Low and zero cost energy improvements to community buildings

The following tips could help you reduce the amount of energy used in your community building for little or no cost and cut the amount of money you spend on fuel bills. Many of these tips will require building users to change their behaviour so you might want to consider putting up signs around the building to reinforce your message. Others require installing small and inexpensive energy efficiency measures – we'd recommend that you shop around for the best deal and follow the installation instructions carefully.

Insulation and draught proofing

Draughts can make the building uncomfortable for users and lead to the heating system being overused so we suggest these tips:

- Close the curtains at dusk
- Fit heavy curtains, especially over main door
- Fit draught proofing such as brushes or foam seals around windows and doors and in between floorboards
- Fit secondary glazing – *either cling film or rigid plastic*
- *Make draught proofing snakes (see our guidance)*

Space and water heating

This will be where you are spending the most money, so it's very important to make sure you're not being wasteful!

- If you don't have them already, install a central heating programmer and thermostat
- Learn how to use your heating systems controls and make sure that other key building users know how to do this as well
- Turn the heating down by one degree – *around eighteen degrees Celsius should be comfortable*
- Adjust the thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs) according to the heat output you want
- Make sure the heating is turned off at night and when building is not occupied
- Ensure radiators are not covered by furniture and that air can circulate
- Tuck curtains behind radiators
- Fit shelves above radiators and reflective panels behind them – *this will allow the convection heat currents to circulate into the room*
- If you have a hot water tank, make sure it's insulated – *this is one of the quickest energy efficiency pay back measures*
- Set hot water cylinder thermostat at 60 degrees – *as a minimum to kill Legionnaire bacteria but you don't need it any hotter*
- Insulate hot water pipes – *also known as 'lagging'*
- Get your boiler serviced annually to ensure it's running at its optimum efficiency

Lighting

Energy-saving light bulbs use up to 80% less electricity than the old bulbs, can last over 10 times longer but still produce the same amount of light. The most efficient bulbs are LEDs but CFL and halogen bulbs are also more efficient than traditional bulbs. Otherwise, you could also:

- Make sure you switch off all lights before leaving the building
- Keep the building windows clean to allow as much natural light into the building as possible
- Consider using dimmer switches
- Fit timers and auto sensors to lights

Appliances

It's important to make sure your appliances are being used responsibly and are running efficiently; we suggest that you should:

- Defrost the freezer regularly
- Check the seals of the fridge
- Ensure that air can circulate behind fridge
- Dust the condenser coils at the back of the fridge
- Keep the fridge temperature between three and five degrees
- Refrain from putting hot food into fridge
- If you have an oven, keep the door shut as every time it is opened a ¼ of heat is lost
- Once you've finished cooking, leave the oven door open to make use of heat
- Only boil as much water as you need
- Consider getting a hot water urn if you need to provide lots of hot water for tea and coffee
- Don't leave appliances on standby – switch them off at the plug
- If the building is on an Economy 7 tariff, be conscious of using appliances such as dishwashers and washing machines during the day

Water use

Not strictly energy saving but definitely resource conservation – we'd recommend that you:

- Fix any dripping taps
- Consider a water displacement device for toilet cistern

Other

- Check whether you can get a better gas and electric tariff - *this could save a lot of money if you haven't switched tariffs recently.*
- Check with your supplier to see if you can apply for VAT reduction on your energy bills – *this typically applies to registered charities*
- Energy monitor – *for a community building, an energy monitor could work really well to make users more aware of how much energy they're using and it could act as a prompt to switch appliances and lights off after use.*