



# Community Energy for Energy Solidarity: Evaluation of the CEES pilot projects

## Enercoop chapter

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[www.energysolidarity.eu](http://www.energysolidarity.eu)



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# Introduction

## The CEES project and the CEES evaluation

In the Community Energy for Energy Solidarity (CEES)<sup>1</sup> project, six energy communities implemented six pilot projects to alleviate energy poverty, including projects to diversify sources of funding for this work. Knowledge exchange and mutual support between the energy communities was a key component of the six pilots. Within CEES, such projects are referred to as a form of energy solidarity. Led by the University of Birmingham, the CEES team implemented a comprehensive evaluation of the six pilot projects.

## Evaluation materials

The following evaluation materials are available at [www.energysolidarity.eu/evaluation](http://www.energysolidarity.eu/evaluation):

- A short summary of the evaluation findings
- The Full evaluation report (232pp)
- The Executive summary (15pp)
- Individual documents of each of the evaluations of the six CEES pilot projects, plus an additional project that was evaluated through CEES.
- The full Evaluation framework (60pp)

## About this document

This document contains the evaluation of the pilot project that was implemented by Enercoop, France. In the Full evaluation report, this is Chapter 7 and begins on p100.

## Key terms in this document

### Energy poverty

*The situation in which households are unable to access affordable energy services (such as adequate warmth, cooling, lighting, and energy to power appliances), which underpin*

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<sup>1</sup> The CEES project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101026972. The project commenced in June 2021 and ran to the end of August 2024.



*elements of human flourishing (such as health and wellbeing, relationships, social inclusion, employment, recreation and education). (Day et al.,2016)<sup>2</sup>.*

### **Energy communities**

*Local collectives of individuals that tend to share values and ambitions relating to: supporting equitable, democratic and fair transitions towards more local, sustainable and efficient energy systems; establishing renewable and decentralised energy systems; assisting local community members with energy efficiency, demand reduction and energy poverty; or economic activity on energy for social and community benefit. These organisations are diverse in structure, size and scope.*

### **Energy solidarity**

*Actors willingly working in ways that align, on a shared goal of overcoming energy-related adversity that is experienced by one or more of the parties. Energy solidarity is inspired by empathy and / or a sense of justice, and may, but does not have to, involve reciprocal obligation. Stronger solidarity involves a more sustained commitment, and / or a willingness to incur a higher personal cost in pursuit of the shared goal. (Day and Burchell, 2023)<sup>3</sup>*

### **Fund mechanism**

Fund mechanisms are employed to raise funds or income to fund work on energy poverty alleviation.

### **Identify mechanism**

Identify mechanisms aim to seek out and identify households in energy poverty, recruit them to projects and assess their eligibility for projects.

### **Alleviate ('soft' and 'hard') mechanism**

Alleviate mechanisms aim to alleviate energy poverty. 'Soft' alleviation mechanisms do this through household engagement, provision of advice about energy poverty, energy efficiency measures, the provision of energy kits consisting of a variety of small energy efficiency measures (such as window insulation material) and support applying for financial support. 'Hard' alleviation mechanisms alleviate energy poverty through building renovation, retrofitting and refurbishment. In CEES, hard alleviation was undertaken in one pilot project. Several of the CEES pilot projects include recruitment and training for energy advisers. These activities have been included as part of the Alleviate mechanisms.

<sup>2</sup> Day, R. et al (2016) Conceptualising energy use and energy poverty using a capabilities framework, Energy Policy, 93: 255–264.

<sup>3</sup> Day, R. and K. Burchell (2023) Energy solidarity in Energy Communities: alleviating energy poverty and supporting just energy transitions through solidarity approaches.: European Sociological Association RN12 mid-term and Energy and Society Network 6th international joint conference; Energy, Environment and Societies in Crises, 6-8 September 2023, Trento, Italy.

# Enercoop



## 1. Summary

The evaluation report addresses the following mechanisms.

### The new CEES mechanism

1. **Alleviate:** a telephone-based energy poverty advice service, known as the Energy Solidarity Taskforce (inspired by ALLenergy), with associated training of energy advisors.

### Additional mechanism

2. **Identify:** participating households were drawn from Enercoop customers who were in arrears on their energy bills and were in receipt of the 'energy cheque' from the French government.

## Evaluation summary

### Introduction

The objective of the CEES Enercoop pilot project was to implement an Alleviate mechanism. This was a telephone helpline (known as the Energy Solidarity Taskforce) for its customers who were in arrears with their Enercoop energy bills and new Enercoop website material to support energy poverty alleviation and broader energy demand reduction across its customer base.

A key feature of the Enercoop pilot is that it was implemented with the involvement of three Enercoop teams: the International projects team managed the project, while staff in the Customer Service and Revenue Protection teams delivered the project. This created challenges because changes to the Taskforce needed to be discussed and agreed across three departments and at director/board level. Enercoop implemented a training day in January 2023 that was appreciated by the trainee energy advisors. Nonetheless, some of the trained energy advisors remained uncomfortable working on energy poverty alleviation with households. This meant that some staff felt pressure to do this work and some staff may have been ill-suited for this work in terms of their social instincts and soft skills. Further, the



project managers noted that there was a difference in 'work culture' between the Taskforce project managers and the staff in the two delivery teams. Finally, the challenging workloads that were already present in the two teams were exacerbated due to the additional work on the Taskforce.

### **Identify**

As noted above, participating households were drawn from Enercoop customers who were in arrears on their energy bills. The process to bring these customers consisted of four stages and required some effort on the part of the householders. The evaluators noted during formative evaluation that this process was overly cumbersome, and the project management team came to agree with this view. However, due to the organisational challenges described earlier, it was not easy for the project managers to make changes in response to this. This is likely to have slowed the progress of households to the Taskforce.

### **Alleviate**

Despite these challenges, the Enercoop Solidarity Taskforce was able to support 261 Enercoop customers through the telephone helpline (between February 2023 and May 2024). The telephone consultations largely consisted of the provision of energy advice and advice about potential sources of financial support. The short-term and long-term responses of these participants was largely positive in terms of experiences and impacts. In addition, the evaluation data suggests that paying energy bills became less challenging for participants; though, it should be noted that this is based on a relatively small sub section of the households and that the seasonality of energy consumption may have played a part in this. Turning to the new Enercoop website material, the most popular of the new webpages (relating to the French national renovation grant scheme) received 2,397 visits.

### **Legacy**

In terms of the legacy of the Enercoop CEES pilot, in September 2023, the Enercoop board agreed with the Taskforce managers' proposals to continue the Taskforce beyond the CEES project and to redesign the Taskforce in response to the challenges that were described above. Thus, in September 2024, Enercoop relaunched the Solidarity Taskforce as an independent team of four within the Enercoop Customer Relations team, with a dedicated budget, and with representation at board level. The four team members were drawn from the Customer Relations team. In addition, the training that was implemented in CEES has been enhanced to include more material relating to the specific challenges of working with people in energy poverty. Finally, households will be directed to the new Solidarity Taskforce from several Enercoop teams, using a more straightforward process, and the range of advice has been broadened and deepened.



## 2. Introduction

### Enercoop

Enercoop is a national French network of 12 renewable energy cooperatives located in the 12 French regions. Enercoop has 89,000 domestic clients. With 160 employees in the head office (and a further 280 across the network), Enercoop is considerably larger than the other CEES pilot partners. Enercoop was established in 2005 and is based in Paris.

### The Enercoop pilot (EO1)

As mentioned above, the evaluation addresses the two key mechanisms in the Enercoop CEES pilot project: the Alleviate mechanism and the Identify mechanism.

### Pilot timescales

The timing of the Enercoop pilot project is shown in Table 7.1.

	2023				2024	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
<b>Training the Taskforce</b>						
<b>Implementing the Taskforce</b>						

Table 7.1. Timescales for the Enercoop pilot project.

### Organisational arrangements

Across the time of the project, the Enercoop pilot was managed sequentially by three different managers from the Enercoop International projects team. The change in managers was due to a maternity leave and a staff member leaving Enercoop. While these challenges are normal within projects, it is noticeable that this had an impact on project management delivery. The Energy Solidarity Taskforce itself was made up of staff from two other teams in Enercoop: the Customer Service team, which deals with general customer queries, and the Revenue Protection team, which pursues overdue payments. Thus, the pilot project was a collaboration between three internal Enercoop teams. It is important to note that Enercoop is a much larger organisation than the other CEES partners and operational plans need to be approved at director/board level.



### 3. Identify (EO3)

#### Process

Like several of the CEES pilot projects, Enercoop's approach to identifying households for the Energy Solidarity Taskforce was shaped by concerns about having either too many or too few households in its pilot. Enercoop said:

*'We're not going to give the Taskforce email address right away to all of the clients in energy poverty because we don't know what amount of people that will bring, so we will start slowly.'*

With this concern in mind, Enercoop selected households that had arrears on their energy bills for attention from the Taskforce. These households then went into the following Identify process:

1. Households were telephoned by the Revenue Protection team to inform them about:
  - a. The new energy poverty FAQs page on the Enercoop website.
  - b. The availability of energy poverty advice and support from the Taskforce.
  - c. The email address that they should use to contact the Taskforce.
2. Enercoop then followed this with an email from the Taskforce email address, inviting the households to take advantage of the Taskforce service.
3. Households who wished to use the Taskforce service responded to this email.
4. The Customer Service team then contacted the household to provide the Taskforce service.

#### Challenges

The most significant challenge that Enercoop experienced, throughout the implementation of the Identify and Alleviate mechanisms, was at the organisational level. This was related to the collaboration between the International Projects team (which was managing the Taskforce project) and the Revenue Protection and Customer Service team (which were implementing the project). This challenge had a number of aspects to it:

- The collaboration was between teams that have separate management structures that extend up to director level within Enercoop. Thus, when the Taskforce managers wished to adapt or develop the Taskforce process, the issues needed to be discussed at managerial level between the three teams and then approved at director/board level. This meant that the project was not agile, flexible or adaptable and developments took a very long time to be agreed and implemented.
- Very early in the development of the Taskforce project, it became apparent to the pilot project managers that there were 'cultural differences' between the International team and the Customer Service/Revenue Protection team. As the quote below suggests, these were related to the work practices, staff backgrounds and management styles in the different teams.

*'There are some cultural differences between different teams in Enercoop. For us as project managers we are really flexible, and we really don't have the same culture or*





*background as the customer service or revenue recovery teams. They are working with a really tight schedule and they have to answer the phone, there is no spare time for doing some meeting, brainstorming and experimenting. They have really specific things to do and they are tightly managed to respect that, and they can't say, "Oh yeah, let's go grab a cup of coffee and see if we can decide something in ten minutes of having a coffee,". Maybe I underestimated this difference in how we function.'*

- As hinted in the quote above, the Revenue Protection team and the Customer Service team are both very busy. This meant that the manager and director of the Customer Service team, in particular, were not able to allocate as much of their team's time to the Taskforce as the Taskforce managers would have liked.

In addition, the pilot project managers realised that the process through which households reached the Taskforce was too complicated, had too many stages and required too much of the households. This was also the view of the evaluation team at an early stage. After some time, the email inviting households to contact the Energy Solidarity Taskforce was modified to be more directive. Due to organisational challenges, it took a long time for this change to be implemented (these challenges are discussed fully in the Alleviate process section). However, in the view of the evaluation team, the process remained too complicated; the suggestion was made that the process could be simplified to just one stage in which the Taskforce contacts the identified households to provide the service either immediately or at another mutually agreed time. Due to the organisational challenges, Enercoop was not able to make this change within the pilot timeline.

Finally, when the Revenue Protection team called the households in Stage 1 of the process described above, the number that showed on the households' phones was the same as for a standard call from this team, which would normally be pursuing payment. The Enercoop team have speculated, plausibly, that this would have led to many households not taking the call.

## Outcomes

Unfortunately, Enercoop does not have access to reliable records on how many households there were at Stages 1-3 of the Identify mechanism process that is described above (the number of households that were successfully contacted by the Taskforce at Stage 4 is discussed in the Alleviate process section below). However, as discussed above, both the Solidarity Taskforce management team in Enercoop and the evaluators conjecture that there is likely to have been considerable attrition between Stages 1 to 4.

Householder responses to the 'baseline' survey suggest that the Enercoop approach was reasonably effective in targeting people who are struggling to pay their energy bills. Although it is important to remember that CEES uses a definition of energy poverty that goes beyond affordability, the 70 responses to the 'baseline' survey question, 'Thinking about the past year, how much difficulty have you had with affording your energy bills?' is a useful indicator of energy struggles. Table 7.2 shows that around three out of five (60%) of the respondents were experiencing 'great difficulty' or 'some difficulty' paying their energy bills in the year prior to their contact with the Solidarity Taskforce. Meanwhile,





around one in four (25%) had been experiencing ‘no difficulty’ or ‘little difficulty’ paying their energy bills. These are perhaps surprising findings given that the Enercoop Identify mechanism focused on customers who were in arrears on their energy bills. The evaluators recommend that Enercoop examine this issue further with the objective of focusing to a greater extent on people who are truly struggling with their energy bills (as opposed to just not paying them).

	<b>Number (%)</b>
<b>1 - No difficulty</b>	14 (20%)
<b>2</b>	3 (4%)
<b>3</b>	9 (13%)
<b>4</b>	22 (31%)
<b>5 - Great difficulty</b>	20 (29%)
<b>No answer</b>	1 (1%)
<b>Prefer not to say/Don't know</b>	1 (1%)

Table 7.2. Baseline responses to the question, ‘Thinking about the past year, how much difficulty have you had with affording your energy bills?’ (n = 70).

The demographic characteristics of the 70 participating households that responded to the ‘baseline’ survey are shown in Table 7.3. It is interesting that the great majority were in work, highlighting that struggles with the cost of energy does not only occur in non-working households. It is also the case that relatively few households contained a ‘vulnerable’ person such as an older person or someone with a disability or long term illness, and more than half did not have children. However, it may be that more of such households declined to complete the survey, which was optional.



	Number of households (%)
<b>Number of people in household</b>	
1	14 (20%)
2	16 (23%)
3	17 (24%)
4	14 (20%)
5 or above	9 (13%)
<b>Number of children (aged 17 or less) in household</b>	
0	37 (53%)
1	16 (23%)
2	16 (23%)
<b>Number of older people (aged 65 and above) in household</b>	
0	68 (97%)
1 or 2	2 (3%)
<b>One or more person with a disability or long-term illness</b>	
Yes	6 (9%)
No	64 (91%)
<b>One or more person in paid employment</b>	
Yes	68 (97%)
No	2 (3%)
<b>One or more adult male in the household</b>	
Yes	61 (87%)
No	9 (13%)
<b>Type of property</b>	
Purpose built flat or apartment	39 (46%)
House	31 (54%)
<b>Tenure</b>	
Owner occupier	26 (37%)
Social tenant	30 (43%)
Private tenant	13 (20%)

Table 7.3. Demographic characteristics of households that completed the 'baseline' survey in the Enercoop Solidarity Taskforce programme (n = 70).



## 4. Alleviate: the Solidarity Taskforce processes (EO4.1)

### Introduction

The Enercoop Alleviate mechanism had three key elements or stages:

1. Training the energy advisors.
2. Setting up systems and materials.
3. Implementing the Energy Solidarity Taskforce.

### Training energy advisors

#### Process

Enercoop employed an external expert to deliver a one-day training in energy poverty alleviation in January 2023. There were 17 participants in the training, drawn from the Enercoop Customer Services and Revenue Protection teams. The training covered the following topics:

- Defining energy poverty.
- The causes and consequences of energy poverty.
- The roles of different actors in energy poverty interventions.
- The current financial support for people in energy poverty and in poverty more broadly.
- How to identify the problems and offer responses.



The Enercoop Solidarity Taskforce training day



## Outcomes

The 17 participants in the Enercoop training completed the ‘trainee’ survey at the end of the day. The results are shown in Table 7.4. As indicated in the table, the training session was highly valued by the participants. The positive statements all have high levels of agreement (88% to 100%) with no disagreement at all. The qualitative responses to the open-ended questions indicate that the case studies and role plays were particularly appreciated as was the section on the various institutional actors in energy poverty.

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
<b>I learned practical information and skills to help me to support householders to reduce their energy consumption and costs.</b>	15 (88%)	2 (12%)	0 (0%)
<b>I feel MORE confident than before that I can support householders to reduce their energy consumption and costs.</b>	15 (88%)	2 (12%)	0 (0%)
<b>I intend to take action to reduce my own energy consumption and costs.</b>	15 (88%)	2 (12%)	0 (0%)
<b>The training event was well-run.</b>	17 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<b>The training event was tailored to my needs.</b>	15 (88%)	2 (12%)	0 (0%)

Table 7.4. Participant perceptions of the Enercoop training day (n = 17).

## Challenges

At the same time, several participants commented that there was a lot of new and complex information to take in on just one day. This suggests that it would be helpful to allow more time for the training and that another training course after six months or one year would be of value.

## Setting up new systems and materials

As part of its preparation for implementing the Taskforce, Enercoop set up:

- A specific email address for the Taskforce.
- A shared spreadsheet to record the progress of households through the Taskforce process.
- An internal messaging channel to share information and updates with and among the Taskforce.
- Process guidance and energy poverty information for the Taskforce.
- An energy poverty [‘frequently asked questions’ \(FAQ\)](#) page on the Enercoop website. This section of the Enercoop was promoted to all Enercoop customers.



## Implementation of the Taskforce

### Process

The telephone consultations that were undertaken by the Solidarity Taskforce had two main elements:

- The provision of energy advice.
- Directing households to sources of financial support.

### Challenges

When the Taskforce began working directly with households, in February 2023, it became clear that despite the apparent success of the training, some members of the project delivery team felt ill-equipped and/or uncomfortable working with people in energy poverty. The project managers realised that this was – at least, in part – because some members of the delivery team did not have the strong social instinct that is essential for work as an energy poverty energy advisor.

### Outcomes

The numbers of households that were advised by the Taskforce service are shown in Table 7.5. This shows that, despite the challenges highlighted above, the Taskforce was able to support 261 households between February 2023 and May 2024. The experiences of and impacts on households are discussed below. Table 7.5 also shows that, over the same period, there were more than 2,397 visits to the Housing Solidarity Fund<sup>4</sup> page of the Enercoop energy solidarity FAQ webpages (noting again that this was promoted to all of Enercoop's customers).

The most significant outcome of this work was that, by September 2023, the Taskforce managers and the Enercoop board had together decided and agreed that Enercoop would:

- Continue the Solidarity Taskforce beyond the CEES project.
- Redesign the Taskforce processes, taking account of learning from the CEES project, for relaunch in September 2024.

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<sup>4</sup> The Housing Solidarity Fund is a key French government grant scheme. This was the most popular page in the Enercoop energy solidarity FAQ webpages.



Month	Number of households assisted by the Solidarity Taskforce	Number of visits to the Housing Solidarity Fund webpage
February 2023	17	12
March 2023	26	36
April 2023	26	54
May 2023	19	63
June 2023	16	70
July 2023	10	80
August 2023	11	117
September 2023	14	113
October 2023	15	245
November 2023	9	249
December 2023	9	200
January 2024	9	214
February 2024	7	236
March 2024	60	360
April 2024	5	195
May 2024	8	153
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>2,397</b>

Table 7.5. Numbers of households that were supported by the Solidarity Taskforce.

In particular, the redesigned Taskforce has the following characteristics:

- It is a dedicated team of four within the Customer Services team, allowing the team greater independence and flexibility.
- It has its own budget.
- The Solidarity Taskforce will provide a new, third level of Customer Service, dedicated to energy solidarity and some other complex customer needs. Level 3 in Customer Service will focus on resolving the most sensitive, complex and time-consuming problems, providing advanced solutions and ensuring that no major problem affecting a customer is left unresolved.
- Further training will be developed and provided to the Level 3 Solidarity Taskforce delivery team, in particular focusing on the challenges of working with people in energy poverty.
- Households will be referred to the Taskforce by other Enercoop departments and the route to the Taskforce will be more straightforward than the one that was piloted in CEES.
- Given the challenging nature of this work, Enercoop is planning to introduce systems for psychological support.



## 5. Alleviate: short term household experiences and impacts (EO4.2)

### Short term household experiences of the Taskforce

A sub-group of 68 households in the Enercoop pilot project completed the ‘engagement’ survey at the end of their telephone consultation with the Taskforce (this is more than a quarter of the 261 participating households). This survey included three questions relating to householders’ experiences of the Taskforce. The results from these questions are shown in Table 7.6. The results suggest high levels of satisfaction with the Taskforce experience. In terms of the quantitative data, 97% of respondents agreed that the telephone call was ‘well run’, suited their needs and was ‘conducted in a respectful way’.

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
<b>The telephone call today was well-run</b>	66 (97%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)
<b>The telephone call suited my needs</b>	66 (97%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
<b>The telephone call today was conducted in a respectful way</b>	66 (97%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)

Table 7.6. Household experiences of the Energy Solidarity Taskforce telephone calls (n = 68).

The qualitative responses to the open-ended questions suggest that the information about government financial support was particularly valued. Several respondents commented positively on the tone of the telephone call, which was referred to as ‘respectful’, ‘attentive’ and ‘pleasant’. Most respondents did not respond to the open-ended question, *Was there anything that didn’t work for you?*, though one commented that they would have liked to have received the information sooner. In terms of further comments, it is interesting that a few respondents placed blame for their situation on the state or government, commenting:

*‘The fundamental problem remains the increases in the state, the taxes’.*

*‘The problem is not my supplier, but the fattening state’.*

*‘Let the government do more!’*



## Short term impacts of the Taskforce

The event survey also contained three questions to help us understand the immediate impacts of the Taskforce telephone calls. The results are shown in Table 7.7 and are broadly positive. More than three quarters of the 68 respondents agreed that they ‘had learned practical information’ (76%), ‘felt more confident’ (84%) and ‘intended to take further action’ to reduce their energy consumption and costs (76%).

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
<b>I have learned practical information and skills today to help me reduce my energy consumption and costs.</b>	52 (76%)	12 (18%)	4 (6%)
<b>I feel more confident than before that I can reduce my energy consumption and costs.</b>	57 (84%)	8 (12%)	3 (4%)
<b>I intend to take further action that I hope will reduce my energy consumption and costs.</b>	52 (76%)	15 (22%)	1 (2%)

Table 7.7. Immediate impacts on households in the Energy Solidarity Taskforce programme (n = 68).

## 6. Alleviate: longer term household experiences and impacts (EO4.2)

### Longer term experiences

In Section 5, it was noted that participants reported positive experiences at the end of the telephone consultations. The Enercoop ‘follow-up’ survey contained four retrospective questions about longer term experiences of the programme and was completed by 18 participating households, six to nine months after the telephone consultations. The findings from this survey are shown in Table 7.8 and are reasonably positive. Across the four questions, levels of agreement are above 50% and levels of disagreement are zero or one. These findings suggest that the Enercoop Energy Solidarity Taskforce was appreciated by many or most households.



	Agree	Neither	Disagree
<b>I think that the programme was well run.</b>	10 (56%)	8 (44%)	0 (0%)
<b>I felt listened to and respected by the people who were delivering the programme.</b>	11 (61%)	6 (33%)	1 (6%)
<b>I feel that the programme was adaptable to suit my needs.</b>	9 (50%)	9 (50%)	0 (0%)
<b>I would recommend the programme to other people who struggle to pay their energy bills.</b>	10 (56%)	7 (39%)	1 (6%)

Table 7.8. Longer-term household experiences of the Enercoop Solidarity Taskforce programme (n = 18).

## Longer term changes: comparing the ‘baseline’ and ‘follow up’ surveys

### Introduction

Longer term impacts of the pilot projects were examined by comparing each household’s responses to a ‘baseline’ survey to their responses to an identical ‘follow-up’ survey. In the Enercoop pilot, the ‘baseline’ survey was conducted in the initial telephone call to households and the ‘follow-up’ survey was conducted by telephone between six and nine months after the telephone consultation with each household. Matched pairs of survey responses (‘baseline’ and ‘follow-up’) were achieved by attributing a unique ID number to each household (in the case of the Enercoop pilot, the Enercoop customer number was used for this purpose). Once the Enercoop ‘baseline’ and ‘follow-up’ data had been cleaned and integrated, 18 matched pairs of households were available for analysis. This is just 7% of the 261 households that participated in the Energy Solidarity Taskforce programme to May 2024. Differences between the baseline survey data and the follow-up survey data were examined using the Related-samples Wilcoxon signed-rank test, with a confidence level of 90% required to establish significant changes. As discussed earlier, 90% was used due to the relatively small sample sizes. Notably, the ‘follow-up’ surveys were completed in July 2024. Since this is typically a period when domestic energy demand is at its lower end, this may have affected the results.

The results of this analysis are examined in the tables below. These tables show all of the items from the ‘baseline’ and ‘follow-up’ surveys that relate to energy poverty. Items where a statistically significant change was identified, with a 90% level of confidence, are highlighted in green. The tables also show the means for the variables in the ‘baseline’ and ‘follow up’ surveys, as well as the



difference between the means. Finally, the tables offer a description of the statistically significant changes.

### **Paying energy bills**

As indicated in Table 7.9, the Enercoop analysis shows a statistically significant *decrease* in the means between the 'baseline' survey and the 'follow-up' survey. This suggests that households reported *less difficulty* paying their energy bills six to nine months following their engagements with the Solidarity Taskforce programme than they did prior to these engagements. However, it is important to note the significant caveat relating to the collection of the follow-up data in the summer, when energy demand is likely to be lower.

### **Self-restriction of energy services**

Table 7.9 also shows the results with respect to the self-restriction of access to energy services by householders. The analysis shows a statistically significant *decrease* in the means between the 'baseline' survey and follow-up' responses with respect to heating, refrigeration, laundry, lighting and running electronic devices. This suggests that householders exercised *less self-restriction* of access to these energy services following their participation in the Solidarity Taskforce programme. These decreases in self-restriction, particularly for heating and lighting, are likely to be influenced by the collection of the 'follow-up' data in July. Nonetheless, these findings may also indicate that the Energy Solidarity Taskforce has been helpful for participating households

### **Negative impacts of energy struggles**

Table 7.10 shows the results with respect to the negative impacts that are associated with energy poverty. Although the analysis shows some decreases in the means, suggesting a *decrease* in these negative impacts, none of these findings were statistically significant at 90% confidence, or close to 90%. It is possible that some of these differences would have been statistically significant if the sample size had been substantially larger, but we cannot be sure.

### **Energy literacy and know how**

Table 7.11 shows the findings with respect to the energy literacy and know-how of the householders. In this case, the analysis showed statistically significant differences in the means in two cases: confidence about receiving benefits and feeling a sense of stigma. In both cases, the indicated change is positive: participants are *more confident* that they are receiving the benefits to which they are entitled and their sense of stigma or shame has *decreased*. Although there are other positive changes indicated by the difference in means, these were not statistically significant at 90% or close to 90%. Again, the sample size is an issue in establishing significant change.

Survey items	Baseline survey mean	Follow-up survey mean	Difference between means	Description of change
<b>Difficulty affording energy bills.</b> <b>1: No difficulty; 5 = Great difficulty (n = 18).</b>	3.89	2.56	-1.33	Less difficulty
<b>Self-restriction of access to energy services in order to be able to afford energy bills. 1: Not restricted at all; 5: Restricted to a great extent.</b>				
Heating (n = 18)	4.00	2.06	-1.94	Less self-restriction
Cooking (n = 18)	1.39	1.88	0.49	-
Refrigeration (switching off fridge or freezer) (n = 17)	1.22	1.71	0.49	Less self-restriction
Cooling your home (n = 6)	2.33	1.79	-0.54	-
Doing laundry (n = 17)	2.56	1.71	-0.85	Less self-restriction
Heating hot water (n = 17)	1.83	1.71	-0.12	-
Lighting (n = 17)	3.65	1.83	-1.82	Less self-restriction
Running electronic devices (for example, TVs, computers and phones) (n = 18)	2.44	1.78	-0.66	Less self-restriction

Table 7.9. Household responses to the 'baseline survey' and 'follow up' survey in the Enercoop Solidarity Taskforce programme (paying bills and self-restriction of access to energy services). The green shading indicates variables where statistically significant findings were observed at 90% confidence.

Survey items	Baseline survey mean	Follow-up survey mean	Difference between means	Description of change
<b>Negative impacts on household of challenges paying for energy: 1: No impact at all; 5: A lot of impact</b>				
Physical health or well-being (n = 18)	1.89	2.17	0.28	-
Mental health (n = 18)	2.61	2.22	-0.39	-
Ability to study at home (n = 15)	2.28	2.00	-0.28	-
Ability to work at home (n = 16)	2.61	2.06	-0.55	-
Ability to have visitors in the home (n = 18)	2.56	1.87	-0.69	-
Feeling of pride in the home (n = 15)	2.61	2.07	-0.54	-
Feeling comfortable in the home (n = 18)	2.56	2.28	-0.28	-
Feeling safe and secure in the home (n = 18)	2.72	2.22	-0.50	-
Ability to enjoy recreational activities in the home (n = 12)	2.17	2.06	-0.11	-

Table 7.10. Household responses to the 'baseline survey' and 'follow up' survey in the Enercoop Solidarity taskforce programme (negative impacts of problems affording energy).

Survey items	Baseline survey mean	Follow-up survey mean	Difference between means	Description of change
<b>Extent of agreement with statements: 1 = 'I don't agree at all' and 5 = 'I strongly agree'.</b>				
I know my approximate monthly energy consumption or costs (n = 17)	3.50	3.53	0.03	-
I understand my energy bills (n = 17)	3.22	3.65	0.43	-
I know that I am on the best energy tariff for me (n = 17)	3.06	3.59	0.53	-
I know how to manage my energy bills online (n = 17)	3.44	3.65	0.21	-
I know how to save energy in my home (n = 17)	3.72	3.59	-0.13	-
I know if my home is well insulated or not (n = 16)	3.78	3.56	-0.22	-
I am confident that I am receiving all benefits/welfare payments that I am entitled to (n = 14)	2.14	3.53	1.39	Greater confidence
I think that my local community is supportive of people who struggle to pay their energy bills (n = 12)	3.00	3.47	0.47	-
I feel a sense of stigma or shame because of my struggles with energy bills (n = 11)	3.18	2.93	-0.25	Less stigma

Table 7.11. Household responses to the 'baseline survey' and 'follow up' survey in the Enercoop Solidarity Taskforce programme (energy literacy and know how). The green shading indicates variables where statistically significant findings were observed at 90% confidence.

## Longer term impacts: the follow-up survey

The Enercoop 'follow-up' survey contained five questions that retrospectively asked households about changes during the period since their participation in the Solidarity Taskforce programme. The results are shown in Table 7.12. The data suggests that around half of the respondents agreed with the five positive statements and that very few disagreed. It is particularly encouraging that the findings suggest there were improvements for around half of the respondents in terms of both physical health and mental health.

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
<b>I have learned more about how to use less energy through participation in the project.</b>	9 (50%)	8 (44%)	1 (6%)
<b>I have learned more about how to save on the cost of energy through participation in the project.</b>	10 (56%)	8 (44%)	0 (0%)
<b>I think my energy bills will be lower through participation in the project.</b>	8 (44%)	8 (44%)	2 (11%)
<b>Participating in the project has improved the physical health of my household.</b>	8 (44%)	8 (44%)	2 (11%)
<b>Participating in the project has improved the mental health of my household.</b>	10 (56%)	6 (33%)	2 (11%)

Table 7.12. Longer-term household impacts of the Solidarity taskforce programme (n = 18).

## 7. Impacts for energy advisors (EO4.2)

As discussed earlier, the Solidarity Taskforce energy advisors were drawn from the Enercoop Customer services team and Revenue Protection team. The experiences of these energy advisors were examined through the 'energy advisor' survey. The responses of 11 (of around 18) energy advisors to the survey are shown in Table 7.13. The findings are fairly positive. In particular, 8 (73%) of the respondents agreed that the Solidarity Taskforce programme was well run and that the Taskforce management team was easy and flexible to work with. Further, more than half agreed that they had learned a lot (64%) and their confidence had grown (55%).







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	Agree	Neither	Disagree
<b>I have learned a lot and developed new skills.</b>	7 (64%)	3 (27%)	1 (9%)
<b>My confidence has grown.</b>	6 (55%)	4 (36%)	1 (9%)
<b>My CV and employability are enhanced.</b>	4 (36%)	3 (27%)	4 (36%)
<b>The project was well-run</b>	8 (73%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)
<b>Project management team was easy and flexible to work with.</b>	8 (73%)	3 (27%)	0 (0%)
<b>I feel more connected to my local community.</b>	5 (46%)	3 (27%)	3 (27%)

Table 7.13. Experiences of the Enercoop energy advisors (n = 11).

The qualitative responses strongly showed that the energy advisors found it very rewarding to be able to support people in energy poverty; all of the respondents made this point, in a variety of ways. In terms of things that did not work so well, three respondents mentioned the limited effectiveness of the email that was sent to households, in encouraging them to email back for a consultation with the Taskforce. As previously mentioned, the evaluators had also felt that the process for householders to access the support was too complicated for the households.

## 8. Impacts on Enercoop: the legacy of the pilot (EO6)

1. Based on considerable learning during the CEES project, Enercoop will relaunch its Solidarity Taskforce in September 2024. The new Taskforce will be independent of other Enercoop departments and approvals structures, with its own budget, and will therefore be more agile. Staff working on it will have chosen to work on energy poverty, and training will be more comprehensive. Compared to the CEES pilot version, the process of accessing it will be simpler for households, and it will be able to offer advice and support on a much broader range of topics.
2. This new team will aim to resolve the most sensitive, complex and time-consuming problems, provide advanced solutions and ensure that no major problem affecting a customer is left unresolved. The aim is to provide personalised support, from start to finish, from a single customer relations employee.



## 9. Key learning from the Enercoop pilot

1. Organisational structure is key. It is important that teams working on energy poverty are agile so that they can effectively respond to inevitable challenges. This means that it is important that they are able to operate independently of other departments and approvals processes.
2. It is important that the people who work on energy poverty alleviation with households are carefully selected, with an emphasis on their empathy and communication skills. Further, it is important that people work in these roles through their own choice.
3. It is important that training goes beyond 'technical' matters of energy poverty and energy efficiency, and also includes 'soft skills' and 'social skills', such as listening and patience.
4. It is important that the process for households to access the available support is designed to be straightforward and not onerous.