

Grassroots organisations and the transition to Net Zero

A research project for the Energy
Consumers Commission

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Report	Grassroots Organisations and the Transition to Net Zero
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Executive Summary

Achievement of Scotland's 2045 Net Zero target will require widescale participation and collaboration from all sectors. Engaging the domestic sector and ensuring a Just Transition to Net Zero will be vital in reaching this target. It has been suggested that grassroots organisations will be pivotal for engaging householders and communities, acting as trusted intermediaries on their route to decarbonisation.

The primary objective of this research was to gain a first-hand understanding of what support was needed by grassroots organisations in order to effectively empower householders to take action in the journey to Net Zero.

Key findings

- There were no major knowledge or training gaps indicated by research participants, though it was felt additional training surrounding smart energy systems (e.g. domestic-scale renewable energy generation, storage and flexible tariffs) would be beneficial. It was noted that existing channels are available for specialist referrals surrounding these topics.
- Organisations were polarised on their views of the awareness and appetites of consumers surrounding the Net Zero agenda. It was felt that communities as a unit did have an appetite to decarbonise, however, individuals are more ambivalent to the need for decarbonisation and the majority are not in a financial position to invest in the necessary measures. This is especially evident during the current energy crisis, with many grassroots organisations providing increased crisis support for householders.
- The existing funding landscape was considered to be too transient and criteria too changeable. Short funding contracts have contributed to existing shortfalls in staffing and the provision of aftercare for householders, leading to increased pressure on advice services.
- Whilst there were specific differences in the challenges faced between rural and urban focussed services, the main challenges (e.g. funding, staffing and aftercare) were felt broadly across organisations throughout Scotland.
- The majority of organisations had 'some knowledge' of key policies and strategies, however, it was felt that these are of little relevance during householder engagement and that there is a disconnect between policy and action on the ground. It was felt that understanding of policy within householders was even more lacking.

Recommendations

Funding - There are clear calls for funding support for grassroots organisations to be less restrictive with regards to both criteria and timescales. There are also calls for funding to be consolidated and easier to access, reducing the work burden on organisations and allowing smaller groups, (without the resource for dedicated development staff) to access vital funding.

Training – Additional training for advice staff on more technical topics such as flexible tariffs, domestic energy generation and storage and controls for low-carbon heating should be provided. Advisors indicated they were the least confident when discussing these topics. Mechanisms should be put into place to encourage cross-sectoral working with supply chains, installers and technical professionals, tapping into the existing knowledge base. This would also help to address the inconsistencies in advice provision amongst organisations.

Staff – Many organisations are having to shape staffing capacity around available funds as opposed to the requirements of the clients, creating strain on advice services. Dedicated staff are needed as well as dedicated funds. More resource is needed for staff and volunteers for existing services, as well as funding for new posts, such as development officers and local community energy workers.

Community empowerment - Throughout stakeholder engagement, it was voiced that communities must be more empowered to help deliver Net Zero projects, with the support of grassroots advice organisations and the private sector. It is anticipated that existing work on Climate Hubs will help to facilitate this engagement.

Policy - There were calls for increased input at the local level within national policy and strategy development. It was noted that Local Energy Plans (LEPs) will be an important tool to help to deliver a just transition.

1. Introduction

In 2019 the Scottish Parliament committed to becoming a Net Zero society by 2045¹ resulting in the development of a broad set of bills, policies and proposals to cut emissions across sectors. The focus of Scottish Government has now turned to the delivery and implementation of decarbonisation, as has been called for by the Climate Change Committee (CCC)² and underscored by the most recent assessment by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).³

A key factor in this implementation will be the engagement and mobilisation of citizens. As such, the IPCC's recent report contains a chapter dedicated to the "demand, services and social aspects of mitigation", which explores the social science literature to assess how people's behaviour, and the choices they are offered, can cut emissions.

Decarbonisation will be dependent on supporting and empowering consumers and communities to participate in the transition to Net Zero by making changes to everyday activities such as travel, diets and heating homes. The Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring a just transition to Net Zero is founded on a number of consumer-centric principles:

- Just transition requires active participation
- To be equitable this means people should be informed and empowered
- Grassroots organisations⁴ are key 'trusted intermediaries' in this process

Current levels of awareness and understanding of the route to Net Zero and the changes required have been found to be low. Survey data from a Citizens Advice Scotland study found that awareness of actions required, and the level of change needed to achieve Net Zero was very low across the populace, despite broad support for such a transition in principle.⁵ These findings are consistent in the literature, with knowledge of low carbon heating systems and a willingness to install them both found to be low among consumers in Scotland.⁶

While a number of national initiatives exist to support consumers (e.g. Home Energy Scotland), the conduits for consumer awareness (and action) which will drive a transition to Net Zero will be based within communities. It is crucial to understand how local and national initiatives and grassroots bodies can support each other

¹ The [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) was amended by the [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)

² The Climate Change Committee (2021) [Progress reducing emissions in Scotland - 2021 Report to Parliament](#)

³ IPCC (2022) [Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#)

⁴ In the context of this report, 'grassroots organisations' are those working at the local level who provide advice or support on energy or related issues (e.g. housing, debt, etc.)

⁵ Citizens Advice Scotland (2021) [Consumer Voices: Energy efficiency, climate change, and low carbon heating](#)

⁶ ClimateXChange (2020) [Public awareness of and attitudes to low-carbon heating technologies](#)

successfully and efficiently across the customer journey. This can allow joined up thinking, planning and delivery, to minimise duplication of effort and limit the barriers and inefficiencies which will hinder the wider transition.

In the context of the current energy price hike, which is unlikely to abate this year, and increases to the cost of living and inflation, the role of community-facing advice organisations in Scotland is more critical than ever. As demand for their services continues to increase, understanding the pressure points for these organisations will support them to keep decarbonisation at the forefront of their services and not be overtaken by more immediate concerns and actions around fuel poverty.

1.1 Project Aims

This research aims to understand the readiness of frontline advisors for empowering consumers in Scotland to engage in the transition to Net Zero. By identifying limitations to service provision, as well as preferred solutions, informed decisions can be made which best supports consumers on the journey through decarbonisation.

In achieving this aim, and to support a transition which is just, fair and effective, the research was developed around the following objectives:

1. Assess how well-equipped grassroots organisations and frontline advisors are for providing advice about Net Zero, focusing primarily on factors linked to domestic energy
2. Identify unmet needs of advisors and organisations
3. Determine how grassroots organisations and frontline advisor perceive key policy developments

1.2 Research methods

The research methodology comprised a literature review, a survey, interviews and focus groups (see Appendix A for more detail). The main challenge experienced was a difficulty in recruitment. As visible in Table 1, a total of 246 organisations were contacted with varying success during stakeholder engagement. Challenges in recruitment can be explained by the rapidly increasing demand these organisations are facing owing to the current energy crisis and increases in the cost of living. It is implicit that these organisations will be delivering support to householders through the transition to Net Zero, and as such, existing issues with capacity will need to be addressed.

Table 1 Numbers of organisations contacted and engaged during this research project

	Contacted	Engaged	Success rate (%)
Survey	117	29	25
Interview	54	6	11
Focus groups	75	13	17
Totals	246	48	

2. Literature review

Key findings:

- Much research has been undertaken surrounding consumer knowledge gaps and barriers to uptake of energy efficiency measures. However, very little research exists surrounding the challenges faced by grassroots organisations who are supporting consumers through decarbonisation.
- Whilst the majority of householders are aware of the climate crisis and are generally supportive of decarbonisation strategies, many are unsure of what is required of them as part of the transition to Net Zero. A lack of centralised direction has been cited as the main cause of uncertainty amongst individuals.
- Consumers are overwhelmed by the breadth of information available, leading to procrastination and uncertainty. Advice organisations providing more tailored support, including an increase in face-to-face interactions, show more success in driving action.
- Individuals are unable to act on environmental motivations due to financial constraints. That said, it has been noted that financial support alone is not enough to foster stronger engagement and a more holistic approach will be required.
- Collaboration between grassroots organisations and industry professionals can facilitate a more holistic and joined-up approach and a smoother customer journey for householders.

2.1 Consumer knowledge

A substantial volume of research has been conducted in recent years surrounding consumer readiness relating to decarbonisation and climate change strategies. Consumer motivation and awareness has been tracked, and barriers identified.

Most notably, whilst there is an awareness and an appetite amongst consumers to reduce their carbon impact, there is a lack of understanding on the necessary steps required to do this. It has been reported that they feel there is no clear direction at a national level and expect a clear strategy from government on what Net Zero will mean for them as individuals.⁷

Consumers are struggling to navigate numerous sources of advice to find relevant information from credible sources and feel that they are left without guidance and

⁷ Energy Action Scotland (2019) [Down to the wire](#)

direction. It has been reported that many householders feel that they are overwhelmed by the wealth of information provided and that knowing what advice is relevant to them requires a level of knowledge that most do not have.⁸

2.2 Financial implications

Whilst many consumers are concerned about the climate crisis, even the most well informed and well-intentioned individuals find that financial constraints pose barriers to the uptake of energy efficiency measures.

Many sources note that the initial capital costs, plus the uncertainty surrounding operational costs of novel low carbon heat technologies, are a major concern for householders.⁹ The able-to-pay market are pioneering in this space as they have the financial buffer to be more driven by environmental motivations.

Financial support has been beneficial to help persuade some individuals to adopt low-carbon heat, but this is not the only driver and as such will not be sufficient to drive mass uptake alone.¹⁰ It has been reported that as well as financial support, learning from neighbours is a key factor influencing individual action.

2.3 Advice provision

Many householders indicated they would take action if they had more information around the specific measures they should be implementing, rather than having broad discussions about all potential technologies.¹¹

Whole house retrofit

Retrofit programmes, such as those delivered through Energy Efficient Scotland (EES), which offer single or multiple physical measures, are well established within Scotland.¹² However, programmes designed to enact habitual change in behaviours

⁸ Citizens Advice (2020) [Navigating net zero: A framework to give people the confidence to invest in home energy technologies.](#)

⁹ Citizens Advice (2016) [Energising homeowners: Research into consumer decision-making on energy efficiency improvements](#)

¹⁰ ClimateXChange (2020) [Public awareness of and attitudes to low-carbon heating technologies](#)

¹¹ UK committee on Climate Change (2020) [Understanding how behaviours can influence climate change risks](#)

¹² Citizens Advice Scotland (2018) [Changing behaviour in a changing climate](#)

are less well established and research suggests that current advice is delivered in a piecemeal way.¹³

PAS 2035 aims to establish a whole-house approach to retrofit, taking into consideration the energy efficiency requirements of the entire property.¹⁴ Should this be combined in a more holistic way alongside bespoke advice for individuals, it is believed that this will be a more impactful retrofit solution and will ensure greater success with decarbonisation efforts.¹⁵ That said, existing supply chain issues (especially within remote rural and island communities) and the increasing costs of materials may limit the feasibility of such an approach.

Complexity of advice

Retrofit solutions can be difficult to understand for the average householder with no technical experience, with a variety of options and retrofit scenarios available to them. There are calls for advice services to offer more tailored advice packages to householders, including a shift towards increased in-person interactions. Agencies providing in-home advice services report that the complexity of issues experienced by consumers are such that they can only be resolved with more in-depth face-to-face interactions.¹⁶

Furthermore, it has also been highlighted that householders' need for advice and support does not end once an installation or retrofit project has been completed. Householders need ongoing support and expert guidance on how to use the technology, how to make sure it is working effectively, and on potential maintenance issues.¹⁷

2.4 Sources of advice

Research undertaken by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in 2020¹⁸ found that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were the most trusted source of information about low-carbon heating, followed closely by government funded advice services. Although it is understood that professionals have the technical expertise needed to guide consumers, 85% of homeowners were hesitant towards trusting advisors and installers who have a financial interest in the

¹³ Citizens Advice (2016) [Energising homeowners: Research into consumer decision-making on energy efficiency improvements](#)

¹⁴ Retrofit Academy [What is PAS 2035?](#) (Last accessed 13/04/22)

¹⁵ BEIS (2016) [Each Home Counts](#)

¹⁶ Energy Action Scotland (2019) [Down to the wire](#)

¹⁷ Citizens Advice (2020) [Navigating net zero: A framework to give people the confidence to invest in home energy technologies.](#)

¹⁸ BEIS (2020) [Transforming heat: Public attitudes research](#)

advice they are providing.¹⁹ The results of BEIS' 2020 Public Attitudes Tracker survey²⁰ indicated tradespeople or friends and family as the most trusted sources of information about heating.

Both independent advice services and industry specialists will play an important role in guiding homeowners through decarbonisation. Presently, there is little cross-sectoral collaboration and communication, leaving the onus on householders to make sense of information provided by both parties. It was reported that consumers that had accessed advice from a range of sources reported inconsistencies in the messages being promoted, and in some cases contradictory views.²¹

That said, householders do benefit from receiving information from multiple sources, including technical expertise and social interactions with people with lived experiences. Implementation of a mechanism to both streamline knowledge sharing and improve the consistency of messaging may help to reduce the burden of effort on householders and improve engagement.

A 'one-stop-shop' model has been cited as a potential solution, building on existing work through Home Energy Scotland and Climate Hubs.²² It is suggested that this model will reduce uncertainty amongst householders on where to access advice and enable a smoother customer journey. Additionally, a 'no wrong door' approach has also been advocated by several charitable organisations. This approach ensures that all individuals can access appropriate services through a variety of channels, via improved collaboration across sectors, comprehensive referral mechanisms and common frontline approaches.²³

¹⁹ De Wilde, M. (2019) [The sustainable housing question: On the role of interpersonal, impersonal and professional trust in low-carbon retrofit decisions by homeowners](#)

²⁰ BEIS (2020) [Public Attitudes Tracker](#)

²¹ Energy Action Scotland (2019) [Down to the wire](#)

²² Citizens Advice Scotland (2017) [Warming Scotland up to Energy Efficiency: Putting Consumers First](#)

²³ The Homeless Network (2018) [No Wrong Door](#)

3. Stakeholder engagement

3.1 Organisational role

Evidence from focus groups showed that many grassroots organisations see their role as being educators and advocates, attempting to empower local communities. Net Zero is often discussed and used as a key marker for success, with many organisations working with communities to help them towards Net Zero or carbon neutrality targets.

Interestingly, this doesn't appear to be reflected in the service they provide, with the majority of consumers engaging with them for assistance with fuel bills and income maximisation where carbon reduction is a secondary benefit. Organisations are clearly very passionate and driven, however, consumer motivations currently shape service provision more than national objectives.

3.2 Consumer awareness and motivations

An initial survey sought to explore consumer motivations as observed by grassroots organisations. Figure 1 illustrates how frequently advice organisations received enquiries surrounding various advice topics.

It was found that householders are most frequently contacting advice groups to discuss topics surrounding financial concerns, such as funding support for retrofit measures and fuel bills, fuel debt management and advice on reducing energy bills. There was lower relative demand for advice surrounding low carbon heat, domestic storage and domestic generation. These findings are consistent with evidence from the literature review which suggest that householders prioritise affordability over low carbon investments due to financial limitations.

It was also felt that there exists an appetite within communities for local generation, particularly in rural areas. This was further reflected by participants of the rural themed focus group, who cited a high level of motivation from communities surrounding decarbonisation of heat and investment in community energy projects.

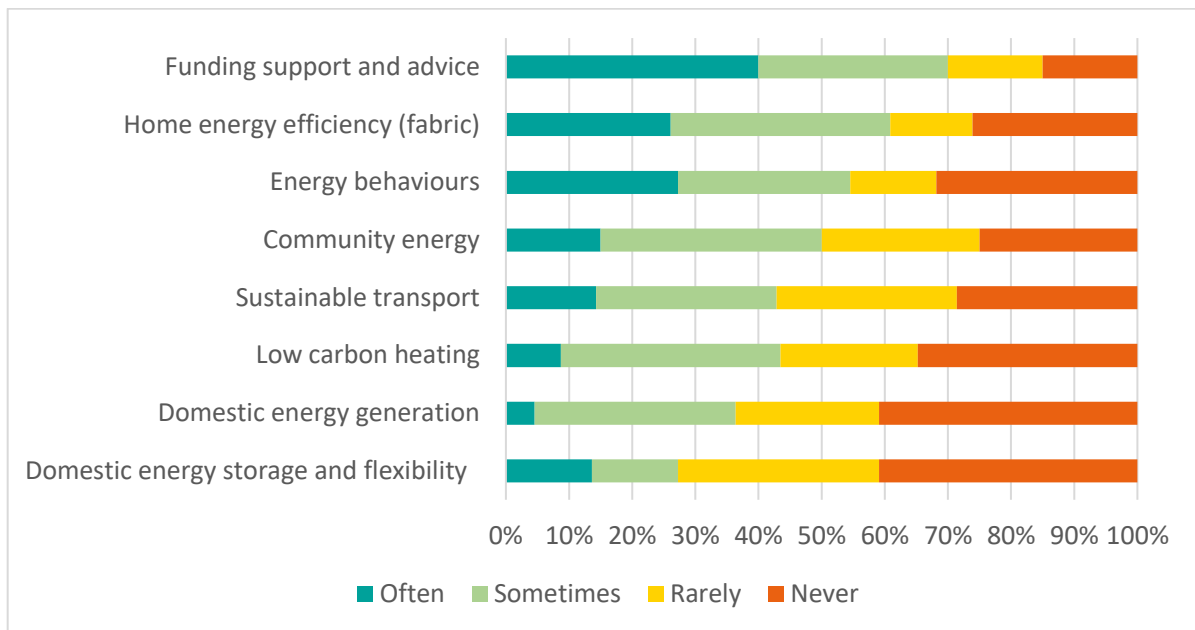


Figure 1: Frequency of contact surrounding advice topics

Advisors felt that clients, on the whole, are not ignorant regarding the steps required to reduce energy costs. Instead, barriers to decarbonisation exist where expensive retrofit solutions and heating systems are prioritised based on environmental policies which, although well intentioned, fail to consider factors such as cost and ease of use.

Community groups

There was a noticeable difference in the motivations of individual householders compared with community groups. Where individuals were motivated predominantly by finances, there was a significantly higher motivation from community groups to engage in decarbonisation projects from an environmental perspective.

The most likely reasoning for this is the availability of capital within community groups for green projects, with little requirement for private investment from individuals. Stakeholders also noted that these community groups will be valuable in motivating individuals to take action towards Net Zero through the development of demonstration projects. For example, the Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) enablement grant funding application stipulates that applicants must evidence engagement within the wider community to facilitate learning and encourage community involvement in local energy systems²⁴.

²⁴ Local Energy Scotland (2021) [CARES funding: Information and guidance pack](#)

“Community groups we are working with are definitely motivated – rising costs is a factor, but a lot are looking at carbon costs for buildings. They are happy to invest where they can to prepare buildings for net zero. They are also really helping to get communities on board too.” – Community support organisation

Interestingly, the apparent disparity in motivations between individuals and community groups was not fully recognised by the organisations themselves. That is to say, organisations working with community groups to drive the energy transition did not seem to fully grasp the barriers felt by individuals accessing other means of support, such as energy affordability support.

As community development groups generally have limited interaction with fuel poverty services, there was little understanding of the financial constraints felt by lower income households and how this impacts consumer motivations.

Financial motivations

Customers contacted grassroots services most often about funding support, home energy efficiency and energy behaviours, topics most strongly linked to reducing energy consumption and therefore energy bills (Figure 1, page 10). This is increasingly apparent with the current energy crisis.

Further evidence from the initial survey suggests that consumer motivations shape service provision within grassroots organisations. As seen in Figure 2, a higher percentage of organisations give advice surrounding the topics of energy behaviour, home energy efficiency and funding support.

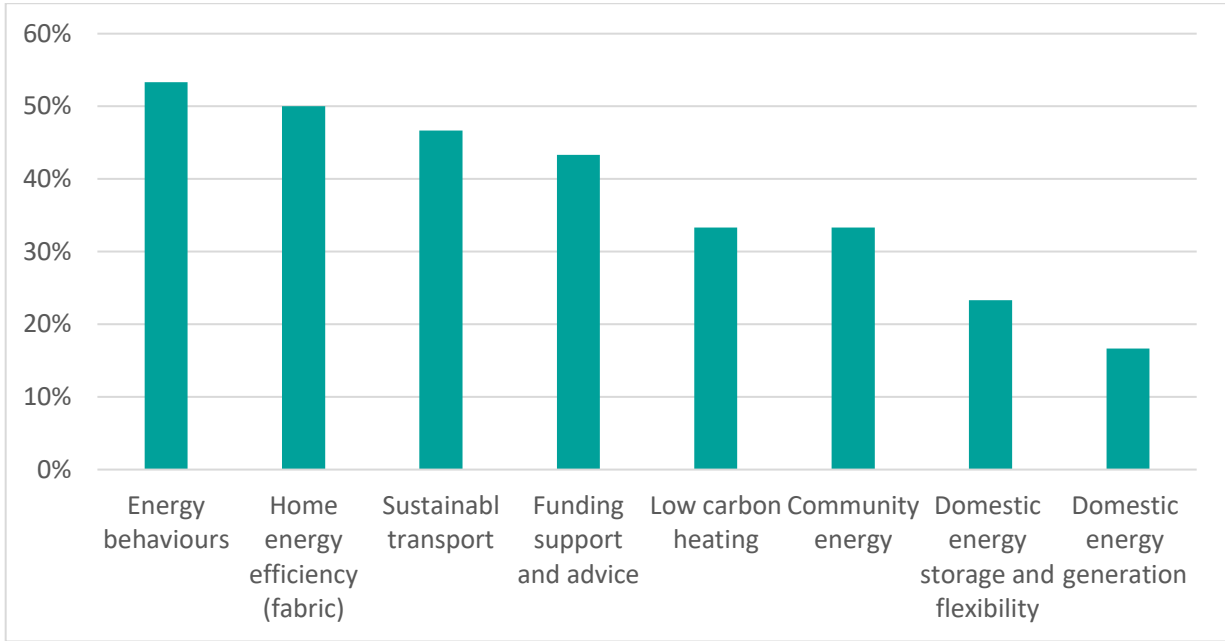


Figure 2: Percentage of organisations providing support on various advice topics

Stakeholders noted that advice and grant arrangements have been put in place to help facilitate decarbonisation (e.g. Home Energy Scotland Loan) and it has been left to individuals to take action. However, it was suggested that only the committed able-to-pay market, and public housing agencies with statutory obligations, have done so and more work is required to improve engagement.

3.3 Urban vs rural challenges

It was anticipated that the needs of consumers, and therefore the needs of grassroots organisations, would vary geographically and at different scales. As such, the three focus groups were split into Urban, Rural and Project Management themes in an attempt to capture the nuanced differences experienced in these areas. Though there were some key differences highlighted relating to energy supply in rural vs urban areas, the issues raised largely transcended this categorisation, with stakeholders identifying challenges and solutions which were felt widely across organisations.

Energy

The disparity in energy costs between urban and rural areas is already well discussed within the context of a just transition. Representatives from rural organisations highlighted the inequalities faced by rural householders with regards to higher electricity costs and a greater reliance on unregulated fuels.

Energy metering was one example given which has a significant impact on decarbonisation efforts made by householders. A large proportion of electrically heated homes in rural areas have antiquated multi-rate metering systems which restrict access to more economical tariffs and limit the financial benefits of installing modern low-carbon heating. Conversely, urban households are more likely to have smart meters which have the potential to enable fuel bill savings via the use of flexible tariffs and smart appliances. With the phasing out of the Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) on which some restricted systems rely, a lot of support will be required for households, particularly in rural areas. It was felt that there should be more support from energy suppliers themselves, and that suppliers are failing on their commitments to consumers, leading them into debt.

Advisors in urban areas were aware that within on-gas areas the decarbonisation of heat can sometimes lead to bill increases for some households. With the current energy crisis, many on-gas households will be less likely to install low-carbon heating systems due to the rising costs of electricity and concerns that this may translate to higher energy bills for low carbon heating systems. As highlighted previously, money is a significant factor for householders, with many opting for the most economical option despite greener intentions.

Construction

There is evident variability in the construction of domestic properties between urban and rural areas. Urban areas have a higher proportion of brick or block construction buildings, including tenements, multi-occupancy properties and terraced housing. Within the urban focus group, stakeholders noted that multi-occupancy buildings pose the greatest challenge owing to the difficulties associated with whole-building buy-in. It was highlighted by a representative from an energy advice organisation that building-scale heat networks would be greatly beneficial, provided all tenants were in agreement. More work is needed to convince householders of the benefits of these systems.

Rural areas have a greater proportion of dispersed, off-gas detached properties, many of which are century-old stone-built croft houses. It was discussed by focus group participants that a whole-house approach to retrofit is needed, incorporating the decarbonisation of heat. Presently, the poor thermal performance of many rural homes negates any financial savings made via the installation of low-carbon heating systems.

Access to services

Stakeholders throughout the consultation process felt that services were, for the most part, adequate and accessible throughout Scotland. That said, the physical distance of services in dispersed rural areas is restrictive for less mobile householders.

“I usually do home visits, but during Covid it was telephone. The most important thing for any energy advice is not a telephone service, it’s going into people’s homes and seeing how they are living and using their energy” –
Energy advice organisation

Telephone advice services, such as Home Energy Scotland, are convenient for isolated consumers and were well utilised throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it was indicated by one energy advisor that telephone advice would not be sufficient to engage householders in the Net Zero transition, advocating for more resource to provide bespoke, in-person engagement.

Policy

Rural areas are predominantly off-gas and it is felt that the opportunities here are not fully understood within policy, where increased focus is on urban areas. Stakeholders felt that off-gas areas would represent easier wins with regards to the electrification of heat.

“There’s an unfairness in on-gas vs off-gas – any help in off-gas areas will have financial and carbon benefits, however, a lot of people in policy are only thinking about mains gas so off-gas goes under the radar a lot. This is apparent when you consider that they removed funding for oil & LPG boilers but still maintained the funding for gas boilers and gas connections.” – Energy advice organisation

4. Challenges faced by grassroots organisations

Challenges specified by stakeholders were rooted in resource and funding limitations. One of the primary research aims was to identify any training and upskilling opportunities for front-line advice staff, however, the majority of stakeholders indicated that there were no major training gaps. As mentioned previously, it was felt amongst stakeholders that there are wider systemic issues affecting service provision. Even so, a smaller number of stakeholders commented on the need for more knowledge and training on low carbon heat technologies and smart energy networks.

4.1 Staffing

It was noted by several representatives that issues with staffing have historically been problematic, with services chronically stretched. Currently, staff capacity is based on available funding rather than being matched with service demand. Again, having the staffing capacity to support face-to-face interactions was advocated as being more impactful than telephone interactions.

“we could always have done with more staff (even more so now), but when you are doing your funding bid with more staff you've got to take a leap of faith that you'll get match funding from somewhere else. So I've cut the teams back to three because it is doable to obtain funding” – Energy advice team, Housing Association

Stakeholders also noted that staff turnover is high within fuel poverty and energy advice services. This was deemed a waste of resources, considering the extent of training that is undertaken by new advisors and the cost this bears to organisations.

Stakeholders attributed this, in part, to the nature of the existing funding landscape (Section 4.3). Many grassroots organisations are awarded short-term funding contracts of between 12 to 24 months to fund front-line advice staff. This lack of stability within funding streams imbues a sense of job insecurity, with many staff obtaining alternative work prior to confirmation of new funding, taking vast training and experience with them.

“It affects staff retention as well and because you spend a lot on training, it's a complicated industry and you spend a lot of time training people up and when it gets to three and four months away from when the funding finishes and there's no word yet, people start looking for other work and you're losing a lot of experience. – Fuel poverty service

These comments mirror consumer behaviours surrounding the incapability to prioritise the green agenda owing to financial constraints. Grassroots advice organisations feel that the vast majority of resources are allocated to provide crisis support as a priority, with a smaller resource available to provide any meaningful Net Zero advocacy work. This is particularly apparent with the existing energy crisis.

“Our caseloads too high to begin looking at people's loft insulation.” – Energy advice team, Housing Association

Development officers

A number of participants advocated for the creation of new roles within grassroots organisations to help support delivery. Primarily, the implementation of local development officers who would be solely responsible for monitoring funding calls, applying for funding and managing funding contracts with partners.

“Development officers that each island have got seems a well-tested pathway. To get down to local groups – they are quite empowered to get down and do the work so that would work here (Orkney/ islands).” – Energy advice organisation

4.2 Knowledge gaps

Low carbon heating technologies

One specific area indicated was a lack of information for householders on how to use new heating technologies, for example, air-source heat pumps. Advisors are trained to understand the fundamental theory of how they operate, and the financial and comfort benefits for the householder. However, day-to-day use of controls does not fall within the remit of their advice and as such there is little ongoing support for householders.

Smart energy networks

Survey respondents also commented on a lack of knowledge and confidence discussing subjects surrounding smart energy networks. These organisations noted an increasing interest from communities in the possibilities of local energy networks and community energy. It was suggested that upskilling staff in these topics would be beneficial going forward, considering the significance placed on local generation and heat supply within the future of the wider energy networks, as demonstrated in the Heat Networks (Scotland) Act 2021 and Heat in Buildings Strategy.

Domestic generation and storage were also considered to be areas of little confidence amongst advice staff. Local grassroots organisations commented that there is a reliance on specialist organisations to provide this more technical advice. Survey respondents frequently cited Home Energy Scotland and Local Energy Scotland as referral organisations for technical support for householders.

“Our generalist service is not designed to have specialist knowledge in energy. That is where we rely on the specialisms of organisations with a sole focus on energy issues.” – Energy advice organisation

However, it was felt that these technical gaps shouldn't necessarily be filled by grassroots organisations themselves, as the knowledge already exists within the private sector. Rather, it is about facilitating more joined up working between advisors and tradespeople, removing the onus on householders to act as an intermediary between the two.

Specialist knowledge

It was felt amongst respondents that there is a broad range of topics that are covered by grassroots energy advice teams and that training is already extensive. Organisations feel that their advisors already undergo a steep learning curve, and that channels are available to signpost or refer to more specialist organisations.

“We provide a generalist service to our clients and so enquiries which are technically involved can be difficult to manage. This is when we rely on the organisations providing specialist help and support in these areas” – Energy advice organisation

Some organisations noted that they employ a small number of trained professionals, including mechanical engineers, ecologists, Passivhaus designers, heating experts and trained systems engineers. Organisations employing trained staff are able to provide in-house training, though this was not considered to be the norm amongst the majority of grassroots organisations who rely more on external training, such as City and Guilds qualifications.

4.3 Funding

Barriers associated with funding are not novel and are directly linked to a number of impediments faced by both organisations and householders on the route to Net Zero. A significant shift is needed in the way funds are managed to ensure best value for money and avoid misuse of crucial resources.

Funding landscape

Stakeholders considered existing funding mechanisms to suffer from “short-termism” and not sufficient for the scale and pace of change needed to meet long-term targets. To date, funding has been adequate only for small-scale demonstration projects, and not sufficient for transformative measures. There were additional comments that the piecemeal nature of funding affects the mobilisation of projects which rely on access to multiple sources of funding.

“The funding needs to be better managed. There are lots of small piecemeal projects. The funding should be better thought out, instead of giving to so many pots there should be one energy pot and from there to a central organisation to provide an agreed upon service. That roadmap is lacking.” - Energy advice organisation

Participants found there to be a lack of roadmap, making for a complex funding landscape, with many smaller organisations not able to keep up with the various initiatives on offer. It was recommended that less restrictive funds would be more impactful and would serve to facilitate a more just transition.

It was suggested that community benefit funding should be leveraged for decarbonisation projects for local communities. However, it was highlighted that the organisations who manage these funds (e.g. community councils) predominantly consist of local volunteers who lack the expertise to action large energy projects. Foundation Scotland are currently delivering training for funding panels to help tackle this issue, though more collaboration is also required with the private sector.

“Community benefit funds – they aren’t feeding into this side of things at the moment, and it is a bit of a fragmented landscape considering they target specific local community areas” – Energy project organisation

Funding criteria

Organisations indicated that funding criteria is extremely variable and changes frequently depending on higher-level strategic priorities, rather than being funded based on the needs of consumers.

Time scales within funding contracts were also considered to be too short-term and unachievable considering the existing material bottlenecks affecting supply chains.

“Plus funding is ridiculous - giving people funding but they only have 1 month to spend it is stupid and a waste of tax payers money.” – Energy advice organisation

One interview participant noted that although funding streams close, or criteria change, the needs of householders are less changeable and the requirement for advice services is ever present. There are worries that with the end of funding support a lot of services will also come to an end, leaving householders with less support. This is something already being observed with the end of the Climate Challenge Fund.²⁵

Staffing resource

Organisations are having to commit vast amounts of time and resource into looking and applying for funding. Larger organisations are able to employ dedicated staff members to manage funding applications, an asset which many smaller organisations do not have the capacity to pursue. This leads to a loss of local services because many smaller organisations do not have the resource to obtain the funding they need. Opportunities are available; however, grassroots organisations don't have the capacity to deliver.

Conversely, some organisations felt that funding needs to be more targeted and less ambiguous. It was noted by one interviewee that funding awarded to Local Authorities to tackle fuel poverty is often not utilized to its full potential.

“I feel that some of the money that's going into local authorities to address fuel poverty is going off on tangents and it's not targeted. They got £52,000 that was to be used for fuel vouchers, but they were giving to any social housing tenant regardless of their situation.” – Energy advice team, Housing Association

²⁵ Several organisations contacted as part of this research were no longer in operation, or were operating at a limited capacity, due to the ending of the Climate Challenge Fund.

4.4 Networking

Grassroots organisations do not consider themselves to be in competition, but rather sharing the workload. It is believed that the right number of services exist, though there needs to be a forum or platform for these organisations to help establish partnerships, improve communication, reduce duplication of work and share best practice. This can also serve to provide a centralised location for advice which householders can access.

“What I would say is there needs to be a directory of services available in all areas, so people have the transparency to see what’s available and get the support they need from the right place.” – Energy advice team, Housing Association

It was also noted by a number of participants that the work surrounding climate action hubs²⁶ will help to bring local organisations together, as well as increase awareness of the decarbonisation agenda within communities and individual householders. However, others felt that climate hubs would get in the way of work already being done at a local level.

“We have HES so why not build on it? Get it done that way rather than climate hubs all over the place. They are probably just going to get in the way of people locally trying to do things” – Community energy organisation

4.5 Aftercare

A lack of resource available for continued support following initial enquiries was commented on frequently by participants. This is particularly true in cases where new low-carbon heating or domestic generation systems have been installed.

Focus group participants, who had personal experience with installing new systems, noted that it took them many years to get to grips with the technology even with a relatively substantial existing knowledge. Participants from fuel poverty organisations

²⁶ The Scottish Government is supporting the development of a network of regional community climate action hubs, to provide a strategic regional approach to climate change action. This network of regional hubs will be spread across Scotland. The hubs could help groups develop local plans, take up community funding opportunities, facilitate networking and ensure a joined-up approach is being taken to tackling climate change at a regional level.

noted that there are many repeat callers who use their service due to the gaps in aftercare, putting additional strain on services.

“I find that aftercare is lacking, and I think clients find that too. They have an installer come and put it in who sets the controls for them, and they don’t understand how to change them if they need to. So, their bills are more than they would’ve been when they had a bit more control with their storage heaters. And so, it’s kind of helping them understand the ways they would use controls and giving them the independence to do that themselves.” – Energy advice organisation

4.6 Fabric first approach

A large proportion of respondents commented on the need for a fabric first approach and the requirement to educate householders on the benefits of this approach. It was noted during one focus group session that householders (particularly the able-to-pay market) are attracted to more “exciting” decarbonisation technologies, such as solar PV and battery storage, when the most impactful way of reducing carbon emissions is insulating.

“It should be fabric first all the way and that message is not getting out yet. It’s contradictory as it waffles about decarb of heat as the primary mover, but if you speak to architects, fabric first is the way to go.” – Energy advice organisation

The case for increased funding for windows had been highlighted by several of the respondents. Consumers are very concerned about condensation, and underheating is a common occurrence within fuel poor households. Advisors receive numerous calls regarding funding for windows, and it has been suggested that they should be included within whole-house retrofit programmes.

Supply chain

Participants felt that the supply chain infrastructure to deliver change is lacking. There are almost no qualified retrofit co-ordinators and few companies providing whole house retrofit. What companies exist are working in silos; for example, companies installing heat pumps are not working with companies installing insulation. Examples were provided of organisations and companies south of the border attempting to address this problem of coordination.²⁷ With PAS 2035 it will be

²⁷ [Retrofitworks](#) and [People Powered Retrofit](#)

increasingly more important to consider whole house retrofit and cooperation between sectors.

5. Policy

For the most part, stakeholders felt that the policy itself is well intentioned and fit for purpose, though effective delivery is lacking and doesn't have the necessary momentum. Many organisations indicated that they are having to take action themselves to drive Net Zero strategies forward within their communities without clear direction from Government.

"The Scottish Government's policies are good, but the implementation of them is too slow. That is why we established our community action group on climate change." – Community development organisation

5.1 Understanding and relevance

Consumers

It was noted by stakeholders that most householders aren't interested in policy unless it pertains to funding. Participants within the focus groups felt that the current strategy for engaging householders is not working; the Government are providing funding and incentives for individuals, though with a lack of clear direction, the burden of effort falls largely with householders to do a lot of their own investigation.

Decarbonisation and the pathways to Net Zero are complex and it is felt that individuals cannot be expected to navigate this entirely independently. There has been a failure by central government to take a lead in what individuals are required to do. Comments mirrored those expressed within existing literature.

"The government has got to go out and employ people to go into communities, and proactively reach out to householders and communities. There's no good to provide money, sitting back and hope it will happen, because it won't." – Community development organisation

Organisations

The majority of organisations felt that energy policy does not trickle down through to service delivery. There is an awareness within the organisations of key policies, however, this isn't being translated into anything formally within service provision.

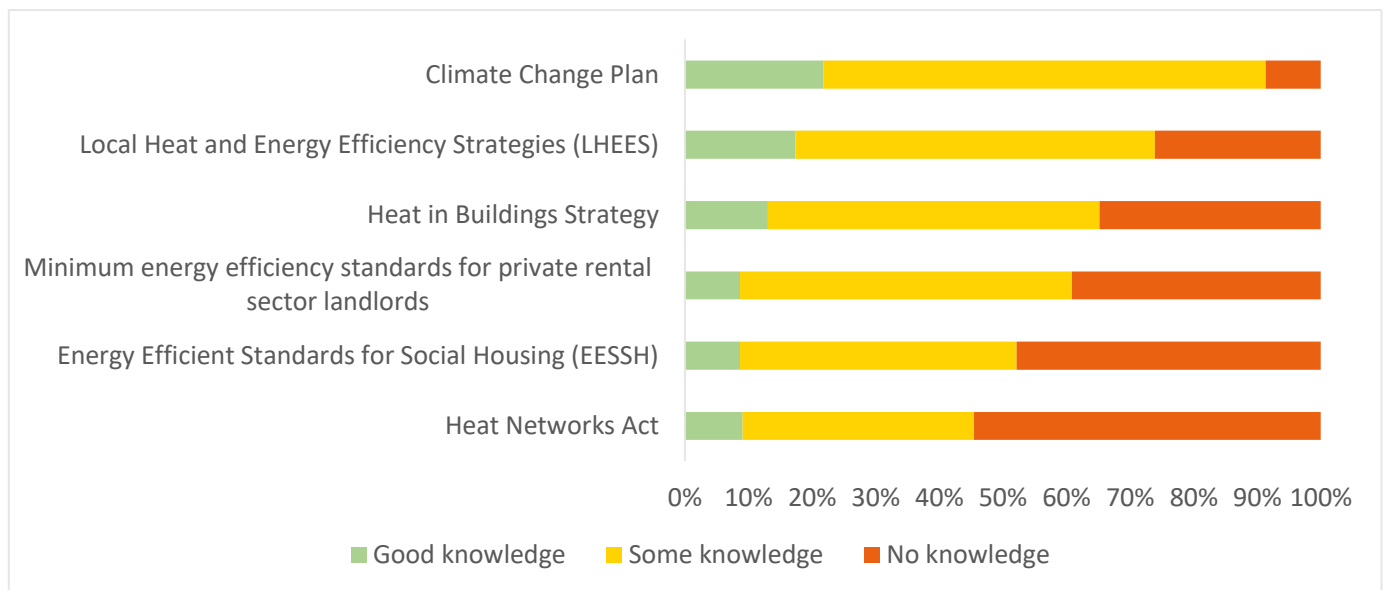


Figure 3: Advice organisations knowledge of key energy policies and strategies

Results from the initial survey (Figure 3) suggest that most organisations have 'some knowledge' of key policies and strategies. Less than 20% of respondents have a 'good knowledge' of any of the policies listed, with higher figures seen for 'no knowledge' across the majority of policies and strategies. Respondents are most knowledgeable about the Climate Change Plan.

It was suggested that the reason for this is a lack of clarity from national governments surrounding how these policies will translate to action "on the ground". It was felt that organisations struggle to translate Scottish Government policies and funding streams into practical solutions to meet their local needs.

"As I said I see a lot of high-level discussions and I think people pat themselves on the back, but there is very little low level follow up. And people don't understand it properly. We are not engaging with the right people. They are talking to policy makers instead of technologists and consumers, they forget the basics. I would like to support them, but I get dismayed because they are not managed properly." – Energy advice organisation

Questions surrounding where the responsibility should fall for driving forward Net Zero policies were polarising amongst focus group attendees. Some believed that action should be driven from the bottom-up, where communities and households have the lived experience to be able to inform and shape top-level strategies.

Conversely, others felt that it should be driven from the top-down, as national bodies have the political impetus and resource to enact more substantial change. A third group felt this should sit somewhere in between and be the responsibility of Local Authorities who have both the local knowledge to inform policy and the consistent resourcing to help deliver it. Many participants highlighted the important role of community-led Local Energy Plans²⁸ (LEPs) in shaping and delivering decarbonisation projects within communities.

5.2 Policy disconnect

A recurrent theme emerged during stakeholder engagement surrounding an apparent disconnect between top level energy strategy and action at the local level. It was suggested that policy makers do not have a sufficient grasp on consumer behaviours and consumer needs to adequately inform policy decisions.

There is also a lack of understanding as to the real scale of fuel poverty and it's impacts on individuals and households. Strategies are considered to be somewhat "out of touch" with what householders are both able and willing to do to reduce their carbon footprints. This disconnect is serving to disenfranchise householders with the Net Zero agenda. Advisors have suggested that governments and Local Authorities are prioritising EPC and energy efficiency data over affordability.

"Prioritizing EPC and EE values over affordability will turn the public off carbon reduction" - Energy advice team, Housing association

²⁸ A community-led Local Energy Plan enables the local community to look at its existing and future energy needs (in terms of power, heat and transport) and state where it sees priorities for action. It also identifies opportunities that can help the community take practical action to support its current and future energy system developments.

Local level planning

Many felt that real change is going to be driven by policy at the local level, and involvement from communities is needed to shape these local strategies. Participants felt there is no “one size fits all” approach and that feeding into LEPs will be more effective than attempting to decipher higher level national strategies.

“Not convinced that a one-size fits all approach will work in areas of fragile grid infrastructure. A whole system approach using alternative low carbon energy vectors may be required” – Community energy organisation

6. Recommendations

Funding

A substantial shift is needed in the way existing funds are managed. There are clear calls for funding to be less restrictive with regards to both criteria and timescales. There are also calls for funding to be consolidated and easier to access, reducing the work burden on organisations and allowing smaller groups, without the resource for dedicated development staff, to access vital funding.

A shift is needed in the way funding criteria are developed, with calls for a more bottom-up approach. It was suggested that criteria be designed with more consideration of the needs of householders and local communities, rather than shaped by the national objectives of the moment.

Funding limitations affecting the provision of aftercare ultimately create additional pressure on services, with householders having to engage multiple times or undergo multiple customer journeys. Resources for aftercare and follow-up should be ‘baked in’ to funding contracts to ensure a complete customer journey, reducing the need for repeat interactions year on year.

Training

Organisations already felt that staff receive adequate training across the broad suite of topics which they discuss. Advisors felt least confident discussing more technical topics, such as flexible tariffs, domestic energy generation and storage and controls for low-carbon heating solutions. Additional training for advice staff on these topics should be provided.

Furthermore, mechanisms should be put into place to encourage cross-sectoral working with supply chains, installers and technical professionals, tapping into the existing knowledge base. This would also help to address the inconsistencies in advice provision amongst organisations.

Staffing

Staff shortages are a direct result of a lack of sufficient funding, with many organisations having to shape staffing capacity around funding criteria and availability as opposed to consumer demand.

Dedicated staff are needed as well as dedicated funds. More resource is needed for staff and volunteers within existing services to alleviate increasing demand pressures, especially considering the current energy crisis. Funding for new posts, such as development officers and local community energy workers, will further help to empower consumers by facilitating community engagement and increasing collaborative working between the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Community empowerment

Throughout stakeholder engagement, it was voiced that communities must be more empowered to help deliver Net Zero projects, with the support of grassroots advice organisations and the private sector.

That said, participants noted that there are mixed opinions from community groups regarding partnerships with the private sector. Some groups want complete control and are willing to upskill members to do this, whereas others are happy for the technical elements to be managed by industry specialists whilst they retain ownership and the financial benefits.

It is also believed that community councils could play an integral role in motivating individuals, though they are often underutilised outside of community benefit work.

Policy

There were calls for increased input at the local level within national policy and strategy development. It was noted that LEPs will be a very important tool to help to deliver a just transition. This was also reflected in the literature, with views that Local Authorities will be increasingly guided by LEPs and the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies. This will also require an increase in energy expertise within Local Authorities, which can then be passed on to consumers²⁹.

The acknowledged policy disconnect is believed to be linked to a lack of awareness and ambivalence from householders towards national policies, who do not feel directly affected. This is further compounded by a lack of momentum in enacting policies. Again, stakeholders believe that enabling action at local policy level will increase momentum and bring policy more into the forefront of people's minds. This

²⁹ Citizens Advice (2020) [Navigating net zero: A framework to give people the confidence to invest in home energy technologies.](#)

could be done through the implementation of local community energy champions or paid community advisors.

6.1 Examples of best practice

Climate Action Hubs

Stakeholders identified existing work on climate hubs to be integral in addressing some of the challenges highlighted within this research. Particularly, the opportunities for increased networking and collaboration with other NGOs and the supply chain to help deliver more tailored and relevant advice for householders, and to ensure a smoother customer journey.

The two pilot climate hubs³⁰ have been beneficial for local volunteer groups who felt that they were taking some of the pressure off services with limited resources. It was also reported these spaces were pivotal in increasing local momentum and community engagement surrounding the Net Zero agenda.

Local Authorities

It is anticipated that cross-sectoral collaboration and pooling of resources will ensure a wider reach to individuals who need the support most.

Argyll and Bute Council facilitate a financial inclusion advice group, including fuel poverty groups, energy advice services and energy action groups from across the Local Authority area. At a recent committee meeting, a sub-group was formed with aims to find out how local fuel poverty and energy advice services can work more effectively together to help those affected by the price cap increase.

In this model, the council are able to use their existing platform to facilitate communication between organisations with complementary objectives.

³⁰ The [North Highlands Climate Hub](#) is managed by Thurso Development Company, and the [North East Scotland Climate Action Network \(NESCAN\)](#) hub is managed by Aberdeenshire Climate action.

7. Conclusion

The overarching aim of this research was to understand what support grassroots organisations will require to empower consumers to take action in the transition to Net Zero. An important element of this was to identify any knowledge deficits that existed within these organisations and explore opportunities for training and upskilling of front-line advice staff.

It was identified that there is a lack of confidence amongst advisors when discussing subjects surrounding smart energy systems, such as flexible tariffs and domestic generation and storage, though this was attributed in part to low demand for this type of advice. Questions were raised as to whether the role of 'technical advisor' should be fulfilled by local advice organisations considering the substantial knowledge pool which already exists within the supply chain. This wealth of knowledge could be accessed through increased collaboration with the private sector via climate hubs or regional energy committees.

With more common enquiries, such as energy bill reduction and access to funding for energy efficiency measures, it is felt that staff are provided adequate training on these. Local advice services are designed to provide a more 'generalised' service, with the channels available to signpost householders to specialised organisations for more in-depth advice.

Discussions with stakeholders served to highlight that the support needed is not as simple as the provision of additional training, and that wider more systemic action is required to mitigate the challenges they face. Organisations feel they are under-resourced and understaffed and implicate the complexity and short-term nature of the existing funding landscape as a fundamental cause.

Moving forward, grassroots organisations are calling for clearer direction from the Scottish Government on what is required by individuals and communities through the transition to Net Zero. The Government should seek to bridge the existing policy disconnect by ensuring participation from local communities by means of LEPs, which can feed into strategies to deliver more meaningful change.

Appendix A: Research Methodology

Literature review

A literature review was conducted to identify any gaps in previous research, avoid repetition and draw upon existing knowledge to inform our research and recommendations.

The literature review also fed into the development of the surveys and topic guides in the following tasks. The search was carried out using academic (Web of Science, Google Scholar and Scopus) and non-academic (Google) search engines.

Survey

An incentivised online survey was prepared based on the research aims and findings from the literature review and distributed using Survey Monkey. The survey was open from February to March 2022 and was emailed to relevant organisations, this collected 30 responses.

Interviews and focus groups

Findings and trends stemming from the literature review and survey were used for the development of the focus group and interviews topic guides. These are included in full in Appendix B.

Three incentivised focus groups were held online via teleconferencing with a total of thirteen participants. Participants were organised into three focus group themes:

- Rural delivery
- Urban delivery
- Project development

Six interviews were subsequently conducted with participants that were not able to make the focus group. Notes and transcripts for these were thematically analysed.

Appendix B: Survey questions and topic guides

1. Online Survey

Organisation info

1. Name of your organisation
2. Where is your organisation based? (Please provide the first half of the post code)
3. Which area(s) does your organisation cover? (Please tick all that apply)
 - a. Urban (large city)
 - b. Urban (small city/town)
 - c. Rural
 - d. Remote rural
 - e. Island
 - f. Other (please specify)
4. Which of the following topics does your organisation provide support with? (Please tick all that apply)
 - a. Low carbon heating
 - b. Home energy efficiency (fabric)
 - c. Energy behaviours
 - d. Domestic energy generation
 - e. Domestic energy storage and flexibility (e.g. Time of use tariffs)
 - f. Community energy
 - g. Sustainable transport (EVs, e-bikes, active travel, etc.)
 - h. Funding support
 - i. Other (Please specify)

Advice provision

5. How regularly do customers get in touch regarding the following topics? (**Never, rarely, sometimes, often**)
 - a. Low carbon heating
 - b. Home energy efficiency (fabric)
 - c. Behaviour change
 - d. Domestic energy generation
 - e. Domestic energy storage and flexibility (e.g. Time of use tariffs)
 - f. Community energy
 - g. Sustainable transport (EVs, e-bikes, active travel, etc.)
 - h. Funding support
6. If you wish, please provide more detail (open)
 - a. **Staff knowledge**

7. Which of the above topics do you feel the most confident discussing? Please add additional information if you wish.
8. Which of the above topics do you feel least confident discussing? Please add additional information if you wish.
9. Where do you feel there are knowledge gaps within your organisation, if any?
10. Are there any topics which your organisation does not cover but which you feel would be beneficial to advise on? (open)

b. Partnerships

11. How does your organisation respond to enquiries outside of your remit? (e.g. referral process/signposting to other sources)
12. What partners/organisations do you make referrals to?
13. Please list any sources of information/websites you regularly signpost to.

Training and Resources

a. Training

14. Please provide any detail on the training your staff receive in relation to the above topics (in-house or external).
15. Are there any areas you feel your organisation would benefit from increased training?

b. Resources

16. Do you feel your organisation has the capacity to provide adequate support to consumers during the transition to Net Zero?
17. If no, what support do you feel your organisation needs to increase capacity?

Policy

a. Awareness of policy

18. Please rate your knowledge of the following policies and strategies: (No knowledge, some knowledge, good knowledge)
 - a. Heat in Buildings Strategy
 - b. Climate Change Plan
 - c. Heat Networks Act
 - d. Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES)
 - e. Energy Efficient Standards for Social Housing (EESH)
 - f. PSL minimum standards

19. If you wish, please provide any further comments on Scottish Government's Net Zero policies and strategies.
20. What do you feel your role is as an organisation in the transition to Net Zero? Please feel free to include information around your organisation's goals and objectives.

2. Interview topic guide

- 1) Can you tell me a bit about your charity/company/role?
 - a. What area(s) do you cover?
 - b. What are your key priorities/areas of focus?
- 2) In what ways do you feel your organisation is helping to facilitate decarbonisation and the Net Zero transition?
- 3) What is your relationship with householders looking to decarbonise?
- 4) What elements of your service do you feel are the most impactful to help address energy efficiency and the fuel poverty crises?
 - a. Are there any areas you feel would be more impactful with the right resource?

Regional differences in Scotland (and regional differences in energy technology, such as off-gas areas.)

- 5) From your experience, are you aware of regional differences of service provision to surrounding or different areas (E.g. On vs off gas, island & remote communities)?
- 6) How does this differ with regards to:
 - a. Advice topics covered
 - b. resource requirements
 - c. engagement

Consumer priorities and experiences

- 7) Can you speak to the current appetite of consumers with regards to decarbonization?
 - a. Again, does this differ regionally or within different markets (able-to-pay, fuel poor etc.)

- 8) What do you feel are consumers key priorities?
 - a. In your experience, have priorities have changed over time or do you feel they may change in the future? In what ways?

- 9) Do you believe there is a good enough understanding by consumers surrounding the Net Zero agenda itself?
 - a. Are you able to speak to the current level of awareness of consumers with regards to the **change required** to meet Net Zero?

Existing and anticipated challenges faced by their organisation

- 10) In your experience, what are the main limitations affecting service provision?
Prompts:
 - Resource
 - Funding
 - Staff
 - Engagement

- 11) Are there any particular skills which you feel you are lacking or are lacking within the wider organisation?

Support needed

- 12) What are your experiences of receiving suitable support from:
 - a. Local government
 - b. National government

- 13) Do you have any comments on the existing funding landscape? (Prompts: cycle, reporting requirements, coordination of funds, Ease of application process)
 - a. How does it impact your work?
 - b. Is it fit for purpose? And if not, what needs to change?

The future of advice and what role grassroots organisations will fill.

- 14) Can you speak to your position within the wider network? (what organisations do you work closely with, what is your role compared with others i.e. facilitator, advisor etc.)

- 15) Are there areas of advice and support which are not covered by existing services in your area?
 - a. What implications does that have on the consumer?
 - b. Do you see yourself filling this gap? If not, what might be needed instead?

- 16) Alternatively, do you feel there is there any duplication of work amongst local organisations?
 - a. How do services overlap and interact during customer journeys?

Policy

- 17) What is your awareness of key Net Zero policies and strategies? (*give examples if needed*)
- a. Can you speak to the awareness within the wider organisation?
- 18) Do these policies/strategies directly affect your work?
- a. If yes, how?
 - b. If not, why not?
- 19) Do you feel current policies/strategies are adequate to help meet Net Zero targets?
- a. Are there any policies you feel are hindering progress?

3. Focus group topic guide

1. Consumer motivations

- What is the appetite of consumers surrounding the Net Zero agenda?
 - o What are the main drivers for consumers?
- Are consumer motivations changing and (if yes) what is your organisation doing to keep up with this change?
- What do you think will be the most effective way to engage and support customers through the transition – What, in your experience, is the most impactful strategy?
 - o **Prompt: is it provision of advice, providing access to funding, education events, community engagement, all of the above etc.**

2. Knowledge & Resource gaps

- What areas of advice/support do you feel are going to be most important for consumers throughout the transition and into the future?
 - o Do you think staff are adequately trained to discuss these?
 - o Where do you feel advisors and customer-facing staff could benefit from increased training, with regards to keeping up with relevant advice/support?
- What are the existing resource limitations which hinder your ability to support customers?
 - o **Prompts: staffing, funding, experience... any additional barriers?**
- What additional resources do you feel grassroots orgs need to support customers?
- Where should this support and additional resource come from? – are you aware of any untapped/novel avenues of support?

3. Rural challenges

- What challenges do you face which are specific to rural areas?
 - **Prompt: Supply chain, technical expertise, specialist advice etc.**
- Are services sufficient in your area or do you think there are gaps in advice and support?
- How do you think services in rural areas could be improved?
 - **Prompt: partnership working, referrals processes, more services, specialist training, better engagement strategies...**

4. Policy

- How relevant are national policies and strategies to your work? **(Give examples if needed: HIB, Net Zero etc.)**
- Do you feel adequately supported by these strategies/policies?
- Where do you feel policy changes could help/support your organisations' objectives?