

Title

Energiecoaches – free advice on energy savings

Short description

This project started in Amsterdam in October 2016 and it involves “energy coaches” that provide free advice in people’s homes about energy savings. The goal is to visit 10 000 inhabitants of Amsterdam. This is done in collaboration with an Amsterdam living support point (ASW). Coaches are trained beforehand and they give advice in inhabitants’ homes on how to save energy by interacting differently with lighting and heating and how to simply implement insulation. In addition, a point of attention is safety. This advice and home visit is free, and the saving package that the coach brings contains radiation foil, a draught-strip, letterbox brushes, water saving showerhead and LED lamps. Energy coaches can offer tailored energy saving products from which inhabitants can choose something (with a value of 15 Euros), and they can choose more products against 50% of purchase price.

Topic

Energy efficient housing: Energy saving behaviours

Characteristics (type, level)

Intervention, local

Country/Countries of implementation

The Netherlands

Aims and Objectives

To have energy coaches visit 10 000 Amsterdam inhabitants by 2020.

Target Group

Inhabitants of Amsterdam

Status

Ongoing

Start and Completion dates

This project started in October 2016 and will run until 2020.

Lifestyle and Behavior Change

By getting tailored in-home advice and some free or cheap energy saving products from volunteering energy coaches, people are encouraged to change their energy savings behaviours in the home.

Effects on:

<p>Health and Wellbeing</p>	<p>A point of attention of the energy coach is safety: carbon monoxide detector or smoke detectors can be placed. When saving money due to the energy use reductions, this could create more budgets for other things such as food. The impact on health through this way is mostly indirect. There is no explicit mentioning of paid attention to how to save energy in a healthy way (but the project could be expanded to have energy coaches include health aspects in their advice).</p>
<p>Vulnerable populations</p>	<p>People with lower socio economic status often reside in bigger cities, and are often not reached by mainstream interventions. Using energy coaches from the neighbourhood that give personal advice in the home, may be more effective. By allowing them to save money by saving energy, more budget remains for other important things such as food. Since people with lower incomes often live in poorer quality houses, are at home more often. Especially these groups benefit from advice on how to live more sustainably as it can relieve them from energy poverty. In addition, when people who do not have jobs are used as energy coach volunteers, this can bring them closer to the job market.</p>
<p>Environment</p>	<p>Research by ECN was done on energy poverty and energy coaches (and one of the projects used was in Amsterdam). They concluded that these projects can affect CO₂ reductions due to energy savings.</p>

Initiated and/or implemented by

The municipality of Amsterdam, to speed up sustainability of the city, in cooperation with foundation WOON.

Stakeholders and sectors involved

Wijksteunpunten Wonen and ASW (now fused and called Foundation Woon) together implement the Energiecoach project. Using these local neighbourhood support points, volunteering energy coaches will give inhabitants of Amsterdam energy saving tips and advice.

Financial support

The municipality of Amsterdam.

Evidence-base

Although the target group of the current Energiecoaches project is different from the one studied by ECN, this research is described below because it studied the effects of energy coaches. ECN (Energieonderzoek Centrum Nederland/ Energy research Centre Netherlands) had conducted a study (2015) on the effectiveness of energy coaches among those with energy poverty (households that spend more than a predefined threshold share of their overall consumption expenditure on energy products, usually 10%), using generic monitoring and effect measurements of five local pilots that aimed to reduce energy poverty. Of these pilots, four used coaches that were trained in energy advice, and frequency of visits by this volunteer varied between one to three times. This study aimed to find out to what extent these types of project are effective and what effective elements are. They concluded that projects and campaigns like the pilot projects had an effect on energy use of households, resulting in energy savings, lower energy bills and CO₂ reduction. In addition, job-seeking persons can be trained as advisors. However, quality of advice, good math examples, experienced coaches, multiple visits, intrinsic motivation finding, and giving clear information about the advice after the visits were found to be success factors. Based on subjective recall data by participants, the amount of energy savings were calculated. They concluded that when all households with a low income would get improved advices, they could potentially save 70 to 130 Euros per year (ECN, 2017).

Main activities

Coaches are trained beforehand and in inhabitants' homes. They give advice on how to save energy by interacting differently with lighting and heating, how to simply implement insulation. In addition, a point of attention is safety. This advice and home visit is free, and the saving package that the coach brings contains radiation foil, a draught-strip, letterbox brushes, a water saving shower head and LED lamps. Inhabitants can choose a selection of the products (with a value of 15 Euros), and they can also choose more products against 50% of purchase price. Afterwards, the coach will send a tailored energy saving plan to the visited inhabitant.

Evaluation

This current project has not been evaluated, but a similar previous project based on the same principles, called 'Besparen met je Buren' that took place years before in Amsterdam, has been evaluated, mainly in terms of how many people received advice. 170 households received support from a volunteer who installed radiation foil, draught-strips, letterbox brushes and or water saving showerheads.

In addition, ECN's study on energy coaches conducted desk research, interviews with project organizations, focus groups with energy coaches on how they experienced the projects, and participating observations during house visits of energy coaches to gain insight in the interaction between personal advice styles of coaches and different households.

Structured telephone interviews were carried out on four out of five projects to ask on experience and rating of the energy advice and whether people changed their behaviours. Also, online surveys were conducted to study satisfaction of households.

Main results

The previous similar project in Amsterdam 'Besparen met je Buren' that took place years before: 170 households received support from a volunteer who installed radiation foil, draught-strips, letterbox brushes and or water saving showerheads. About 180 people took part in group information meetings, received a saving box and advice to quickly, simply save energy and money at home.

Based on earlier projects, the effect of Energiecoaches on energy use is predicted to decrease by about 6% due to the intervention, which would mean 100 to 120 Euros saved per household a year (Feith, 2016).

Key success factors and barriers

Energiecoaches from one's own neighbourhood come to visit your house, and this can be a low threshold to participate compared to large scale information campaigns. The personal approach is a key success factor.

A barrier might be attracting enough volunteers to become energiecoaches.

INHERIT Perspective

This project is a promising INHERIT practice, because people with lower economic status often reside in bigger cities, often not reached by mainstream interventions that inform using pamphlets. Energy coaches from the local neighbourhood, who give personal advice in the home, may be more effective. Saving energy is good for sustainability and allows saving money for other purposes, especially important for lower-income groups. This may also have indirect health effects, besides the health safety advices given by energy coaches. By providing free products and advice, Opportunity, Capability and Motivation are targeted.

More information

<http://www.energiecoach.amsterdam/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=61&v=s5rgpvk92KE

Contact

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