Improving uptake in home visit retrofit programmes

An *Evidence Base* project

Final report, April 2012

Authored by Sally Bremner, Dani Jordan and Ike Omambala

The *Evidence Base* is funded by:

Waterwise Project
Camelford House, 3rd floor
89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7TP
United Kingdom
T: +44 (0)20 3463 2400
E: info@waterwise.org.uk
W: www.waterwise.org.uk

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Home retrofits and home visits are a growing component of the delivery of water savings by water companies. Uptake in water efficiency home visit retrofit projects has varied, ranging from 6% to 60% in the projects included in the *Evidence Base*[1]. This report sets out to better understand the factors that affect uptake in these home visit projects and will review recruitment methods that have been employed both successfully and unsuccessfully in previous programmes.

Methodology

Evidence was initially collected through a literature review. For the purposes of this study material included was:

- From the UK only;
- Focused upon home visit retrofit programmes, where the customer opts in;
- Used a range of methods (both qualitative and quantitative);
- Of suitable quality in terms of robustness and relevance to the research question.

A systematic data gathering process was also undertaken, drawing on available information from previous water efficiency projects, specifically relating to recruitment. The project collated relevant information through the WaterUK Water Efficiency Network, the Waterwise Newsletter, the Waterwise 'Water & People' bulletin and the *Evidence Base* Steering Group, Peer Review Group and Working Groups. Informal discussions were carried out with water efficiency practitioners, within water companies, and consultants as a means of identifying suitable literature. In addition, the UKWIR WR25c database was used to identify other potentially relevant projects.

Telephone interviews were then carried out with individuals that have been closely involved in the recruitment for previous home visit retrofit programmes, providing insight and detail beyond what can be gained from literature. Interviewees were then provided with a summary of the key points discussed during the interviews in order to ensure their views and opinions were accurately recorded.

Findings

Letters – These are generally the first method of contact in a project. In order to increase the likelihood of uptake, the letters should include clear messaging that considers important factors such as the target customer, the time of year and the aims of the project. The letter should also be branded appropriately – including partner logos where applicable. There should also be an easy response method included, such as inclusion of a Freepost reply envelope. The most popular and successful example is a tear-off slip which can simply be posted back by the customer. Follow-up letters should be designed using the same branding to facilitate project recognition; however, the message and format of the letter may be changed in order to attract those customers who did not respond to the first mailing. Response rates are usually increased by promoting it as a limited time offer.

Telephone Calls – Telephone calls should only be used as a follow-up after a letter is sent. Cold calling alone is unlikely to achieve a high uptake rate, partly because the customer may not have heard of the project and so is likely to be unreceptive, but also because many people find cold calls annoying. The timing of the telephone calls is essential; they should

[1] 2011. *Evidence Base* for large-scale water efficiency, phase II final report. Waterwise, London. Available at http://www.waterwise.org.uk/pages/evidence-base.html.

occur shortly after the letter has been sent out as a short time-frame facilitates recognition of the project They should also be made at various times of the day, and at least once in the evening, if necessary, to ensure the highest possible chance of making contact. The staff making the telephone calls should receive training on how to build rapport with the customers to gain trust throughout the conversation.

Door-Knocking – Similar to the way telephone calls are conducted, door-knocking should only be used when following up from an initial letter and should occur shortly after – ideally no later than a week. Areas chosen for door-knocking should be small enough so that staff can knock the same house more than once if necessary. Staff should receive training on how to interact with customers on the doorstep. If partner organisations are involved it may be useful to draw on their staff, particularly staff from housing associations who will often be familiar with an area and its residents.

Combined Methods of Recruitment – Using a combination of recruitment methods helps to increase awareness of the project. It also helps to recruit those who are unlikely to respond to a letter alone. One method of recruitment tends to limit uptake rate, while combining methods tends to increase the overall potential uptake rate.

Implications

How recruitment methods are designed and rolled out is instrumental in achieving a high uptake rate. There is no ideal recruitment package or method that will lead to a successful project. In order to increase the likelihood of successful recruitment, the methods should be tailored as much as possible to the scope and target audience of that project.

Knowledge gaps

There is a need to improve information on effectiveness; information collected for most projects is top line and few details are included. There is little information on the interaction of recruitment methods; for example, it is not known how sending a letter and then following it up with a telephone call affects recruitment compared to following the initial letter up with a reminder letter. It would also be useful to gain a better understanding of segmentation methods and how to use these to target recruitment methods more effectively. Many of the projects outlined in this report mention tailoring literature and approaches to customers; however, there are few details on how this is done. There is also limited evidence about dropout rates for home retrofit projects. It should be noted at what stage of the recruitment process customers drop out[2] of a home visit and this should be documented to help improve future retention strategies.

[2] For this report, 'drop out' is defined as the percentage of customers targeted to take part in a water efficiency project, who signed up for a home visit but did not actually have a home visit (due e.g. to scheduling conflicts).

1 Introduction

For four years Waterwise has been developing the Ev*idence Base for Large-scale Water Efficiency*. The report for Phase I of Waterwise's *Evidence Base* drew on evidence from around twenty water efficiency trials and projects in domestic properties that had been undertaken by water companies in the UK; it was published in October 2008. Phase II of the *Evidence Base* concluded in April 2011 and contributed to the body of evidence that has been built up about both home and school retrofitting. The research programme is now in its third phase; the three-year programme is being funded in its first year by Defra, Ofwat and the Environment Agency.

A key part of the delivery of water savings by water companies is undertaking home retrofits and home visits. Uptake[3] in water efficiency home visit retrofit projects has varied, ranging from 6% to 60% in the projects included in the *Evidence Base*. In projects where a higher level of uptake has been achieved, direct contact methods (e.g. door-knocking) have often been undertaken. In addition, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that uptake varies widely in partnership programmes too, such as with social housing providers and energy companies. There is a need to understand the uncertainty involved in recruiting customers so that this can be taken into account in water company submissions for the Price Reviews and Water Resources Management Plans/Strategy Planning.

Home retrofit projects are run by water companies and other organisations such as local councils in order to promote water efficiency to householders, through providing or installing retrofit products. Achieving the best possible uptake[2] rate in such projects maximises their potential effectiveness, by encouraging the participation of as many as customers as possible. Of particular significance is that uptake is one of the key factors in determining the overall water savings from water efficiency projects.

This report sets out to better understand the factors that affect uptake in these home visit projects and will review recruitment methods that have been employed both successfully and otherwise in previous programmes. It will concentrate on the main methods of recruitment, namely letters, telephone calls and door-knocking, and will investigate how these methods can be more successful. The report will also draw upon key areas for improvement of future home visit projects.

[3] For this report, *uptake* has been defined as the percentage of customers targeted to take part in a water efficiency project, who sign up and then go on to participate in the project.

2 Methodology

This research aims to identify the most effective approaches to recruiting customers for home visit retrofit water efficiency programmes. An initial one page document outlining this research project was submitted to the Evidence Base Steering Group for approval. After this, a methodology was drafted and submitted to the Working Group and Peer Review Group associated with this project and amended where necessary following comments from the groups. This methodology served as guidance for the execution of the project.

The approach involved the following:

Literature Review

A rapid literature review was undertaken, covering published and unpublished reports from water companies and county council-led projects. In addition to reports held by Waterwise, searches were undertaken using the internet, Google Scholar and the UKWIR database. Information was also requested directly from water companies.

The project also requested relevant information through the following groups and publications:

- WaterUK Water Efficiency Network
- Waterwise E-newsletter
- 'Water & People' bulletin
- *Evidence Base* Steering Group and Working Groups

The literature review was initially limited to ten sources that were pertinent to the research question. However, more than ten relevant sources were identified; the maximum number of sources had to be reviewed to ensure that the most significant literature was included. Inclusion within the report was determined by relevance and source quality.
The study aimed to include material that was:

- From the UK only;
- Produced from 2005 onwards;
- Focused upon home visit retrofit programmes, where the customer opts in;
- Uses a range of methods (both qualitative and quantitative);
- Includes both grey and peer reviewed literature from a range of sources: industry, government, regulators, consumer groups, academia; and,
- Of suitable quality in terms of robustness and relevance to the research question.

Information from the literature review was collated using a charting method, with headings to draw out key sections from each document regarding different stages and methods of recruitment. Appendix 1 lists the reports that were included in this study.

Informal discussions were carried out with water efficiency practitioners within water companies, and consultants, as a means of identifying suitable literature. In addition, the UKWIR WR25c database was used to identify other potentially relevant projects.
The qualitative and quantitative data obtained was collated and patterns and common threads in the data were drawn, which contributed to developing the understanding of what makes for successful recruitment in a home visit retrofit programme.

Telephone Interviews

In addition to the literature review, telephone interviews were carried out with selected water efficiency practitioners. The interviews were designed both to gather more detailed information about projects that had been identified through the literature review as well as projects for which reports had not yet been published.

Eight telephone interviews were conducted during December 2011 following the completion of the literature review. However, one of these interviews did not provide pertinent information and thus was disregarded for the purposes of this report. These interviews, which lasted 30 to 60 minutes, were conducted with staff from water companies and other organisations that had been closely involved in the recruitment for previous home visit retrofit programmes. Staff working on projects build up significant knowledge and expertise, enabling an in-depth view of recruiting 'on the ground', and providing insight and detail beyond what can be gained from printed literature.

A shortlist of interviewees was compiled based on the findings of the literature review, as well as existing knowledge of relevant projects for which no documented evidence was available. Preference was given to organisations that: had extensive experience of such projects; had undertaken a project that differed from others in a potentially interesting way; or had undertaken a project that was particularly relevant to this topic but was as yet unreported. From this shortlist the interviewees were selected according to their availability within the project timeline.

A topic guide was developed, and a list of the topics to be covered was sent to the interviewee ahead of the interview. Appendix 2 includes the topic guide that was used for the interviews.[4] The interviewee was also provided with a project description in advance. Each interview was recorded and reviewed. Information from the interviews was charted, drawing out data on methods of recruitment used, evaluation of these recruitment methods and the timings associated with the methods used. Interviewees were asked to reflect on their experiences and thoughts on the potential successes and failures of recruitment approaches used in their projects. They were provided with a summary of the key points following their interview and asked to comment, to ensure that their views and opinions were accurately reflected.

Project Outputs

The aim of the project was to guide recruitment in future home visit retrofit water efficiency projects. Recommendations were outlined, including suggestions to ensure the strength and completeness of collected data. This will enable robust analysis and assessment in the future, as well as helping to fill any gaps in existing knowledge.

Limitations

There was the risk that existing data would not be robust enough for this project, and that data may be inaccessible or indeed non-existent. However, for the most part this was not the case. There were issues surrounding receiving data and project reports from those asked for contributions, in the instances where information was not provided it had to be omitted due to time constraints. Also, in some instances, while information was available regarding a project, it was still ongoing so final evaluation had not yet been carried out.

[4] The interview covered two topics; uptake and recruitment for the purposes of this report, and customer feedback on retrofit products for a second *Evidence Base* project being conducted at the same time.

2.1 Projects used

As a result of the literature review, a number of projects were determined to be of use to this report. Further projects were identified during the interviews, the details of which were given during the interview, and where possible, relevant written reports were later obtained. These projects are listed below in Table 1. The source of information for each project is also noted in the table, indicating whether it has been gathered solely from the literature, through an interview, or via a combination of the two.

Within the body of this report, where information has been gathered during an interview, this is explicitly stated; where this is not the case it can be assumed that information has been taken directly from project reports and literature. This table also indicates some of the main methods of recruitment used in each project alongside other details of the project. Where information is unavailable the table is left blank.

Water Company	Project	Year	Literature/ Interview / Both	Letters?	Telephone Calls?	Door-Knocking?	Advertising?	Other methods used?	Partnerships?	Target audience	Response Rate, %	Uptake Rate, %
Anglian Water	Bits and Bobs	2011	Interview	Yes	No	No	Yes	Local events	No	Ongoing		
Anglian Water	Ipswich Area WEM Trial	2009	Both	Yes	No	No	Yes		No	10,000		10.0
Anglian Water	*Tap into Savings*	2010-2011	Both	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Engagement of local groups, community events, refer a friend scheme.	Yes – Local Council, Housing Association, Waterwise			
Severn Trent Water	*Tap into Savings*	2010-2011	Literature	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Engagement of local groups, community events, refer a friend scheme.	Yes – Local Council and Housing Association, Environment Agency, Waterwise			
Sutton and East Surrey Water	*Tap into Savings*	2010-2011	Both	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Engagement of local groups, community events, refer a friend scheme.	Yes – Local Council, Housing Association, Environment Agency, Waterwise			
Essex & Suffolk Water	H_2eco	2008	Both	Yes	Yes	No	Yes		No	7524	21.0	19.8
Essex & Suffolk Water	H_2eco Phase 2	2008	Both	Yes	Yes	No	Yes		No	7238	20.1	19.8

Water Company	Project	Year	Literature/ Interview / Both	Letters?	Telephone Calls?	Door-Knocking?	Advertising?	Other methods used?	Partnerships?	Target audience	Response Rate, %	Uptake Rate, %
Essex & Suffolk Water	H_2eco Phase 3	2009	Both	Yes	Yes	No	Yes		No	2492	10.8	7.8
Essex & Suffolk Water	H_2eco Phase 4	2009	Both	Yes	Yes	No	Yes		No	7552	13.0	7.9
Essex & Suffolk Water	H_2eco Phase 5	2010-2011	Interview	Yes	Yes	No	Yes		No	15,085	16.4	15.0
Essex & Suffolk Water	H_2eco Phase 6	2011	Interview	Yes	Yes	No	Yes		No	15,587	19.6	19.3
Essex & Suffolk Water	Sustainable Water audits Research	2005-2006	Literature	Yes	Yes	No	No		Used a secondary company to contact customers.	924	20.0	17.7
Kent County Council	Water Savings for Existing Homes	2011	Interview	Yes	No	Yes	No		No	539	-	53.0
South West Water	WaterCare	2007-2010	Both	Yes	Yes	No	No		Used a secondary company to contact customers and be the face of the project.			18.0
South West Water	Water Efficiency Trial	2005-2006	Both	Yes	No	No	No		No	6000	22.0	
Sutton and East Surrey Water	Preston Water Efficiency Initiative	2007-2008	Both	Yes	Yes	No	No	Local events	Yes – Local Council, Housing Association	342		60.0

Water Company	Project	Year	Literature/ Interview / Both	Letters?	Telephone Calls?	Door-Knocking?	Advertising?	Other methods used?	Partnerships?	Target audience	Response Rate, %	Uptake Rate, %
Thames Water	Save Water Swindon	2010-	Interview	Yes	Yes (in Phase 1, not any longer)	Yes (in Phase 1, not any longer)	Yes	Phase 1 – Community events and engagement	Yes – WWF, Waterwise	Ongoing		
United Utilities	Home Audit Project	2008	Literature	Yes	No	No	No		No	4562	11.0	8.0
Veolia Water South East	Lydd Metering	2009	Both	Yes	No	No	No		Yes – local council	1450	17.0	
Wessex Water	Water Efficiency Trial	2008	Literature	No	No	Yes	No		Yes – Housing Association	269 people in 156 flats		45.0
Yorkshire Water	Water Saving Trial	2008	Literature	Yes	No	No	No		No	5000		19.7

Table 1: Projects used in this report and their methods of recruitment.

3 Recruitment Methods

Within the projects identified there were many different approaches to recruitment. The next section (Section 4) presents a more in depth discussion of the factors which may influence the effectiveness of these methods. The focus here is to provide an introduction to the recruitment methods, describing broadly how they are used.

3.1 Letters

Letters were a common element of most trials and projects, often used as the first point of contact to introduce a customer to the project. Recruitment letters are frequently sent as part of a 'pack' which could include leaflets providing further information about the specific project or water efficiency in general. The 'pack' often also includes a freepost return envelope where postal reply is an option. Occasionally, a letter is accompanied by freebies such as a magnet or a tea towel.

The approach to sending letters in projects varied in terms of the number of letters sent in one mailing and the number of mailings carried out in a project, i.e. sending letters to the same customers on more than one occasion. While some prefer to send out a high number in the first instance, others prefer to send out letters to a smaller target audience but with repeated mailings.

The content of the letter is also important. The tone, message, branding and timing of mailings vary depending on the target audience and the particular objectives of the water efficiency project. A discussion of these and other factors affecting letters is included in Section 4.

3.2 Telephone Calls

It was found that telephone calls were used occasionally as a method of recruitment, but it was rare that they were the first point of contact with the customer. More commonly they were employed after initial contact had been made, for example through a letter. The decision to use telephone calls as a method of recruitment, as well as which households could be contacted, was often decided by the availability and accuracy of telephone records.

The way that telephone calls were used varied in terms of the number of attempts made to contact customers. In some instances only one attempt per customer was made while in others multiple calls were made at different times of the day.

External companies were sometimes used to make the calls, utilising recruiters who are trained specifically for this purpose. However, in other instances project staff or in-house call-centres were used. It is common practice for those making telephone calls to use a pre-prepared script. The script usually describes the project and what is on offer to the household before asking them to participate.

Factors such as timing and how telephone calls were used in combination with other recruitment methods are discussed in Section 4.

3.3 Door-Knocking

Door-knocking was used occasionally as a recruitment method in water efficiency projects. It was found that there were several similarities between the use of door-knocking and

telephone calls. For example, door knocking was most commonly employed after initial contact had been made via another method, such as a letter.

The approach to door-knocking also varied in terms of the number of attempts made to contact customers. In some instances only one attempt per customer was made while in others multiple visits were made at different times of the day.

Again, external companies were sometimes used to conduct the door-knocking, utilising trained recruiters. In other instances project staff and volunteers were used. Additionally it is common to provide door-knockers with a script to guide the conversations on the doorstep.

Section 4 includes a discussion about combining door-knocking with other recruitment methods, timing of door-knocking and the quality of contact with the customer.

3.4 Advertising

Advertising is not generally considered to be a recruitment method in itself but it is a tool that can be used alongside other methods to raise the profile of a water efficiency project. Advertising can take a wide variety of forms including bus stop posters, advertorials in local newspapers and airtime on a local radio station. Projects can also be advertised through stalls and participation at local events, helping to raise awareness.

4 Factors Influencing Uptake

These factors are not recruitment methods in their own right but they can have a great effect of the response rate. While this section is not exhaustive, it includes all of the factors mentioned in the reports and interviews performed for the purposes of this study.

4.1 Targeting

The majority of water efficiency projects select a geographical area in which to conduct their activities. This can be a planning zone, a district metering area, whole town, or a district council area. However, a small number of projects have targeted specific types of customer, and in some cases with a specifically tailored package.

For example the WaterCare project run by South West Water focused on customers who had existing affordability issues and who were not able to pay their bills. In this project water efficiency retrofits were offered as part of a suite of debt management options including benefit entitlement checks. A good uptake rate of 18% was achieved by this project (through the standard method of sending out a single mailing, a 10% uptake is generally expected), however it is not possible to conclude that this is a result of the targeted approach alone. There were a number of other factors such as multiple mailings and the use of a professional contractor which make it impossible to distinguish the individual impact of targeting on recruitment success.

During the United Utilities Home Audit Project, aside from selecting by area, customers were also selected due to financial status. It was predicted that those customers who were more financially stable would be interested in taking part in a home retrofit project and activities were targeted at particular socio-economic groups. An uptake rate of 8% was achieved using letters alone, providing little evidence that targeting customers in this way boosts uptake.

There are examples of projects which have targeted customers who live in social housing properties. As part of the Preston Water Efficiency Initiative, Sutton and East Surrey Water worked in partnership with a social housing provider and other partners. The project achieved an uptake of 60%. Similarly, Wessex Water teamed up with a housing association to offer water efficiency home visits to tenants, with door-knocking used as the sole method of recruitment. An uptake rate of 45% was achieved overall. Both the Preston and Wessex Water projects saw very high uptake rates when compared to other water efficiency projects.

One of the reasons for this success may be that social housing tenants are more willing to have a home visit as they are accustomed to maintenance visits from the social housing provider. However these two projects have more in common than simply targeting social housing tenants, they also both made extensive use of door knocking as a recruitment method, as well as working in partnership with the social housing provider. These other factors work alongside the targeting, making it difficult to distinguish the specific impact of targeting on uptake.

From the available literature it is difficult to unpick the impact of targeted recruitment from that of other influencing factors. The recruitment methods used, the package on offer as well as working in partnership all influence uptake rates. The projects involving social housing provide examples of how targeted recruitment, when combined with partnership working and appropriate recruitment methods, can be successful in the right context.

4.2 Follow up Mailings

In many cases, more than one letter will be sent out to each customer in an effort to increase uptake.

As part of Essex & Suffolk Water's Phase 6 of their H_2eco project, a pre-mailer postcard was sent out, which was both project- and water company-branded. Three days later a letter on company headed paper was sent out, explaining the project, its benefits, and details on how to apply. If this letter was unsuccessful then a reminder postcard was sent out three weeks later. This approach, combined with telephone calls, helped the company achieve an uptake rate of 22%. To put this into context, Essex and Suffolk Water would normally expect an uptake rate of 10% after the first mailing.

Similarly, Anglian Water's ongoing Bits and Bobs programme used a number of mailings to each customer. They outlined the different mailing stages in their interview. The first mailing consisted of a standard white letter containing the company logo, coupled with a 'Bits and Bobs' leaflet, showing the different products that the customer can have installed. A second mailing was sent around three months later to those who had not responded so far, with this letter emphasising the limited time period of the programme and also suggesting that neighbours are taking up the offer. A third mailing followed after another three months, this time focusing on environmental impacts and local issues. To date, it has been found that the different messages emphasised in each mailing attract different types of customer (e.g. the money saving messages have proven particularly ineffective in more affluent areas).

Although many projects have utilised follow up mailings, few have collected separate data for each mailing that would enable the benefits of a follow-up mailing to be understood. That said, from the literature available there are two potential benefits of carrying out multiple mailings to each customer. Firstly, the opportunity to contact a customer on multiple occasions may help to remind them to sign up for a home visit, or confirm that a project is still running. Secondly, multiple mailings offer the opportunity to utilise different messaging strategies, providing the chance to appeal to a wider range of customers and potentially encouraging increased uptake rates.

4.3 Message Choice

It was found in several projects that the messaging included in mail outs was a factor thought to influence uptake rate. The message used in a campaign or letter specifically may focus upon one beneficial element of home visit retrofits, such as saving money, avoiding waste or helping the environment, or can combine a number of different messages. While messaging would ideally be tailored to each individual contacted, this is not practical. In the majority of projects reviewed, the messaging used was aimed at the target audience as a whole and the issues that were most likely to be effective in engaging them. There are several examples from the literature of different approaches to message choice.

In the *Save Water Swindon* project, Thames Water used four different types of message in separate mailings in order to examine the effectiveness of each. The first focused upon the water company's obligation (via government) to carry out home visit retrofits, the second on energy savings, the third on financial savings and the fourth on environmental benefits. The response rates resulting from different mailings were described in their interview. It was found that the letters suggesting that the government was forcing the water company's hand resulted in the highest response rate; however the conversion of these responses into actual home visits was lower than for the other messages. Thames Water also changed the message theme of the letters depending on the time of year, with, for example, energy saving letters being more appropriate in the winter. However the impact of this on uptake has yet to be assessed.

Sutton and East Surrey Water (in interview) confirmed the findings of Thames Water, that communicating to customers as to why the water company is undertaking free retrofits in the first place is important. Making customers aware of the role of government targets, even if this is not the primary motivation for the water company, can make customers feel more comfortable about accepting free products and so increase uptake rates.

Findings from the *Tap into Savings* programme also highlight that care should be taken to explain why a home visit retrofit is being offered for free. The results of a number of evaluation activities emphasised the importance of removing any suspicions residents may have about a possible catch with a free offer. In focus groups held with social housing residents, when discussing what messages should be included in a recruitment letter for water efficiency home visit retrofit projects, there was general agreement that they should emphasise that the visit is free and it can result in saving money. So for this particular group of customers at least, it is important to be clear that an offer is free, as well as explain why this is the case.

Both the projects included here by Anglian Water (Bits and Bobs) and Veolia Water South East (Lydd Project) have mentioned in interview that the use of the 'limited period only' message spurred people into responding. It may be that the realisation dawned on customers that it was not an ongoing project, or that it made them feel that they might miss out on something they might regret later. However, no data was available from these projects to help to assess the added value of this approach.

There were a number of different approaches taken to the messages used in letters, but the there is insufficient data available to isolate their specific impact on levels of uptake. It was found to be important make customers aware that a home visit is free of charge but also to allay customers' fears that there may be a catch in accepting free products. Anecdotal evidence suggests that messaging which made it clear to the customer why the project was being done, particularly if this was due to government targets, made customers feel more comfortable about accepting free products. This may be a useful strategy in explaining why home visits are being offered without charge. There was also feedback from two different projects that the use of 'limited period only' messages helped spur customer participation.

4.4 Tone of Letters

In some projects the tone of the letters used was chosen specifically to appeal to a particular type of customer. For example in the Lydd project run by Veolia Water South East, a polite and formal tone was adopted as it was felt that this would be better received by the elderly residents who made up the majority of the target audience.

In the letter sent out to customers as part of Anglian Water's 'Bits and Bobs' project, the water saving devices were referred to as 'whatdoyoumacallits' and other such words aimed to give a more casual feel to their mailings. This approach received a mixed response. Feedback in their interview described that in one area where this tone was used in the letter, an uptake rate of 10% was achieved, which is typically what is expected from a single mailing. In another area, however, complaints were received about the use of 'childish' language.

The exact impact of tone on uptake is not yet clear at this stage, however the review has provided some evidence about the importance of considering the tone of letters. While tone may help persuade customers to participate, it also has the potential to alienate customers, which could adversely affect uptake.

4.5 Reply Options

When sending out a recruitment letter, there were a variety of ways that the customer could respond to show their interest. These included a tear off slip that they posted back, a telephone number they could call, a questionnaire and envelope to post back, a telephone number that they could text details to or a website they could visit.

There is limited evidence promoting any single one of these methods over the others in the reports published, although information gathered through the telephone interviews suggests that the most popular of these were tear-off slips where the customer simply fills in their details and posts it back (usually in a supplied prepaid envelope) to the organiser. This was mentioned through both Anglian Water's Bits and Bobs project and *Tap into Savings*, with the report for the latter noting that this method was a surprise success with a large proportion of requests being made this way.

As part of Phase 5 and 6 of H_2eco, Essex & Suffolk Water recorded data on response method, which is shown in Table 2. In both Phases 5 and 6 of H_2eco customers made use of each of the available response methods, in significant proportions, with the exception of SMS text messages. In Phase 5, applications to participate were secured in fairly equal proportions through the website, by postal reply, by telephone and cold-calling (follow up phone calls to customers). In Phase 6, cold-calling proved to be a very successful method of recruiting customers. 44% of customers were signed up in this way, while the website, postal responses and telephone responses were used to a lesser degree.

Application Method	**Number received in Phase 5 (%)**	**Number received in Phase 6 (%)**
Website	21.3	13.3
Postal	25.6	18.1
Telephone	26.6	23.8
Cold Calling	26.5	44.2
Incoming SMS text message	-	0.6

Table 2: Breakdown of response methods used in Phases 5 and 6 of H_2eco.

The examples here indicate that different customers prefer to respond to invitations to participate in projects in different ways. There is some evidence that replying by post is a favoured option, however it can be concluded that it is prudent to provide customers a number of avenues via which to reply including website, postal reply and telephone. There is also additional value in calling customers who have not yet responded to invitations, in order to boost uptake.

4.6 Working in Partnership

Third parties were also used in different capacities, either for delivery purposes or for joint branding alone. Sometimes joint branding between a water company and a housing association was used to gain the trust of customers. In other projects, such as the WaterCare project by South West Water, a third party contractor was used to contact and set up the home visits. In a number of instances, water companies worked with local councils to help promote their project, even if this was as basic as making sure the council were well informed so that they were able to pass on information to householders should the

opportunity arise. The review of literature and the interviews undertaken have helped to demonstrate that there are benefits to working in partnership in terms of improving uptake.

One example of this is South West Water's WaterCare project. Due to the nature of the scheme, it would have been difficult to undertake this project on their own, due to the distrust of the customers with water-debt issues that they were attempting to target. In their interview, it was described how a third party (i.e. Eaga, now Carillion) was used to manage the project, including contact with customers. South West Water sent out an initial letter to introduce the scheme and the benefits to the customer, contact was then passed over to Eaga to follow up and communicate with the customer from that point. This decision was taken by South West Water because it was deemed the third party contractor would have more success at recruiting customers to the project.

As part of the Preston Water Efficiency Initiative, Sutton and East Surrey Water worked in partnership with Raven Housing Trust (social housing provider) and other organisations. The project achieved an uptake of 60% of customers targeted in social housing, and there is evidence (noted in their interview) that partnership with the social housing provider was important in giving the project increased visibility and credibility with the tenants.

Kent County Council described in their interview how they worked with local community wardens to help promote their project. This was successful as they gave a route in to the local community and also helped to increase word of mouth promotion as well as distributing leaflets for the project. Anglian Water said in their interview that working with local councils on their 'Bits and Bobs' project helped them spread word of the programme and achieve media coverage. The company now works with local organisations wherever possible as this helps achieve a higher uptake rate than the standard 10%.

Thames Water have a number of project partners in their *Save Water Swindon* scheme, including WWF (World Wildlife Fund). It was discussed in their interview that WWF's status as a recognised household brand helped to gain the trust of the customer. Additionally, it was suggested in the interview that this partnership gave more credibility and weight to the environmental messages used.

Working in partnership was crucial for the *Tap into Savings* project. The programme was run in three different regions, with different partnerships set up within each. These included local housing associations, the local council, water companies and the Environment Agency in Coventry and Braintree, combined with the third sector organisations GAP, and Waterwise who co-ordinated the project. Aside from the practical elements of sharing project delivery between a number of partner organisations, it was found that one of the major benefits to working in partnership was the ability to use several logos, which meant a wider appeal to target audiences.

There are numerous examples of water efficiency projects where partnership has been an important component in helping to convince customers to participate. In general, working with several partners can help to recruit customers from a broader target audience. But in addition, the following points were noted:

- A third party may be better placed to appeal to customers to take part in a project.
- Working in partnership with a social housing provider could help give increased visibility and credibility with social housing tenants.
- Working with local councils could help to generate media interest, while additional support to boost uptake can be gained through working with local community wardens.
- Working with environmental NGOs that customers are familiar with may help to give more credibility and weight to environmental messages.

4.7 Use of Logos

The way in which logos are used as part of a water efficiency project is strongly linked with partnership working, which was discussed in the previous section. Organisational logos are often included on project materials, and this review has highlighted that whose logos and where they are used, can be an important factor in helping to convince customers to participate in water efficiency projects.

Many companies sending out letters want the customer to recognise and associate the branding of the literature. While some projects chose to only contain the branding of the water company, as noted in their interview, it was felt in the case of South West Water's WaterCare project that this could hinder uptake. Due to this project being focused on customers who have difficulty paying their bills, water company branding was limited in order to avoid the impression of a debt collection. Their logo was removed from all communications; a 'WaterCare' logo was created using the colours of South West Water so that the link could be made with the company. This was a key step in order to alleviate some of the customers' apprehension.

Thames Water have also discovered that the right use of logos can increase uptake and response rate. Their Save Water Swindon project has gone through a number of phases and due to the splitting up of a whole town into its District Metering Areas (DMA) and have sent out different literature to each zone, in order to compare the uptake rates achievable using different methods. This project is ongoing at the time of writing; however some early findings were described in interview. Specifically, sending out a letter in an envelope branded with all the partner logos included increased recruitment by approximately 1% when compared to sending a plain addressed envelope.

The Lydd trial mailings contained both the logo of the water company and the Kent County Council logo on the letters. In the interview it was suggested that this had little impact on the uptake rate, however others believe that having an associated logo on the letters is usually beneficial, such as the housing association logo when mailing to social housing properties. When Kent County Council ran their own project it was noted in interview that having the local council logo on the literature helped to increase uptake as it was a known and trusted organisation.

Following the *Tap into Savings* project focus groups noted that local partner organisation logos play an important role. The focus group participants were housing association residents and seeing these logos on the letter meant they were more likely to read it. It also made customers more trusting of the project and reassured them that there would be no issues involved in the work being allowed to take place in their homes. Furthermore, it made them less likely to think that it was a marketing tool.

Use of logos is an important factor in helping to build customer trust in water efficiency projects. Whose logos are used and where they are placed is clearly felt to have an impact on recruitment. Where logos of partner organisations are included, there is some evidence that this can help to improve uptake rates compared to the use of no partner logos. The Thames Water evidence is starting to quantify the potential influence of logos, however, there is currently insufficient evidence to fully understand their impact.

4.8 Advertising

As discussed in Section 3.4, advertising is not generally considered to be a recruitment method in itself but it is a tool that can be used alongside other methods to raise the profile of a water efficiency project. A number of projects included in this review have used

advertising in the local areas in order to promote their specific project and some of these are described below.

Thames Water are currently promoting their *Save Water Swindon* project throughout the Swindon area. In the interview it is described how the company has tried to advertise the project to particular DMAs before sending out letters. This way the uptake in a DMA with advertising can be compared to that of one without. The project is ongoing but as of yet there does not seem to be a great deal of difference in uptake rates.

The approach to including advertising in Anglian Water's Bits and Bobs project was discussed as part of their interview. The project used the local councils as a way of advertising their project, as well as placing advertorial in local papers and using billboards. The issue with this was that sometimes the advertisements reached people outside the project area and they have to turn these people away. Where the first mailing was joined by advertising (a half page advert in local newspaper as well as billboards and bus stop posters), a 12% response rate was achieved, slightly higher than the 10% that would usually be expected. It was thought that this was because customers were more aware of the project. To date, the advertising has been used as a recognition tool ahead of letters, door-knocking and telephone calls, making it difficult to pinpoint the impact that additional advertising has overall. Advertisements were also previously used on the radio, however this resulted in very low interest generation and they have decided not to use it again in the future.

In their interview, Essex & Suffolk Water described how they have used bus stop posters as an additional recognition tool on top of their other methods (e.g. branding on installer vans, magnets). They had also branded their installer vans in the H_2eco project. It is believed that this helped to build trust in the brand as well as making it more recognisable. It also helped Essex & Suffolk Water to raise awareness of the project over all six phases of H_2eco. It was suggested that recognition of the project is a vital part of increased uptake by the customer. As such a branded magnet and tea towel are now included in their mail outs, so that customers can remember it when contacted by another method at a later date. It was felt that this helped to drive the project brand into customers' day to day lives, making it more recognisable.

Tap into Savings used posters in all three of their target areas and bus posters in Coventry. There was no evidence to suggest that posters were an effective recruitment tool in themselves, however feedback from project staff suggested that where a resident had heard of *Tap into Savings* from more than one source (e.g. receiving a letter, seeing a poster, seeing a stand at the supermarket), they would be more likely to sign up for a home visit when approached directly. A small number of people rang up to request an appointment stating they had seen the poster on the bus. As with other posters used to promote *Tap into Savings*, the primary usefulness of this poster may have been to provide a different avenue through which residents could learn about the project, adding to its credibility.

This review has highlighted some ways in which advertising can help to make a brand more recognisable to customers. There is evidence that letters sent to customers, in an area in which a local advertising campaign has been run – including an advert in a local newspaper, billboards and bus stop posters, are more successful than letters sent without advertising. It has also been observed that customers proactively sign up to water efficiency projects where they have been made aware of them through advertising. On the other hand, where the impact of radio campaign was evaluated, little change in uptake was discernible. Although there are clear benefits to including advertising in water efficiency projects, there is currently little evidence available to help to understand to what extent advertising can help to improve uptake.

4.9 Quality of Direct Contact

Training or guidance for project staff can help to ensure that when opportunities arise to recruit customers to water efficiency projects, that there is high quality contact. This is a crucial part of ensuring these are rolled out effectively, particularly when a project includes door-knocking and telephone calls.

As part of the Kent County Council Water Savings for Existing Homes project, there was a single installer who, in addition to carrying out home visits, encouraged residents to get their neighbours to sign up. Due to the high quality of his work, and his polite demeanour, he became well known in the project area, which helped to build trust. This project achieved a 90% uptake rate from door-knocking where customers were at home. This is an example of high quality direct contact with customers leading to improved uptake for a water efficiency project.

The *Tap into Savings* project used both telephone and door-knocking recruitment activities flexibly. Initially, a loose script was used in order to aid new recruiters, helping them to guide the conversation and providing information in response to frequently asked questions. Recruiters were trained on motivators and barriers so that bespoke approaches could be developed for each type of person encountered.

The recruiters were encouraged to find the style that worked best from them, as well as to provide feedback about what they found worked well or questions that were encountered – this feedback was then built into the training for new recruiters to make the activity more successful each time and increase uptake. Essex & Suffolk Water also described in the interview how call centre staff have scripts designed as flow charts so that they are able to deal with a variety of responses by the customer.

Findings from the *Tap into Savings* project also suggest that the correct selection of staff is vital for a project where direct recruitment is required, such as door-knocking and telephone calls. While knowledge of the project and its components is essential, it is not the only thing that customers respond to. It may not be realistic to expect all recruiters to be able to build a rapport with every customer they meet. However, clear guidance or training can help to ensure that they can explain to customers why the project is being run, which elements of the project that might appeal to them and to be able to talk about the project with energy and enthusiasm.

4.10 Scheduling Recruitment Activities

The literature review and interviews have helped to highlight that the timing of contact with a customer is an important factor in determining uptake rates from water efficiency projects.

In their interview Essex & Suffolk Water explained that a postcard was initially sent out and then followed up with a letter three days later – while the postcard was fresh in the customer's mind. Over the period that the mailings were taking place, ambient advertising and press releases were used to try to ensure that the project brand would be recognisable to customers when they were contacted. Two or three weeks later customers were sent a reminder postcard, after which the household was telephoned up to three times at different times of the day.

Similarly, Sutton and East Surrey Water mentioned that they sent out their introductory letter and then followed up approximately three weeks later with a postcard. This was then followed up a further three months later with door-knocking. Anglian Water chose to separate their mailings for Bits and Bobs by three months. Although the final results from

Bits and Bobs are not yet available, the extended waiting time between mailings was one of the reasons used to explain the fact that slightly lower response rate achieved compared to other projects.

In H_2eco Phases 3 and 4, Essex & Suffolk Water introduced a Water Savers Report. This was a personalised report sent to the customer based on the information they provided in workbooks that customers filled out prior to confirming their participation in the project. However it was mentioned in their interview that although this was a good idea, in retrospect it resulted in lower take up (circa 7-10% as opposed to 20% in Phases 1, 2, 5 and 6) as it introduced another step and also more time between customer indicating they want to take part and the audit.

Another example of the importance of timing of recruitment methods is South West Water's WaterCare project. WaterCare focused on persistence with their customers as it was most appropriate to their demographic (customers with water bill arrears). The recruitment process consisted of sending out a first letter which was followed up with telephone calls immediately afterwards, at three different times of the day. If these phone calls were unsuccessful then a pre-paid response letter was sent out, if there was no response to this another letter followed three to four weeks later, and then a final letter followed three to four weeks after that. If there was still no response then the customer had to be placed back into the debt management scheme. In some instances, their customers were in very difficult situations and were not ready to try and sort out their debt issues. South West Water found that some customers were contacted them months down the line when they were ready, having remembered the project from the numerous mailings.

The evidence from the review indicates two key points when considering timing of contact with customers with a view to improving uptake. Firstly the timing of follow up letters and phone calls is best planned soon after after the initial contact rather than weeks after making first contact. The second point is that where a project is focusing on a specific type of customer (e.g. customers with debt issues) persisting with the recruitment phase of projects over a long period of time, which may involve continuing to contact customers two to three months after initial contact was made, gives customers who are not ready to sign up multiple opportunities to accept the offer.

4.10.1 Timing of Posting

The time of year, as well as specific local circumstances, can all have an impact on recruitment success. The findings from the H_2eco project carried out by Essex and Suffolk Water, studied through the literature review and also through the interview, have provided valuable insight into the importance of timing of mailings.

As part of the Phase 1 of the project, Essex & Suffolk Water posted their initial recruitment letters over the Christmas holiday period, which also happened in *Tap into Savings.* Various problems arose from this, including a delay in the letter and application pack reaching customers but in addition many customers were away from home over this period. This meant a secondary follow up letter was required to boost recruitment.

In Phase 4 of Essex & Suffolk Water's H_2eco project, postal strikes greatly affected the response rate of their initial mail out both delaying the delivery of the letter and the customer's response arriving back with the company. While this could not directly be planned for, it is an instance where having developed a contingency plan for such an event would have been beneficial. In this instance it led to the project being extended and reminder letters being sent out. In the Phase 4 project report Essex & Suffolk Water explain

that in hindsight a better strategy would have been to hand deliver the original 7,541 home survey packs. This also turned out to be a more cost effective in the long term.

The time of year also effects recruitment. The delay in Phase 4 of the H_2eco project led to home retrofits being pushed back to late September, a time where many customers had recently taken a lot of annual leave in order to care for their children over the school summer holidays. If the project had started earlier then appointments could have been made for those days when the parents were at home during these holidays.

The H_2eco project has highlighted the value of planning for letters to be posted in order to take advantage of holiday periods when customers are likely to be more available for home visit appointments. A further useful finding is that contingency planning for occurrences such as strikes or even just achieving a lower than expected uptake should be part of an effective recruitment strategy designed to maximise uptake. In addition to this, it is worth considering hand-delivering letters as part of large-scale mail-outs, which may make recruitment using letters more cost-effective.

5 Other considerations

The three sections below describe elements of the recruitment that do not influence uptake in the same manner as the factors above; in the case of 'Combining Recruitment Methods', this is taking a more strategic view of recruitment, 'Keeping a Good Database' relates to project management, while 'Word of Mouth' is difficult to influence intentionally. However, each is worth considering when planning an effective recruitment strategy, and have been included here.

5.1 Combining Recruitment Methods

While for the purposes of this report recruitment methods have been looked at individually, it is quite rare that a recruitment strategy for a project will only involve sending out a letter without other forms of attempt to contact the customer, whether that is a follow up telephone call, ambient advertising or door-knocking.

It is possible for a single mailing to achieve high enough uptake for a project if sufficient letters are sent out. Yorkshire Water's Water Efficiency Trial, where the aim was to recruit 500 homes, recruited more than this number with a single mailing sent to 5000 homes. In this instance there was no need for any further contact as the level of response exceeded expectation, however, this is not always the case and more often than not further methods are required.

As illustrated in Table 1, several projects use a variety of recruitment methods, the most common being to follow up an initial contact letter with a telephone call. For Essex and Suffolk Water's H_2eco project, this second method of recruitment was essential in achieving the required uptake rate (An uptake rate of 19.3% was achieved in Phase 6). In addition, there is evidence from Phase 6 of Essex and Suffolk Water's that contacting customers by telephone after the initial mailing delivered 44.3% of applications to participate in the project.

The *Tap into Savings* project, run in Anglian Water, Severn Trent Water and Sutton and East Surrey Water's areas, offers more evidence for combining recruitment tools. After a follow up survey was carried out in two of their three target areas, it was found that the most common way respondents heard about the project was via a letter followed by speaking to a recruiter on the doorstep, hearing about the project through a telephone call coming a distant second. It was also noted that a number of customers did not sign up until they had been contacted on more than one occasion, which supports the use of more than one method of recruitment. In the one project area that was not included in this follow up survey question, door-knocking actually accounted for the largest proportion of home visits recruited.

In *Tap into Savings*, the use of promotional methods served to legitimise the project so that the customer was already aware of the project when approached about participating. This increased the success of methods such as telephoning and door-knocking. This position was supported by anecdotal evidence from recruiters, who reported that residents would often say that they had seen a stall or read about the project in their local newspaper.

The discussion about advertising in Section 4.7 provides further evidence to support combining recruitment methods. Advertising is thought to make projects more recognisable to customers hence making other recruitment methods more likely to succeed.

Combining recruitment methods, for example through sending a letter and then following this up with a telephone call has been shown to be a successful approach to improving uptake in water efficiency projects. While the use of a single mailing may be sufficient depending on the recruitment objective, the use of telephone calls and door-knocking can help to boost uptake significantly. Furthermore, employing an advertising campaign can help to make a

brand more recognisable to customers, which facilitates customer recruitment using letters, telephone calls and door-knocking.

5.2 Keeping a Good Database

Some of the evidence gathered within this review has highlighted the importance of good record keeping around project recruitment.

From the beginning of their trials Essex & Suffolk Water used a comprehensive, bespoke database in order to collect and monitor the progress of their recruitment and uptake.

These databases included the ability to:

- Store names, addresses and contact information of all the customers who were eligible to take part in the project
- Store all information provided by the customer
- Record appointment dates and times and store all information obtained from the technicians at the time of the appointment
- Record key dates of when the questionnaires were received and literature sent out
- Record pre, survey and post meter reads

When speaking to Thames Water in interview, they also explained that having a comprehensive database of their target customers was essential when undergoing a successful project and that for all future phases of the *Save Water Swindon* project and all projects going forward, this would be the key part of their recruitment process.

5.3 Word of Mouth

Word of mouth is an important element in encouraging a customer to sign up to a home visit. However, in many projects it was difficult to monitor or promote positive word of mouth, an element that there is generally no control over. Knowing someone who has already been through the process and it being successful for them is almost a stamp of approval for others. It is because of this that word of mouth is generally always encouraged in projects. However, if the project is not run well or the home visit not handled correctly resulting in the customer having a bad experience, it can be quite easy to encourage negative word of mouth.

In the project run by Kent County Council, the use of one installer to take on a lot of the recruitment, via posting letters and door-knocking, increased word of mouth recommendations in the area. In the interview, it was described how as the installer became better known within the community, word spread about the project and others were encouraged to sign up. In one instance, a single home visit led to nine others being booked and undertaken as a result of word of mouth recommendations. It is noted that this project ran slowly over the course of a year so there was time for word of mouth to build up.

Word of mouth promotion also contributed to the success in recruitment as part of South West Water's WaterCare project. As described in the interview, the nature of the project meant there were many customers who were uncertain, or not ready, to take steps towards solving their financial issues, some of whom were reassured by others who had already received a home visit. However, the project offered the customer additional services as incentives to participate in the water efficiency element of the project, such as discussing their benefit entitlements, which were of appreciable monetary value to the customer and may have assisted with peer to peer endorsement.

The *Tap into Savings* project ran a 'refer a friend' scheme in the Coventry area of their project. Many recruits to the project said that they had been informally referred by a friend; however the official scheme had only modest success, of approximately 900 visits that took place, 38 residents were recruited in this way. It was unclear exactly why this was the case. The report suggests one possibility to be that because it was the referee who was rewarded by the scheme, the incentive for the referred friend to actually mention the card and who referred them when booking a home visit may not have been strong enough. The incentives offered included: a washing machine, a year's supply of washing powder, supermarket and high street vouchers and leisure centre memberships.

6 Drop Out

While having a high response rate is essential for a successful project, it does not guarantee the high water savings anticipated. Dropout is a common phenomenon in water efficiency projects. This happens when customers, who initially respond positively to the invitation to have a home visit, do not end up participating in the project. Dropout should be expected in any water efficiency project as a result of changed circumstances or changed minds. The literature review identified a number of examples of drop out occurring and also raised some possible reasons for it.

United Utilities noted in the Home Audit Project report that of the 11% that responded to the letter they sent out, only 77% actually followed on to have the home visit (This is equivalent to a dropout rate of 23%). It is thought that this was down to there being very few plumber appointments available outside of regular working hours.

Kent County Council noted in their interview that those who were recruited by word of mouth or door-knocking, rather than responding to the mailings, often opted to have fewer products installed or were more likely to drop out when arranging a time for the home visit. It is thought that this may be due to them being less keen in the first place and therefore less willing to take part or take a 'risk' on installing a higher number of products. Sutton and East Surrey also commented in interview that the dropout rate from those recruited by door-knocking was much higher than those recruited through mailings. It was suggested that many customers felt pressured when approached at the door and simply agreed to a home visit in order to end the conversation with the recruiter.

Across the *Tap into Savings* programme, dropout rate after recruitment ranged between 16% and 22%. In Merstham/Redhill and the Braintree District the proportion of residents who signed up to have a home visit but did not see it through was higher than anticipated. In both instances, it is suspected that unexpected delays between the initial point of recruitment and the delivery of the home visit were the reason for a large proportion of drops out. In Merstham/Redhill it was not possible to book an appointment time when recruiting via telephone or door-knocking, and it was not always possible to re-contact these residents. The delay in booking a visit resulted in some residents changing their minds. In the Braintree District, requests for home visits resulting from direct mailings exceeded delivery capacity, which meant that wait times for an appointment increased and the delays resulted in residents either forgetting about the appointment that had been booked for them.

It is important to be aware of the risk of dropout when planning a recruitment strategy. The factors that affect uptake discussed in Section 4 can play an important role in helping to minimise drop out:

- the quality of direct contact with the customer (see Section 4.8) which can help to ensure that customers are really engaged with a project and really do intend to participate
- scheduling recruitment activities (see Section 4.9) such that the project is not allowed to slip to the back of customers' minds is one way of trying to prevent drop out.

The examples above show that it is reasonable to expect dropout rates of between 16% and 23% in a water efficiency project. However, it should be possible to improve on this through being aware of the reasons for dropout occurring during the planning phase of a water efficiency project and avoiding common pitfalls.

7 Gaps in Our Knowledge

This section describes the areas of knowledge that need to be improved in order to help stakeholders to produce more effective recruitment strategies for water efficiency projects. It discusses how to improve data collection in future projects.

One of the main difficulties faced by this review has been attempting to disentangle the influence of different recruitment methods and factors which influence them. The water efficiency projects described in this review are all understandably focused on delivering home visits. In order to deliver the highest possible number of home visits, many used multiple recruitment methods, often in unison, to achieve a good uptake. However, in order to really start to unpick the influence of different recruitment techniques, and the subtle variations in each, the different methods would need to be used in isolation. Clearly this is an area where further research, specifically designed to examine the impact of different factors on uptake rates would be useful. This type of research could be bolted on to water efficiency projects which are planned or currently taking place.

The following describes gaps in our knowledge which have been highlighted through this review.

- Improve information on effectiveness. Information collected for most projects is top line and there are few details included. Many of the figures for recruitment of customers deal with an overall response rate, it is rare that these are divided down into the method of recruitment, i.e. initial letter yielded a 10% response rate, telephone calls attracted a further 7%, a second phase of letters led to another 5% of customers recruited. The total sum of recruitment tends to be drawn together, making it difficult to pinpoint where uptake was most successful. While it may be the case that this data is being held in a project, it is very rare that this information is evaluated or documented.

- With reference to the above, there is little information on the interaction of recruitment packages. For example, how well sending out a letter and then following up with a telephone call affects recruitment compared to sending out a letter followed by sending out a reminder letter. Having this information would allow the comparison of which recruitment methods work best together and which can stand alone, it will also allow the identification of methods that perhaps should not be used in conjunction or in a particular order.

- Methods of categorising customers to use when targeting. Many methods described in the projects outlined in this report mention tailoring literature and approaches to categorised customers however there are very few details on how this is done. More work is required to understand how useful it is to tailor recruitment methods to particular customer or property characteristics.

- There is very little evidence surrounding the dropout rates for home retrofit projects. It should be noted at what stage of the recruitment process a customer drops out.[5] Documenting this will help improve retention strategies in the future.

- It would be beneficial to have an understanding of the customer perspective in terms of specific barriers to receiving information about home visits, and acting upon them, and their decision making process (e.g. customer preferred method, agent and time to receive information). Taking a customer perspective should be at the centre of future research in this area, in particular, future research should consider a triangulated approach from which comparative analysis of research findings and insights can be conducted to provide robustness.

In order to improve future uptake it is vital that current and future projects are conducted in a way that they collect as much essential data as possible. While not exhaustive, Diagram 1 shows the key areas where this data can be gathered and what information needs to be collected.

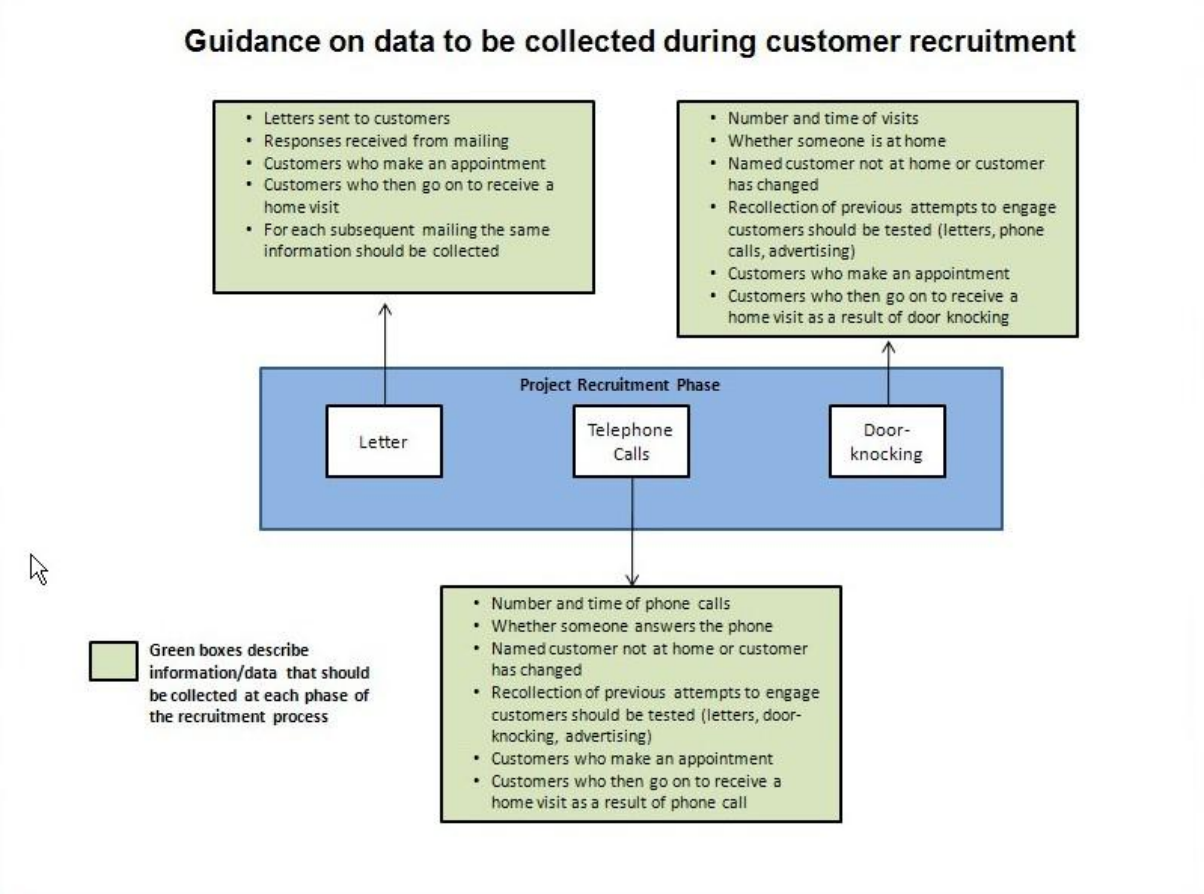

Figure 1. Guidance on data to be collected during customer recruitment

[5] For this report, dropout has been defined as the percentage of customers targeted to take part in a water efficiency project, who signed up for a home visit but did not actually have a home visit (due e.g. to scheduling conflicts).

8 Implications for Future Projects

This report set out to answer the question “What are the most effective approaches to recruiting customers to home visit retrofit water efficiency programmes?”. While any amount of research into this area is unlikely to give rise to a perfect recruitment package that could be rolled out in all circumstances, this report provides suggestions for consideration during project planning in order to increase the likelihood that a recruitment process is successful. These are based on interpretations drawn from the evidence provided.

Prior to starting recruitment for a project, the following questions should be asked:

- Has the target audience been identified? Making sure you have the correct group and the right number of customers needed in order to meet the project objectives.
- While adhering to data protection requirements, have you created a customer database, including known details about each individual target member in order to help both tailor recruitment and to monitor recruitment efforts throughout the course of the project?

In the early stages of setting up a project consider working in partnership with other organisations in order to maximise the impact amongst those the project chooses to target. Especially if there is a set target audience, such as customers in social housing. Much of the evidence reviewed for this report suggests that working in partnership with organisations such as social housing providers and local government can facilitate contact with householders. This is due to customers trusting the information and being more likely to read and respond to an initiative that is associated with a recognised organisation.

8.1 Letters

Letters are the most popular method used by the home visit retrofit projects included in this report. It is the most reliable and cost-effective method used to ensure that the message of the project reaches the customers. However, it is also clear that there are many potential variations that can exist within this method. Sending out letters in the best possible way is key to ensuring the first step of a project is as successful as it can be. While there are other methods available, it is unlikely that either cold calling or ‘cold’ door-knocking where used in isolation, will be as cost effective as they are more labour intensive and often yield lower percentages of recruitment when not coupled with a preliminary introduction to the project.

The key questions to take into consideration when posting a mass letter out to a number of customers are:

1. Have you identified the correct messaging to use in the letter? This will vary depending on who your target group of customers are, the more select the group, the more tailored the letter can become in terms of the message it conveys.

2. Have you decided on the branding and image of the letter? If working in partnership with other companies or organisation, would it be beneficial for their logo included in your letter? Are you making sure that the letter is written so that key information stands out? This is important to gain the customers’ attention and ensure that they do not just skim the letter and throw it away.

3. Have you made sure that it is easy for the customer to send back their response? Evidence suggests that they prefer to post back their reply, so make that simple by including a post back form or a tear off slip and reply envelope. Also, if calling them

back once their response has been received, in order to arrange a home visit, have you requested a daytime telephone number and best time to call? If the reason for requesting the number is explained, it may prompt a higher number of respondents to fill in this section.

4. How in-depth is the project going to be? If a project is run over a short period of time and the aim is to run a low cost initiative which 'skims the surface' of the target audience, then one letter to many people may be the best way of doing this. If the aim is to run a long term project and to carry out more in-depth engagement in a particular area, then sending letters, in isolation, may only attract a limited proportion of customers. In this instance mailings will need to be combined with other, more labour intensive methods such as telephone calls or use of advertising.

5. Are you sending out letters out at the right time for your project? This does not just mean there is a particular time of year that is best for every single project. If a campaign focuses on water savings and the environment, then it may be best to send out letters at the start of summer when it is less likely to be raining every day. If letters are focused on saving money on energy bills through reductions in hot water consumption, this may be a better approach to use in the winter when people are more concerned about their energy use.

6. Are you making your literature and brand memorable? It should be assumed that there will be a high percentage of people who read the letter but do not respond. In order to be able to catch these people at a later stage in the recruitment process it should be ensured that there is something about the letter that is easily remembered. This may involve including a 'freebie' such as the Essex and Suffolk Water magnet, or simply making sure that the company and or initiative logo(s) stand out enough to be easily brought to mind.

Evidence also suggests that all required responses will not be achieved through a single mailing alone and it is sensible to plan for follow up methods of recruitment to be used. The additional tools which could be used include but are not limited to: telephone calls, door-knocking and sending out a follow up/reminder letter.

If a follow up recruitment method of telephone calls or door-knocking is planned, evidence suggests that this should take place within a week of the original invitation letter being sent out. This will help to prevent customers from forgetting the brand. Hearing about the concept a second time should increase the likelihood that they will take up the offer.

There is little information as to what follow-up letters and mailings should look like based on the research performed for this report. It can only be assumed that the letter should serve as a reminder of the project for those who perhaps were interested but did not get around to booking and perhaps include a message notifying the occupant that the visits are available for a limited time only. Others that did not respond were perhaps not interested or didn't trust the scheme. It is inevitable that there will always be a certain percentage of the target audience that cannot be recruited through letters alone.

8.2 Telephoning

If the recruitment phase of the project includes telephone calls then you should consider the following:

1. Do you have all appropriate contact details for the customers? When compiling the database at the beginning of the project, any significant gaps in contact details should be identified and addressed where possible. This could be through hiring staff to

research and complete the details, or via requesting information from customers directly.

2. Are you contacting customers at varying times of the day? If an alternate daytime telephone number is not available for households it may be necessary to try contacting the customer at different times of the day in order to get a response. Keeping records of when call attempts have failed at a household will allow you to select an alternative time window when attempting again.

3. Are your staff trained well enough for them to engage in a one to one conversation with the householder? Project staff should be able to interact well with the customer as opposed to simply reading a script. Anecdotal evidence from the *Tap into Savings* project suggests that those who can hold a personal conversation with the customer are more successful at recruitment.

8.3 Door-Knocking

If your project includes door-knocking then the following should be considered:

1. Where possible, are you using the best people to door-knock? Using installers to perform the door-knocking is a good idea if they are trained properly to do so. This proved successful with both the Kent County Council project and *Tap into Savings*.

2. As with telephone calling, are you sure staff are trained well enough to enable a tailored one to one conversation with the householder? They should be able to interact well with the customer who is more likely to sign up if recruiters are able to build a rapport with them.

8.4 Advertising

While advertising is not enough to recruit on its own, it is worth considering the cost of advertising against the building up of the brand of the initiative. Of methods of advertising, it appears that the use of posters around the local area are the most effective in increasing recognition of a project and are also able to be distributed only in the project area, whereas other methods of advertising can possibly leak out of the target area.

8.5 Data Collection

There is a need to collect more data when running a project. This information will help feed into future recruitment efforts with the intention of helping them become more successful. Suggestions on areas for data collection include, but are not limited to:

- Quantitative data on the response rate given to each individual method of recruitment
- Quantitative data on how methods of recruitment interacted with each other
- Quantitative data on the point of drop out of customers

For each method of recruitment, it would be beneficial to refer to Diagram 1 in this report and attempt to collect as much data as possible at all stages.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 – Reports Included in the Literature Review Study

Report Title	Year Published
Anglian Water Ipswich Area Water Efficiency Trial	2010
Tap into Savings Technical Report	2012
Tap into Savings Final Report	2012
Essex & Suffolk Water H_2eco Final Report	2008
Essex & Suffolk Water H_2eco Phase 2 Final Report	2009
Essex & Suffolk Water H_2eco Phase 3 Pilot Study Final Report	2009
Essex & Suffolk Water H_2eco Phase 4 Final Report	2010
Essex and Suffolk Water Sustainable Water audits Research Final Report	2006
South West Water WaterCare Analysis Final Report	2011
South West Water Water Efficiency Trial Report	2007
Sutton & East Surrey Water Preston Water Efficiency Initiative	2009
United Utilities Home Audit Project	2008
Veolia Water South East Lydd Metering	2012
Wessex Water Water Efficiency Trial	2009
Yorkshire Water Water Saving Trial	2009

9.2 Appendix 2 – Interview Topic Guide

Evidence Base Phase III - Interview topic guide

Introduction – 5 minutes

- Explain the purpose of the interview & how what they say will be used
- Introduce the tape recorder
- Explain about confidentiality and write up of interview prior to publication
- Are there any questions?

Background – 5 minutes

- Could you tell me about your role in your organisation
- Can you tell me about the water efficiency programmes you have been involved with
  - What was your role?
  - How much involvement did you have in delivery of the programme?
  - What about the evaluation (if any)?
- And what kind of programmes were these?

- Self audit / DIY or home visit retrofit
- What was on offer?

Recruitment and Uptake – 25 minutes

- What audience was involved in the programme? Why this audience? How were they selected?
  - Prompt: A specific area, demographic, group etc
- What recruitment methods were used?
  - Prompt: Letters, leaflets, posters, phone calls, advertorials, radio, events, road shows, internet etc
  - details about the wording used, presentation, colours, branding, partnerships etc
  - If multiple methods, in what sequence were they used?
  - What was the timing of the recruitment methods? For example, if there were two letters sent, how long between the two?
  - Did the recruitment method evolve at all?
- How successful or unsuccessful was each method?
  - What overall uptake was achieved?

MAKE SURE ALL METHODS ARE DISCUSSED

  - Precisely what was it about a particular method that made it successful? Prompt: e.g. timing, wording, targeting, colours, partners, staff etc
  - Were some approaches more successful with certain audiences?
- In future, how would you approach recruitment to ensure the best possible uptake?

Customer feedback on products – 25 minutes

- What specific products were used in the programme/s?
  - Why were these particular products chosen?
    - Prompt: Water savings, cost, previous feedback
- How did you go about collecting feedback from customers about the products?
  - Method
    - Prompt: Survey (postal, phone, internet), interviews, focus groups
    - How long after event?
    - Sample size, proportion of households involved in programme
- What feedback did you receive?
  - What products did customers like?
    - Why did they like the product? Precisely?
    - Prompt: look, water saving, money saving
  - What products did customers not like?
    - Why did they not like the product? Exactly why...
    - Prompts: complaints, removals, replacements

MAKE SURE ALL PRODUCTS ARE DISCUSSED

- In future, what products would you choose? What is the reason for this?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank interviewee and close

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