

Understanding potential users of smarter heating controls

Findings from qualitative research

Presented at BEAMA event



What people want from their heating controls: a qualitative study

October 2013 – Final Report

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-people-want-from-theirheating-controls-a-qualitative-study

24 October, 2013



Design and location of controls affect behaviours





Confusion around heating practices

- Keep heating on all the time?
- Turn radiators off in unused rooms?
- Just heat the room you're in?
- Break or unbalance the system?

"I've had the system balanced and I don't want to unbalance it by turning radiators off"





There is a tension between spend and comfort



Need for warmth depends on occupancy and activity



A highly **regular and predictable** household



A highly **irregular and unpredictable** household



Size and perception of space

• Smaller flats more likely to be perceived and used as a single space

Single space

Differentiated space

- Larger homes may include
 - Live space
 - Standby space
 - Dead space
- More interest in heating different spaces at different times
- Perceived hassle
- Worry about forgetting
- Difficulty in achieving comfort





People in the home affect behaviours

Consideration of self versus others influences behaviour



- Multi-person households
 - More likely to consider others
 - Babies and younger children
 - Heating 'conflicts'
 - Teenagers and young adults

"My son came home from football practice and turned the heating on to constant but didn't tell anyone and the heating stayed on all night"

Rationers

"We only put the heating on if the baby is too cold to settle"

- Heating is rationed
- Very limited income
- Very conscious of spend
- Ward off discomfort
- Control heating manually







"If I'm cold I put the heating on"

- Operate according to how feel
- Mostly control heating manually
- Primary concern is for themselves
- Health can be a factor





"If I want it 20 degrees in Winter, I want it 20 degrees in Summer too"

- Don't want to think
- Predictable, regular occupancy
- Happy for programmer control
- May struggle to make changes





Planners

"When our kids stay over Friday night with my parents I set the heating to come on later the next morning"

- Think ahead
- Frequent anticipatory changes
- Helped by 'high visibility'
- Planning can be undermined







"If there's snow outside, I turn up the heating"

- Larger, colder, family homes
- Daytime occupancy
- Some rooms are warmer and some colder
- Unused rooms/ floors
- Struggle to achieve suitable temperatures





Connecting usage to cost was important to users

Rank	Requirement
1	See how much heating is costing you
2	Ability to set different temperatures at different times for different rooms – all from one central panel
3	Understand savings that can be made by making adjustments to settings on the heating controls
4	Ability to remotely turn on heating before returning home
5	Clear and permanent display of times and temperatures set





Zonal control came out strongly

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	2	 all from one central panel 			
Understand savings that can be made by making adjustments to					
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Remote control was also popular

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Matching user types to concepts

		Automated controls	Remote controls	Zonal controls
	Rationers	No Don't want to relinquish control in case it negatively affects spend	Yes	Yes
	Ego- centric	No Don't want heating to consider other household members	Yes	Indifferent
•	Hands off	Yes	No Not interested in adjusting times or temperatures once right	No Not interested in adjusting times or temperatures once right
	Planners	No Have variable routines and like to control heating	Yes	Yes
•	Reactors	No Have variable and often unpredictable routines	Yes	Yes

Could new technology deal with 'wasteful' behaviours?

	Automated controls	Remote controls	Zonal controls
Forgetting E.g. To turn off radiators in guest rooms after guest has left	Yes	No	No
Excessive 'caution' E.g. Heating when away (pipes freezing or pet welfare)	Yes	No	No
Over-heating home E.g. Heat spare rooms; temp higher than needed to 'accelerate' heating	Yes	No	No
Use of auxiliary heaters E.g. Heating an area with electric heater instead of using GCH	No	No	Yes
Non communication E.g. Switching from Auto/ Timer to constant but not telling anyone else	Yes	No	Yes
Leaving heating on when out E.g. Not turning off heating when out, especially if using a timer	Yes	Yes	No
Non fine tuning of timer E.g. When going out or going to bed	Yes	Yes	No



Thank you...

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