



Bristol Community Energy Fund case study:

Awaz Utaoh



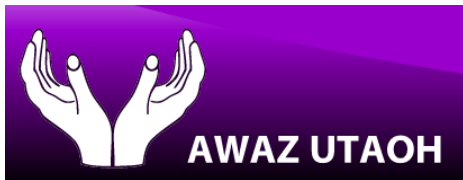
About the group

Awaz Utaoh translates as 'raise your voice' and aims to reduce isolation, disempowerment and victimisation within Bristol's deprived South Asian communities, giving them the skills to deal with issues relevant to their lives and supporting them to participate as active citizens, as well as agents of change in their communities. They tackle key issues of severe and multiple disadvantage such as extreme poverty, mental and physical abuse. They also run a community-led service of multilingual workshops, support groups, case-work, 24-hour phone line and advice sessions. They are based at St Werburghs Community Centre.

About the project

Awaz Utaoh worked with the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) to organise four Energy Awareness Days for older South Asian women. The sessions addressed everyday issues like managing payments, energy suppliers, how to spend less on bills and managing dampness and mould. This was followed by individual questions and answers.

The presentation and fact sheets were translated, which made a huge difference in the understanding of facts, and getting the most out of the sessions. By having a translator on the day and support staff at hand, everybody was made to feel comfortable. The participants were able to actively play a part in the sessions and learn how to keep their houses warm and dry. Reducing bills while benefiting their households and health was a plus! CSE staff delivering sessions were pleasantly



surprised to learn that the women, who could barely speak English, gained so much awareness that they continue to address energy issues outside sessions and have been sharing what they learnt with friends and family.



There have been amazing personal stories from the sessions, but one stands out to Simi Chowdry, of Awaz Utaoh. She explains:

“One of our users had no idea that different electrical items varied in its use of energy and thought that the bill was on an hourly rate for all electrical goods! She was shocked to learn how each single item, ie. heaters, fridge, iron etc. all had different rates of energy consumption. She had her mouth open in disbelief and her hands kept going up in the air in amazement throughout the session. She got so emotional with the CSE trainers, thanking them for teaching her all these new things that will help her and her family”.

Next steps

The Centre for Sustainable Energy has offered to follow up on specific cases (in kind), with translation support from Awaz Utaoh, so the next stage of the project is to seek funding to carry out home visits.

<http://awazutaoh.org.uk>
www.bristolcommunityenergy.co.uk