



Transition Haslemere

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How Haslemere families are learning to reduce their energy use

Transition Haslemere is a community group who are developing responses to the challenges of climate change and long-term sustainability. Among its activities, the group is working with schools and families to improve energy efficiency. As part of this programme, St Bartholomew's Primary School recently agreed to test 10 energy monitors provided by Transition Haslemere. The monitors, which are very simple devices to use, tell you just how much energy your home is using at any time, and the cost of that energy. Ten families volunteered to use the monitors for a month, and as the testimonies below illustrate, the experience of watching the number of kilowatts consumed and the price paid for that energy shoot up as lights and household appliances were switched on, and then drop down as they were turned off, made a big impression on both the children and the adults.

The Farthing family, with three children, Zoe, Jamie and Callum, looked around their home and made a long list of everything that uses electricity. This process was itself useful as it raised awareness of just how dependent they were on electricity. The family identified three main strategies to reduce their energy use: turn lights off; turn things off when they aren't being used; and try to keep clothes clean.

The Lewis household, with two children, Amy and Robyn, were able to see from the change in the monitor reading that they would save energy by turning down their heating by 1 degree, and that when they switched off most of their lights the energy monitor showed that they would save £6 a month. The family has made real changes to the way they behave, "turning our lights off when we

leave the room, turning the TV and printer off when we are not using them, and not putting the heating on so much", the family said.

The Barton family with three children, Camille, Elea and Clara, noticed how the energy reading shot up when appliances such as the dishwasher, the tumble drier and the kettle went on. Turning off lights and the computer also made the reading go down significantly. The family started enjoying evening meals by candlelight; the children were fascinated to watch the energy use go down on the monitor as all the lights went out. Other changes the family made included not overfilling the kettle, only using the drier when really needed and completely shutting down, and turning off computers, the TV and lights when not being used.

By displaying the actual kilowatt figures, the monitors showed clearly how each action, such as turning on a light, boiling a kettle or switching on the TV, used energy and how much that energy cost. The children in particular felt empowered by the devices, as they were able to see that they could help the family reduce the energy they used. The children and adults observed that they started to think and act differently about the energy they consumed. They saw the evidence that they could make a real difference by making small changes in the way they used the electricity in their homes, behaviour changes that required relatively little actual effort, but a lot more thought and awareness. The challenge now for these families is to continue to stay energy aware.

For more information about how to borrow an energy monitor or about Transition Haslemere email transitiontown@haslemere.com or see www.transitionhaslemere.org