

# ADEPT President's Awards 2023

Entry form

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<b>Award category</b>	Shaping Places for People
<b>Project Title</b>	Somerset Safe & Warm
<b>Local authority entrant</b>	Somerset Council
<b>Partner/s if applicable</b>	Centre for Sustainable Energy, Bruton, Frome and Glastonbury Town Councils, Somerset Climate Action Network.

## Headline summary (150 characters max.)

Somerset Safe and Warm helps people at risk of fuel poverty to find advice and funding to keep them comfortable and well at an affordable cost.

## Shaping places for people: How was this project an innovative response to a significant concern? (150 words max.)

Somerset Safe and Warm was set up by the four district councils in Somerset (a unitary authority since April 2023), working in partnership with a delivery partner - Somerset Independence Plus - and the Centre for Sustainable Energy. It provides an end-to-end, wrap-around service that enables people living in any kind of housing to access the advice, support and funding they need to make affordable, appropriate retrofit interventions in their homes to achieve greater thermal comfort, improvements in their health and wellbeing, carbon reductions and fuel bill savings. The project includes the Somerset Retrofit Accelerator - a one year programme funded from the Community Renewal Fund - which ensured that retrofit advice was complemented by qualified retrofit co-ordinators and contractors. The project's success is partly due to the community networks it's created to promote retrofit at a local level through workshops, trained volunteer 'village agents' and leaflet drops.

## Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the quality of outcomes obtained from the project (for example improved/more efficient services, increased inclusivity for residents, futureproofing the service). (150 words max.)

The project team has secured £11m worth of funding from various sources, including HUGS and LADS, to deliver retrofit interventions in some 3,000 homes, generating over £800,000 worth of energy bill savings. In addition, the project has delivered some 52 Futureproof home energy advice plans and supported the qualification and training of 29 Futureproof accredited contractors. The Somerset Retrofit Accelerator has also produced a Green Directory to signpost home owners to qualified contractors capable of delivering home improvements. Works have been carried out on homes in the social rented sector, the private sector and to owner occupied homes. Residents from all sectors have reported increased understanding of retrofit, energy use and carbon reduction, greater confidence in dealing with suppliers, better understanding of how to use their heating and hot water controls, an improvement in the warmth of their homes, a reduction in their fuel costs and better health and wellbeing.

**Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of collaboration between place and people services (both within the council and with external partners/providers). (150 words max.)**

The schemes operating under the project umbrella combine to offer advice on energy efficiency and fuel bill reduction, advice on sources of funding, direct delivery of home improvements and home visits to help people understand how to make best use of both the 'old' and 'new' systems within their homes. The chain of people involved in this work includes advisors, surveyors, works planners, funders, contractors and, when appropriate, specialist advocates to assist with works on the homes of those with specific vulnerabilities.

Linking all of the various agencies and actors in this space through the project has enabled it to ensure that all people, regardless of the kind of housing they occupy, are able to receive targeted help and advice to increase the comfort of their homes, manage their energy consumption, reduce their fuel bills and improve their health and wellbeing.

**Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of buy-in to the project or its goals from members of the local community, health and social care and external organisations. (150 words max.)**

Residents report increased understanding of energy use/carbon reduction, greater confidence in dealing with suppliers, better understanding of how to use heating and hot water controls, warmer homes, reduced fuel costs and better health and wellbeing.

The latest tranche of funding for the scheme came from the Public Health budget as a response to the health and wellbeing improvements seen in those who'd benefitted from retrofit surveys and works.

The scheme has trained local volunteers as 'village agents' in rural areas, to promote this work. House-to-house leaflet drops and workshops have provided advice to some 2261 people, 114 of whom have been referred to other agencies. Referrals include signposting to mental health service, debt counselling, energy discounts and grants, food banks and many other forms of support.

Some home owners have taken part in 'Green Home' webinars to showcase the works they've had done and the benefits that have accrued.

**Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the use or consideration of new sources of investment to fund projects. (150 words max.)**

This year, the project team has secured £75,000 worth of new funding from the MCS Foundation. This has enabled it to engage a project manager to create a sustainable, funded business plan for this work. The remit includes gathering housing stock data to identify those homes most in need of works and identifying the best way of overcoming existing, known barriers to accelerating this work.

In addition, the team is using some of its capital budget to create two new show homes within the county. Sited in different towns, the showhomes will include external wall insulation, roof insulation, replacement doors and windows, air source heat pumps, solar PV for heating and hot water and party wall insulation. The homes will be used to continue to promote retrofit across the communities the council serves and give people the confidence to go ahead and commission their own interventions.