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News Release

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Households given expert advice in bid to be energy smart

Scores of residents in and around Edinburgh are set to benefit from free insight and advice on their energy use, as part of a smart technology research initiative.

Sensor technology that helps consumers to use less gas and electricity – and potentially save on energy bills – has already been successfully installed in 100 homes under the research initiative from the University of Edinburgh and Changeworks.

Organisers are now seeking a further 150 households from Edinburgh and the Lothians to take part in the scheme, known as IDEAL – Intelligent Domestic Energy Advice Loop.

Participants have discreet sensors fitted throughout their homes, which track how much gas or electricity is used, as well as, room by room, the temperature and humidity.

The system gives feedback to help households find convenient ways to save energy, and participants are provided with a tablet to track their usage.

Scientists will use powerful computers to analyse large volumes of data from the study, to inform the development of sophisticated smart meters. These could track energy use in detail, offering personalised insights into how electricity and gas use might be reduced.

To participate, volunteers should live in Edinburgh or the Lothians in postcode areas EH1–EH55. They must have broadband, a combi boiler and mains gas supply.

Helen and Mark, from Leith, took part in an early trial of the project. Mark said: “We had a hand-sized sensor fitted in each room and soon forgot they were there. We were surprised by some of the findings. It was really interesting to see what pushed up our bills.”

To find out more and become a participant, see changeworks.org.uk/projects/ideal, email IDEAL@changeworks.org.uk or call 0131 539 8610.

Drew Murphy, IDEAL project manager from Changeworks, said: “Smart technology allows participating households to see, in pounds and pence, how much gas and electricity they are using. Project findings will inform how we can use technologies, such as smart meters, to enable households to make changes in how they use gas and electricity to lower their energy use and bills.”

Ranked among the top universities in the world

Dr Martin Pullinger, of the University of Edinburgh's School of Informatics, said: "With support from volunteers across Edinburgh, we hope to inform the design of smart meters that could offer personalised, itemised details of gas and electricity use, helping to lower consumption, reduce household bills and cut carbon emissions."

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