

Module 3 – Prepare for Energy Assessments

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INTRODUCTION TO MODULE 3

This module covers the competencies required to comply with Unit 3 of the National Occupational Standards for Domestic Energy Assessors entitled "**Prepare for energy assessments**".

Before leaving the office to undertake an energy assessment inspection, the Domestic Energy Assessor needs to ensure that instructions have been received and acknowledged correctly. A fee needs to be agreed and terms and conditions for the service need confirming with the client.

The DEA needs to plan the journey, agree access arrangements and prepare inspection materials. Instruction sources will need to be kept informed of progress.

By undertaking research about the property and the circumstances of the inspection, the DEA can plan accordingly and partially complete a risk assessment for the inspection.

Finally, a client may request sample Energy Performance Certificates on a block of similar properties. The DEA will need to identify if sampling is an appropriate technique and determine the size and composition of the sample.

Disclaimer

This information contained in these training materials was correct at the time of printing. However domestic energy assessment is an emerging field subject to rapid change, and further regulation, as such PTS has endeavoured to provide up to date information based the published national occupational standards.

Section 1 Terms and Conditions

This section covers procedures for agreeing fees and for confirming other contractual terms for the service.

1.01 Agreeing Fees

As mentioned in earlier modules, it is anticipated that HIP providers will have ties to estate agency chains and that they will be the main source of instructions via panel managers. It is the panel manager's job to distribute instructions to DEAs, to monitor service and to make the fee payments on the pack provider's behalf.

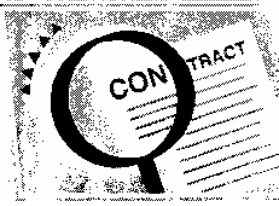
Fees from panel managers are likely to be paid subject to a standard scale. DEAs will not have the ability to quote fees tailored to the complexity of the job in these circumstances, but will gain from certainty of supply and certainty of payment. They will be trading on a business to business basis, rather than with individual customers.

Some panel managers may seek reductions in fees in return for commitments to bulk supply and DEAs will need to weigh up the commercial advantages of such arrangements.

Some independent estate agents may decide to put their own HIPs together and individual home owners may even commission EPCs privately. These smaller clients will provide the opportunity for the DEA to quote individual fees and several factors will need to be considered when deciding how much to quote:

- **Anticipated difficulty** - large properties with several storeys and extensions will take longer to inspect and calculating perimeters/areas will take longer
- **Traveling costs** - unless mileage rates are to be charged (which is unlikely to be commercially feasible) more distant properties will incur higher cost and lost time
- **Current workloads** - if a DEA is fully booked, any additional job will have to be accommodated in overtime if it is to be returned within tight timescales
- **Goodwill** - regular clients need to be serviced at competitive fees to obtain return business, but one-off clients can be quoted higher speculative fees

1.02 Terms and Conditions Procedure



Terms and conditions for the EPC, which include the fee and other contractual terms, will need to be agreed and confirmed in writing prior to proceeding.

It is likely that large pack providers will tie the terms and conditions for the EPC into general HIP contracts and DEAs will be able to rely on these systems for ensuring that the ultimate client has signed the contract. In these circumstances, the DEA will not need to send out independent terms and condition letters for signature and return.

For the independent clients it will be necessary to send out terms and conditions letters. DEAs will need to devise systems for recording the outgoing letter and safe receipt of the signed acceptance, before the EPC can be released.

If DEAs are using systems such as Quest or XIT2 they will find that these incorporate fail-safe processes for dealing with terms and condition acceptance and fee accounting.

1.03 Terms and Condition Content

It is expected that the Government will publish standard terms for the EPC contract, as this is a document subject to statutory control. If these are not forthcoming, DEAs will need to draw up their own terms and conditions with advice from their lawyers. The terms will need to include:

- Confirmation of who is the client and the source of instructions
- Confirmation of fees to be paid
- Timescales for delivery of the EPC
- The extent of the service, particularly the inability to comment about condition
- The limitations of the inspection
- The limitations of liability accepted by the assessor, i.e. which parties can rely on the report
- The assumptions that the assessor make, e.g. about construction and heating appliances
- The reliance that will be made on information provided to the assessor
- The data protection notification confirming what data will be held and for what purpose it will be held

An example of a letter to a home owner confirming inspection arrangements and terms and conditions is provided on the following page.

A1 Energy Assessors

A1 House, High Street, Main Town, PC1 3ZZ
Tel: 12345 678678 Fax: 12345 678789
Email: a1energy@internet.co.uk

Mr and Mrs Bennett

23 Portway Avenue Anytown
PCS 7LX

Our Ref: PT/DMS/4824

15 January 2009

Dear Mr and Mrs Bennett

Energy Performance Certificate - 23 Portway Avenue, Anytown, PCS 7LX

Further to my telephone conversation with Mrs Bennett today, I write to confirm that an appointment has been made for our assessor to inspect the above property on Wednesday 17 January. The assessor is John Finch and he will arrive between 10.00am and 11.00am. All of our assessors carry identification cards

The inspection is likely to take about forty minutes and will require access to all parts of the property, both externally and internally. In particular, the assessor will require access to the central heating boiler, the electricity meter and to all accessible roof voids.

I confirm that a fee of £95 (inclusive of VAT) has been agreed for providing an Energy Performance Certificate. The Certificate this will be sent to you and to your estate agent, Cope and Partners, within two working days of the inspection.

I attach two copies of our terms and conditions for providing this service, which you should read carefully. If you are happy to accept the terms and conditions, please sign and return one copy in the stamped and addressed envelope provided. As I explained, we will not be able to supply the Certificate until your acceptance of the terms and conditions has been received.

I also enclose a brief questionnaire about the property, which will help the assessor prepare for the inspection. I should be grateful if you would complete this and return it with the signed terms and conditions.

Please let me know if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Claire Taylor
Administrative Assistant

A1 Energy Assessors Ltd.
Registered Office: A1 House, High Street, Main Town, PC1 3ZZ.
VAT Number: 123456789

Section 2- Arranging The Inspection

This section covers making an appointment for the inspection, confirming arrangements and updating records.

2.01 Making Efficient Appointments



When arranging inspections, DEAs and their support staff have to achieve a balance between:

Meeting speed of service standards (likely to be a three working day turnaround)

Achieving operating efficiencies, e.g. by grouping inspections geographically to cut down traveling time and cost

Agreeing appointments that do not inconvenience the home owner

Making the most efficient use of time is important to a profitable DEA business and there are techniques for arranging appointments efficiently.

- Traveling time between appointments needs judgment of distance and traffic and this might depend on the time of day. Try to avoid appointments that require traveling into or out of busy towns/areas in rush hours.
- When having to collect keys, remember to add time for collecting and returning the keys. Consider where the estate agent is located in relation to the property.
- Try to avoid being tied to fixed times. Ideally book appointments with open time windows, e.g. **"The assessor will be there sometime in the morning"**. This is often not possible because many home owners will have to take time off work to allow the assessor in. A good compromise is a time window of an hour, e.g. **"The assessor will be there between 10.30 and 11.30"**.
- As a rough rule of thumb, for a compact area, the following time windows might work: first inspection 8.30-9.30, second inspection 9.30-10.30, third inspection 10.30-11.30, etc.
- Some people are reluctant to agree times during working hours, so try to give the impression that the assessor has restricted time slots and that they are lucky to get him/her, e.g. **"The assessor is in your area tomorrow and could fit you in the early afternoon"**

For those home owners who are reluctant to agree a time during the working day, it may be necessary to reach a compromise by offering a first appointment, (around 8.30-9.00) or a late appointment (around 5.00-5.30), so that the home owner doesn't have to take a lot of time off work.

- It can be helpful for the assessor to telephone the home owner at work when he/she is on the way to the property, so that they can then "nip home" from work.
- The possibility of the home owner leaving a key with a neighbour or the estate agents can be explored.
- Asking for a friend or relative to attend can also be suggested if the home owner is reluctant to take time off work.

2.02 Suggested Telephone Scripts



Everyone develops their own preferred style when telephoning to book appointments, but examples of typical scripts might be:

When telephoning estate agents -

"Hello this is XXXX Assessors. We have been instructed by (*give name of instruction source*) to undertake an Energy Performance Certificate on (*give brief property address*). What are the access arrangements please?"

The agent will normally do one of three things

1. Say they have keys, in which case agree a time window for the assessor to collect them.
2. Give you the home owners name and contact numbers for you to phone them directly to make the appointment.
3. Take your details and phone you back after they have spoken to the home owner. This can involve a lot of "toing and froing" before a mutually acceptable time is agreed. It is far better to get the home owners number in order to make an appointment directly.

When telephoning home owners -

"Hello, this is XXX Assessors. We have been asked to undertake an Energy Performance Certificate for your property by (*give name of instruction source*). One of our assessors will be in you area (*give your preferred time*) and I wonder if this will be convenient."

If it is not possible to make telephone contact using the telephone numbers you have been given in the instructions, first contact the instruction source to ask if they have other numbers, e.g. mobile or work numbers. If this proves fruitless it will be necessary to write a brief letter to the home owner asking them to contact your office by telephone to make an appointment.

An example of this type of letter was provided in Module 1, Section 1.03.

2.03 Confirming Inspection Appointments



Having made an appointment for the inspection, take the opportunity to ask questions about the property and to confirm details you have been given in the instructions.

- Check the property address and post code
- Check that you have the correct spelling of the applicants' names.
- Ask if the property is easy to find. If not, ask for directions.
- Ask about parking arrangements, particularly for properties in busy town centre locations.
- Check the property type (e.g. house or flat, semi or terrace) and the number of bedrooms

Tell the home owner how long the assessor is likely to be on site, as they may have different expectations and this can cause confusion or complaints.

Also, explain that a full internal and external inspection will be necessary, including an inspection of all roof voids ("lofts"), boilers and heating appliances, plus electricity meters. This will enable the home owner to make suitable arrangements for the inspection, e.g. to ensure that no rooms are locked and that furniture is moved to allow access to loft hatches and meter cupboards.

Remember to tell the home owner the name of the surveyor, so that they know who to expect.

Give them a contact number and ask them to phone back if there is any reason why they need to change the appointment.

It is good practice to confirm appointments in writing. The letter can also be used to send out terms and conditions and to send a pre-inspection questionnaire to collect information about the property.

An example of a typical letter of confirmation is provided in Section 1.03 of this Module.

2.04 Updating Records



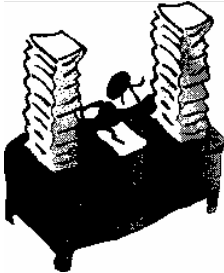
Following the booking of appointment make sure computer systems and manually kept records are updated.

Systems such as Quest or XIT1, will automatically feed back information to the instruction source. They will be able to see the booking time and date on their screens. Instruction sources that use manual systems might need an up-dating telephone call.

Make sure that you have a contact number for the estate agent or home owner recorded in the assessors appointment diary and instruction pack, so that the assessor can phone them if running early or late.

If a key needs to be collected, remember to provide the agent's office address in the instruction pack.

2.05 Declining Instructions



Some instructions may need to be declined:

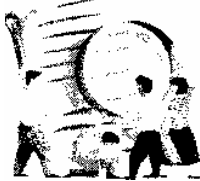
- The assessor may be fully booked within the service standard period
- The property may be outside the assessor's expertise and experience
- There may be a conflict of interest
- The property may not be suitable for an EPC, e.g. part commercial or built of specialist materials
- The property might not be in the assessors operational area

If declining an instruction, do so as soon as possible, so that the instruction source can make alternative arrangement in good time. Make sure that all parties involved are informed of your actions, e.g. if you have telephoned to make an appointment and then decide you can't proceed, you will need to tell the homeowner and/or estate agent as well as informing the instruction source.

Update computer records and diaries to record your actions and the reason for the decision.

SECTION 3 GETTING READY FOR THE INSPECTION

This section covers the paperwork that needs to be prepared for an inspection and the use of pre-inspection questionnaires.

3.01 Preparing the Paperwork

Before setting out on a day's inspections the DEA needs to make sure that all paperwork is in order:

An instruction sheet should record the addresses of each property, together with the home owner's name and telephone numbers. The name and numbers of the estate agent and any other contacts, e.g. tenants, are also helpful.

Full contact details of the instruction source should also be provided in case the assessor needs to make contact to clarify any issues.

The access arrangements and expected times of arrival need to be recorded, possibly using a copy of the assessor's diary.

Directions to each property should be available, possibly using printouts from Multimaps or similar websites. The suggested route to the property and a large scale local map identifying the property are helpful.

A risk assessment and site note pack should be printed out for each inspection.

A copy of a completed pre-inspection questionnaire should be included (if available).

Assemble the paperwork (the "instruction pack") for each inspection in a suitable file cover to keep everything together and avoid getting papers getting mixed up between different appointments.

Care should be taken not to leave instruction pack files in view on car seats, as they will be tempting for thieves and contain personal data.

SECTION 4 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

This section sets out some of the main sources of information for DEAs.

4.01 Undertaking Research

DEAs need to keep up to date as part of the commitment to Life Long Learning that will be required by accreditation centres. They will also need to source technical information on a day to day basis as they undertake EPCs.

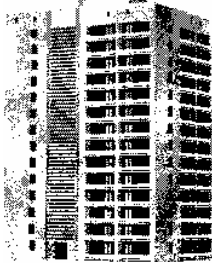
There are several sources of information:

- **Professional Bodies** - DEAs may already belong to professional bodies, such as the ABE, CIOB and RICS, and will be able to tap into their technical resources. It is likely that new professional bodies and trade associations will develop to cater for those DEAs who are not members of an existing profession.
- **Accreditation Centres** - Monitoring Long Life Learning is part of the accreditation centres' functions and it is anticipated that they will develop ongoing training programmes and provide technical information for DEAs.
- **Environmental Advisory Services** - There are a number of organisations publishing information on technical matters to do with energy performance and products, aimed at the home owner and the building professional, e.g. The Energy Saving Trust.
- **Manufacturers** - Manufacturers of heating and insulation products are likely to target their literature at DEAs. There is already a wealth of technical information and guidance available from manufacturers' websites.
- **FAERO** - The providers of RdSAP software have help-lines to guide assessors in the completion of EPCs using their systems. They have a wealth of technical knowledge about the thermal performance of dwellings and heating systems.
- **Technical Publications** - The two main providers of technical literature on specialist topics relating to buildings and energy performance are the RICS (www.ricsbooks.com) and the Building Research Establishment (www.brebookshop.com)
- **Local Authorities** - The planning and building control departments of local authorities are usually helpful to building professionals seeking information about the development history of properties in their jurisdictions. They will also be able to confirm if properties are in Conservation Areas and will know those Listed as being of Historical Interest.
- **Home Owners and Neighbours** - The home owner may be a useful source of information about the property and the history of its construction and services. The neighbour digging the garden next door can also be engaged in

conversation on such topics. The validity of such information must not be taken at face value and has to be "sense checked" by the DEA and followed up with more official sources before being relied upon.

Section 5 EPCs by Sampling

5.01 Sampling Regulations



The concept of undertaking a sample of inspections in order to produce EPCs on a class or group of similar properties was added to the National Occupational Standards at a late stage, just prior to their publication, even though the requirement is specifically stated in Article 7 of the EU Directive.

Cloning / Sampling

Although an EPC will be required for every property that is being rented to a new tenant from October 08, it is possible to use 'cloning' or 'sampling' methods. In principal, one original EPC will be required for each property type, this can then be copied for all property types which are the same or similar in each portfolio. A certificate will be required for each property but the EPC can be copied across from the same or very similar property types. This will obviously reduce the amount of time required to produce EPCs for a whole portfolio and therefore the cost will also be reduced. The Cloned/Sample Set must be inspected and approved by a Domestic Energy Assessor that has been specifically trained to produce EPCs for the Social Housing Sector. Their training includes Certification on the methodology used to complete the sampling of the properties and the criteria required for properties to be classified as same or similar.

The actual Cloned/Sample must be provided by the Social Housing Landlord.

You will need to create a list of property in your portfolio and include the following information:-

- Property type/description for each property
- Number of beds
- Estimated age
- No of properties in the group
- Completed sampling form which we will provide

It may be possible in such circumstances to derive EPCs off-plan or to identify a set of dwellings that are essentially the same and therefore undertake just one physical EPC inspection.

Below is a guide to how many properties in a portfolio you can potential sample as long as all the relevant criteria are met.

Size of Portfolio	Sample Size	Contingency Sample Size
10 properties or fewer	50%	An additional 20% of group
11 – 50 properties	5 plus 30% of (group minus 10)	An additional 10% of group
Over 50 properties	15 plus 10% of (group minus 50)	An additional 5% of group

Test your understanding of Module 3 by answering the following questions. There is no need to write an essay, just note down the key points.

1. What factors should a DEA consider when quoting a fee for an EPC?
2. How should a DEA confirm terms and conditions for the EPC service?
3. What strategies can be adopted when arranging an inspection appointment with a home owner who is reluctant to take time off work?
4. What matters need to be confirmed when making an inspection appointment?
5. In what circumstances should an EPC instruction be declined?
6. List the paperwork that should be included in a DEA's "instruction pack".
7. How might a DEA find out about a type of boiler with which he/she is not familiar?
8. When might sampling be applied for producing EPCs?

1. What factors should a DEA consider when quoting a fee for an EPC?

- **Anticipated difficulty**
- **Traveling costs**
- **Current workloads**
- **Goodwill**

2. How should a DEA confirm terms and conditions for the EPC service?

In writing, but pack providers may deal with this as part of the HIP contract

3. What strategies can be adopted when arranging an inspection appointment with a home owner who is reluctant to take time off work?

Try to arrange an appointment early or late in the day, ask if keys can be left with someone, ask if someone else can attend to let the DEA in or suggest that the DEA calls just before arriving so that the home owner can "nip" home

4. What matters need to be confirmed when making an inspection appointment?

- **Check the property address and post code**
- **Check that you have the correct spelling of the applicants' names.**
- **Ask if the property is easy to find. If not, ask for directions.**
- **Ask about parking arrangements, particularly for properties in busy town centre locations.**
- **Check the property type (e.g. house or flat, semi or terrace) and the number of bedrooms**
- **Also tell the home owner how long the DEA is likely to be on site**

5. In what circumstances should an EPC instruction be declined?

- **The assessor may be fully booked within the service standard period**
- **The property may be outside the assessor's expertise and experience**
- **There may be a conflict of interest**
- **The property may not be suitable for an EPC, e.g. part commercial or built of specialist materials**
- **The property might not be in the assessor's operational area**

6. List the paperwork that should be included in a DEA's "instruction pack".

- **Instruction sheet with full address, contact details and access arrangements**
- **Directions with maps**
- **Risk assessment and site note forms**
- **Copy of pre inspection questionnaire(if returned)**

7. How might a DEA find out about a type of boiler with which he/she is not familiar?

Contact the manufacturer and ask the home owner

8. When might sampling be applied for producing EPCs?

When a block of similar properties are being assessed