Future Homes Hub

Homebuyer customer journey for low energy homes:
Hints & Tips for homebuilders

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Contents

Introduction

This guide is a practical template for sales and marketing teams - those at the sharp end of the industry who introduce residents to their new Future Homes Standard homes.

The Future Homes Standard (FHS) is part of the UK's broader strategy to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. It is both a mandate for homebuilders and an opportunity for architects, developers, and sales teams to reimagine how we design, market, and deliver homes fit for a sustainable future. At its heart lies a major transition - from our dependence on fossil fuels to keep our homes warm, to the adoption of all-electric domestic heating systems instead. Designed to meet the UK's ambitious climate commitments, these homes promise no need for costly retrofits down the line.

This guide is specifically aimed at the home buyer customer journey for low rise properties. It can be used as a template to help develop current ways of working to ones providing future customers with the experience they need to fully take advantage of the benefits of their new FHS home. Further guides covering other types and tenures will follow.

There are sections to reflect the customer journey for home buyers, along with homebuilder sales and marketing examples for completed homes. Selling a future home requires clarity, empathy, and the confidence and knowledge to inform clients, explain new household tech and shape buyer expectations.

Sales teams must become educators, capable of explaining new systems like low-temperature heating or smart time-of-use energy tariffs in everyday language. Aftercare, meanwhile, must move beyond fixing problems to becoming a proactive partner in the homeowner's journey, offering tailored support helping householders get the best from their new low carbon home.

By aligning messaging, managing expectations, and providing clear, consistent support, teams can empower homebuyers to feel confident in their decision. Ensuring that every interaction explains and reinforces the benefits of FHS living will not only enhance the buying experience but also underscore the value of sustainable, future-ready homes.

What is a Future Homes Standard home

A home that is highly energy efficient, has fossil-fuel-free heating and is comfortable to live in all year round.

Customer journey - summary

Marketing

Focus on:

1. fossil-fuel-free all electric homes as the new normal
2. future-ready homes reducing the householder's climate impact
3. the reduced heating needs compared with older homes
4. energy cost savings if linked to smart time-of-use energy tariffs
5. greater indoor comfort levels in winter and summer
6. no costly and disruptive retrofit works needed as FHS homes are already well insulated and fossil-fuel-free

Don't focus on:

7. reduced energy bills alone

Sales

1. Align sales pitch with marketing messages
2. Develop site-specific FHS customer guidance
3. Provide sales staff with comprehensive training on everything FHS
4. Progressively introduce the low energy and low carbon features
5. Clearly communicate how to ensure lowest energy bills
6. Reiterate FHS benefits at reservation stage

Pre-handover

1. Schedule home 'walkarounds' as the home is nearing completion, typically two weeks before handover
2. Actively support homebuyers during handover focusing on specific technologies in their home and the availability of smart time-of-use energy tariffs

Customer journey - summary

Handover

1. Provide a concise home demonstration and handover meeting
2. Supply quick start user guides
3. Offer additional assistance for vulnerable or elderly buyers
4. Don't overload customers with excessive technical information
5. Provide access to easy to understand videos or digital information, so people can review at their leisure
6. Undertake a more detailed follow-up visit 14 days after handover

Aftercare

1. Ensure customer care staff have a deep understanding of how householders can get the best from their FHS home
2. Offer a visit or call 28 days after handover
3. Arrange winter visits for homes handed over in summer
4. Offer additional assistance to vulnerable and elderly buyers
5. Conduct courtesy follow-up calls every 3 months during the first year

Continuous improvement

1. Maintain an issues register and analyse it for any recurring themes
2. Hold regular supply chain review meetings sharing these issues and look to develop solutions
3. Carry out Post-Occupancy Evaluations, with interviews and Building Performance Evaluation (BPE) to assess comfort levels, energy use and customer satisfaction of FHS homes
4. Ensure learnings are fed back across the business, especially to the design and procurement teams so improvements can be made in future developments

Marketing

FHS homes are best marketed by promoting their low carbon and comfort credentials. It is important to ensure all FHS communications, customer messaging and discussions are clear and consistent across all platforms.

Hints & Tips

Electric not gas: Emphasise fossil-fuel-free homes with heat pumps, where used, as the new normal.

Climate change: Promote a feel-good factor by emphasising how low carbon homes have lower climate change impacts.

Domestic heating: Emphasise reduced heating requirements compared with existing homes.

Bills: Don't just focus on reduced energy bills (there are too many variables to consider, e.g. buyers could be moving from a smaller home or a warmer location).

Savings: Promote energy cost savings if linked to a smart time-of-use energy tariffs.

Indoor comfort: Promote the comfort benefits experienced in homes with better insulation and modern ventilation systems.

Future-Ready: Explain how the new fossil-fuel-free FHS homes are designed to meet the UK's climate change commitments, include desirable modern technologies, and avoid the need, and inconvenience of costly upgrades in the future.

Example: Adderbury, Oxfordshire
Developer: Hayfield Homes

Promoted homes by emphasising low-carbon benefits over reduced energy bills, while highlighting sustainability, legacy, and comfort to appeal to buyers.

Over the years at Hayfield Homes, we have learned that buyers respond positively to consistent and customer friendly marketing that emphasises low carbon benefits that help reduce climate change impacts.

Harriet McVeigh
Customer Care Director
Hayfield Homes

Do promote a feel-good factor, highlighting how low-carbon homes have reduced climate change impact.

Don't just focus on reduced energy bills, unless caveated and linked to smart time-of-use energy tariffs.

Sales

Given that sales teams are the first point of contact with prospective buyers, it's essential they are well-trained, knowledgeable, and able to clearly explain the features and benefits of FHS homes. Sales messaging should be simple, easy to understand, and help shape expectations and lifestyle habits to maximise the benefits of fossil-fuel-free, all-electric living.

Hints & Tips

Consistent messaging: Align sales and marketing messages to highlight key benefits such as comfortable indoor temperatures and energy bill savings from smart time-of-use energy tariffs.

Sales and customer support: Create site-specific FHS feature briefs, customer FAQs, and show-home walkthrough guides to address common questions and highlight key benefits.

Training: Deliver comprehensive training for sales staff on FHS technologies and benefits. Use mystery shopper sessions to confirm understanding and competence.

Buyer expectations: Explain good usage habits (e.g. running heating at a lower setting when away) and set realistic expectations about potential energy savings, which vary depending on previous usage and new home habits.

Reservation: Reiterate FHS benefits and recommended habits during reservation meetings. Encourage questions during the cooling-off period.

Before we launch a FHS development, we spend time upskilling the site and sales teams; investing in dedicated product training, partnering with suppliers, and providing sales walk-through guides, inclusive of FAQs. All with the purchaser in mind.

Louise Chamberlain
Group Head of Sales Performance
Bellway

Example: Springstead Village, Cambridge
Developer: Bellway

Sales teams highlighted carbon savings and clarified energy bill expectations for customers. They received Q&A booklets, training, and site briefs to ensure confident, informed responses to queries.

Do, at reservation reiterate sales staff messaging about the habits which get the best from low temperature heating systems, and realistic energy bill outcomes.

Don't forget to provide to sales detailed show home walk through guides, highlighting key touchpoints to explain FHS technologies, features and benefits.

Living well in a fossil-fuel-free FHS home: Beneficial lifestyle habits for homebuyers

As more homeowners transition from older, fossil-fuelled properties to all-electric, energy-efficient FHS homes, it's crucial they understand and adopt new lifestyle habits that help unlock the full benefits of modern low-carbon living.

Sales teams play a key role in guiding customers through this change, shaping expectations, and explaining how to operate new technologies with confidence and ease.

Experience has shown that early and positive engagement with customers makes a real difference.

Some key tips for FHS homeowners are highlighted on the next page. Exact messaging will depend on the technologies installed in the home.

Example: Moorland Green, Chopwell
Developer: Gleeson Homes

Sales team continually reinforced that customers will see real benefits from understanding how to get the best from new technologies. Embedding this in all contact points and the handover process.

It is really important for our sales teams to explain the differences when buying and living optimally in a FHS home. Our customers really value this as they adapt and get the best from their home.

Dan Ramsden
Group Technical Director
Gleeson Homes

Do explain the different ways to operate a FHS home to maximise the benefits, in a simple informative way, on several occasions, to shape expectations.

Don't assume customers will immediately adopt the most beneficial habits for living in their new home after just one explanation of the technologies.

Key tips for FHS homeowners

Heating & Comfort

The home information pack will have specific advice tailored to their home's heating system and should cover typical themes including:

- **Heat pumps** run most efficiently when left on continuously rather following a timed schedule. Unlike gas boilers, they work at lower temperatures over longer periods. The system will gently warm rooms when the temperature falls and only use energy when, and if, needed.
- **When away for short period** (a few days to a week), it's better to leave the heating system running rather than turning it off. Use 'holiday mode' for longer absences.
- **Room thermostats** are pre-set by the installer to suit typical comfort and temperature levels, but can be adjusted. It's best do this in little steps, leaving a few hours between adjustments for temperatures to settle.
- **Low-temperature radiators** linked to heat pumps will feel cooler to the touch. They are slower to heat rooms, so avoid switching them off and on frequently. Keep them steady in occupied areas.
- **Underfloor heating** operates in a similar way to low-temperature radiators, warming the area steadily. Keeping underfloor heating at a consistent temperature is best for efficiency and comfort.

Hot Water

- Heat pumps prioritise hot water to maximise efficiency. Setting water temperatures too high can reduce space heating effectiveness and increase running costs. It is important to explain this during the handover stage as customers get to know their home.

Energy Use & Tariffs

- Many FHS homes will have some combination of heat pump, solar panels, battery, hot water storage and Electric Vehicle Charging Point. Smart time-of-use energy tariffs, where electricity prices change during the day, let householders save money by using, or storing, energy when it is cheaper. Pointing customers to websites of suitable suppliers will make choosing the best one for them easier.

Ventilation & Air Quality

- **Mechanical ventilation systems** are necessary to maintain healthy air. Do not switch them off, especially in bathrooms and kitchens. This could lead to poor indoor air quality and mould growth
- Avoid open windows for long periods of time in **winter** as the ventilation system will provide fresh air without excessive heat loss, improving the overall energy efficiency of the home.
- In **summer**, use passive cooling: close blinds during the day and open windows at night or early morning to let in cooler air.

Daily Living Habits

- **Avoid drying clothes on radiators** - this increases humidity which can lead to higher moisture levels and mould. Use outdoor lines, energy-efficient condensing dryers or dry in bathrooms.
- **Cooking is electric**, often with induction hobs that heat quickly and clean easily. Induction-compatible pans are required so make sure to explain this to customers.

Maintenance

- **Annual servicing** of heat pumps is essential for efficiency and warranty validity. Some ventilation systems will also need maintenance to clean air filters and ductwork. The handover pack must make these timings clear for the individual home.
- **Keep the outdoor heat pump unit clear of obstructions** and avoid storing items nearby, as these can reduce its efficiency and potentially cause damage.
- **Don't adjust the factory settings** on the heat pump unit itself. Doing so will reduce the performance, increase bills and may breach the warranty.

Pre-handover

Early engagement educates buyers on how their new FHS home is constructed and the technologies used. This avoids misunderstandings, helps manage expectations, reinforces features and benefits and proactively informs buyers of behaviours and new habits to get the best from their home. While not a specific New Homes Quality Code (NHQC) requirement a pre-handover meeting does enhance the overall customer experience.

Hints & Tips

Proactive education during construction: Host a during-construction tour of the home to educate buyers about fossil-fuel-free homes, how to get the best from the home, and maintenance requirements. This provides an early opportunity to respond to any FHS-related concerns.

Collaborative and informal visits: Conduct informal visits with sales and construction staff and the buyer, fostering communication and resolving queries proactively, without tying it to the sales agreement.

Pre-Handover inspection: Schedule a home walkaround as construction is completing, typically two weeks before handover to identify and resolve any queries.

Construction planning: Ensure the construction schedule allows sufficient time for inspections and commissioning.

Introducing a construction visit and an informal pre-handover visit, has greatly helped educate and introduce buyers to their FHS homes and helped us proactively address any issues before the formal handover stage, enhancing the overall customer experience.

Eugene Doherty
Director, CG Fry Homes

Example: Nansledan, Newquay, Cornwall
Developer: CG Fry Homes

Organised a pre-handover meeting with customers, sales and site managers two weeks before handover. Conducted a return visit 14 days after occupancy to gather feedback, reinforce messaging and resolve any issues.

Do ensure a pre-handover visit is arranged, to proactively engage and educate customers, whilst providing an effective way to respond to any FHS related queries.

Don't wait to explain things at handover stage.

Handover

FHS homes will need a more detailed home demonstration and handover meeting. This ensures clear, essential guidance on FHS homes, focusing on new technologies and beneficial habits.

Hints & Tips

Home demo: Provide a concise home demonstration and handover meeting, focusing on critical FHS features and controls for immediate occupation, avoiding overly technical details.

User guides: Supply quick start user guides, online videos, and aftercare contact details for ongoing support.

24/7 Support: Offer additional assistance for vulnerable or elderly buyers, including tailored guidance for those less tech-savvy or with language barriers.

Follow up: Undertake a more detailed follow-up visit and a customer survey 14 days after handover to identify and address any queries.

User guides in detail

Home Living Guide: Provide a guide outlining helpful behaviours for maximising FHS benefits, such as heat pumps continuously on for space heating with the temperature reduced at night.

Home User Guide: Include detailed guidance on FHS technologies installed, including operation, location, and maintenance instructions.

Digital access: Grant access to a digital portal with home-specific information, including educational videos, through a user login.

QR codes: Attach QR codes to provide easy access to trouble-shooting, self-help, and instructional videos.

Advice labels: Place on FHS technologies to warn householders where interactions may cause problems and signpost them to the Home User Guide for more information.

Over the years we have tailored our home demonstrations and user guides, to provide only the most meaningful information to homebuyers at handover. Our Home Living Guides have been well received by our customers.

Gary Plant
Product Manager
Spitfire Homes

Example: Fairmont, Bishops Cleeve, Cheltenham
Developer: Spitfire Homes

Provided a Home Living Guide, online videos, and an info portal covering key technologies like low-temperature radiators and continuous heating. Held a home demo one week after occupancy, with follow-ups at 14 and 28 days, and included a winter visit for seasonal needs.

Do simplify technical guidance as much as possible.

Don't overwhelm customer with too much information on each occasion, instead progressively add to their knowledge during each interaction.

Aftercare

Aftercare services need to be adapted to respond to the new technologies within a FHS home. Customer care and aftercare services must be tailored to the specific FHS technologies in the new home being purchased and corresponding individual support needs, ensuring that any defects or issues are promptly acknowledged and resolved.

Hints & Tips

Staff training: Ensure customer care staff have been comprehensively trained on FHS features, technologies, and benefits, supplemented by internal audits to ensure competency and understanding.

One month in: Schedule a follow-up visit or call 28 days after occupancy to ensure buyer satisfaction.

Seasonal assistance: Arrange a winter visit for homes handed over in summer to assist with seasonal heating setup.

Extra care: Offer additional assistance to vulnerable and elderly buyers, who may be less tech-savvy, find technical language confusing or require more help to understand FHS technologies.

Quarterly calls: Conduct courtesy follow-up calls every 3 months during the first year to track issues and engage with customers.

We are investing in our customer support staff educating them on the FHS technologies, improving our aftercare processes to help our customers transition to all electric FHS homes.

Hiba Assaf
Technical Manager
Croudace Homes

Example: Willowbrook Park, Didcot, Oxfordshire
Developer: Croudace Homes

Offered a one-month post-occupancy visit (conducted by BRE) and quarterly check-ins during the first year to address seasonal changes. Provided an IT system with plot-specific tech guides, a customer portal, CRM tracking, and extra support for vulnerable residents. Contact details for the heat pump manufacturer and the care team were also included.

Do ensure all customer care staff are confident answering questions about FHS technologies and how to get the best from this type of home.

Don't leave customers to work out FHS technology maintenance requirements for themselves. Instead provide them with details of what is required, when and where they might find a reputable service engineer.

Continuous improvement

Monitoring the performance of FHS homes after occupancy and conducting Building Performance Evaluations (BPE) benefits everyone. It provides valuable insights into real-world use, highlighting areas for enhancement and drives continuous improvement as industry scales up delivery.

Hints & Tips

Logging feedback: Maintain a customer issues register within customer relations management systems to log FHS-related queries, defects, and feedback.

FHS technology: Hold regular supply chain review meetings to resolve issues related to FHS technology installation and use.

POE and BPE: Carry out Post-Occupancy Evaluations, with interviews and BPE to assess comfort levels, energy use and customer satisfaction of FHS homes.

Continuous improvement: Ensure learnings are fed back across the business.

Building Performance Evaluation

Building fabric testing: (HTC test) to assess heat loss and improve building performance.

Thermography: Thermal imaging to identify and reduce heat loss and cold spots.

Air Tightness Diagnostics: Identify and improve air leakage and infiltration.

Home Environment Monitoring: Monitor air quality and thermal comfort.

SMART Metering & Telemetry: Monitor the performance of FHS technologies, such as heat pumps and PV, including energy usage and equipment defect codes.

Householder Experience: Structured home-user interviews to assess comfort levels, experience and perceptions of FHS homes.

The learning and data generated from as-built testing, monitoring in use and occupancy interviews is invaluable. Through BPE our product offering has been enhanced, and our customer satisfaction consistently improving.

Douglas Drewniak
Senior Building Performance Manager
Wilmott Dixon

Example: Ashton Rise, Bristol
Developer: Willmott Dixon

The aftercare team supported projects from late RIBA Stage 4 through early Stage 5, offering up to two years of defects liability assistance. A customer hotline ensured swift issue resolution, while a maintenance guide aided asset management teams. Committed to Building Performance Evaluation (BPE), the practice's in-house team monitored systems to drive continuous improvement.

Do recruit a proportion of homebuyers onto a long term monitoring programme (over two years) - it helps understand how house holders experience living in FHS homes.

Don't overlook BPE – it provides valuable insights to the technical performance of house designs, quality of construction practice and customer satisfaction.

Additional resources

Future Homes Hub Resources

The Future Homes Hub is continually developing guidance information on Future Home Standard homes, including both consumer and technical aspects. Check out our document library for the full suite of resources, some of which are directly linked below.

You can also sign up to our newsletter to receive regular updates.

Document Library
Access to the Hub's full suite of resources

Householder guidance: Buying a new low energy home - heat pump edition
Written for prospective new home buyers, highlighting the features and benefits of a low energy home

Lessons from Delivering FHS Homes at Scale
Summary of homebuilder research interviews providing key learnings focused on the consumer journey

Building Performance Evaluation - Where to start
A guide to BPE for homebuilders and their advisors

Low Carbon homes: Trials and Demonstrator Map
An interactive map of UK low-carbon housing trials, supporting FHS preparation

External Resources

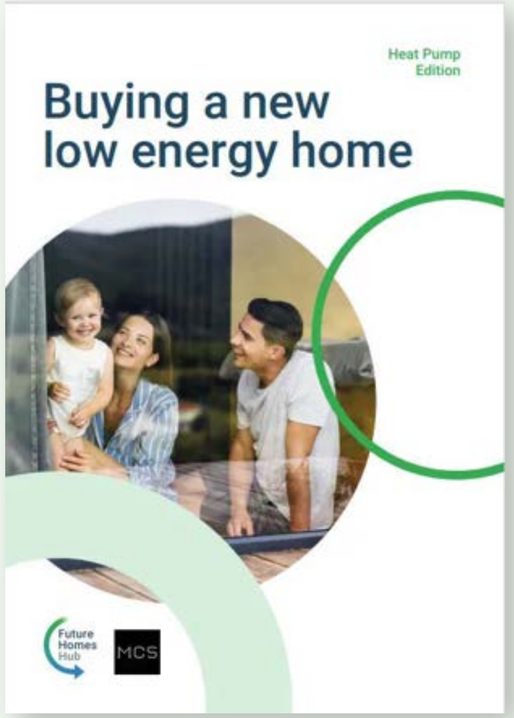
Building for 2050 - Executive Summary
Insights on delivering affordable, low-carbon housing at scale through UK case studies

Building Performance Network - Resource Hub
Information on BPE, including training materials

Good Homes Alliance - Knowledge Base
Best practice guidance and case studies for sustainable home development

Energy Savings Trust - Heat Pumps
Consumer-facing information on heat pumps

New Homes Quality Board (NHQB)
NHQB oversee the New Homes Ombudsman Service and New Homes Quality Code



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