



## **Background**

The Footprint Trust charity has been working with *\*fuel poor* people on the Isle of Wight since 2003. This has been achieved through a number of projects, offering tailored guidance and information. We soon recognised that many of our clients struggled understand their utility bills. Illiteracy and innumeracy on the Isle of Wight is known to be an issue, at around double the national average (source: National Literacy Trust). (*\*Fuel poverty being generally defined as households spending 10% of their income on energy for their home, affecting 15% of Islanders*)

## **Monergy workouts**

Following on from comments made by our clients, staff and volunteers, our General Manager, Ray Harrington-Vail, came up with the idea of running short fun workshops - the Monergy workshops concept was born.

The Trust applied to the ScottishPower Energy People Trust for funding and in 2010 the first Monergy workouts were held. Following on from the success of this pilot, funding has been obtained from a number of bodies, and to date over 1,000 people have benefited.

Monergy training is delivered where people go. Popular venues have been the local JobCentre and various Children's/ Family Centres. Schools and community centres have also been used.

We work with charities, statutory bodies, and schools which provide the venue and promote the session to their clients, parents or volunteers. We also encourage staff to take part, so that they too understand the issues around energy matters.

The Monergy workouts are flexible and we tailor them to our audience. In 2015 we launched the Comedy Stage at the Bestival, with the Monergy workshop!

We use a fair amount of comedy in our presentation generally, as we recognise that the subject of energy and water bills is a bit boring to most people. We avoid "death by powerpoint" and irrelevant statistics, and just get on with telling people how to save money and take control.

The session starts with an introduction from the trainer, and advises those attending not to share any very person details of their situation. Then we start by giving the students a picture of an everyday appliance. Participants then stand in line, in order of which appliance uses the least amount of energy to the most.

Once they have done this we then put them in the correct order!

We then have a chat about watts and the cost of buying energy, the importance of switching and turning stuff off when not in use, short showers, and correct setting of heating. The Warm Home Discount and Priority Service Register are also promoted along with discounts and help available from Southern Water.

Those attending are given a sheet to work out their total savings, if they follow our guidance. We also take the details of anyone who would like a follow-up phone call or a home visit. Most people attending our workshops save around £200 pa on their bills.

## **Feedback**

A parent that attended the Footprint Trust Monergy session held at Ventnor Children's Centre thanked us for inviting her. She said,

*"As a result of attending the Monergy meeting at the Children's Centre I have now been assisted by the Footprint Trust with my energy bills and am saving £100 per month. This has changed my life so much for the better and I am really very grateful to the Children's Centre for inviting me"*

As a result of targeting families who we knew have struggled financially to the Monergy workshop, it has had a positive impact on their financial strain and improved emotional well-being. A parent said,

*"Thank you for inviting me, I attended the workshop and found it interesting. I agreed to a home visit from the Footprint Trust and was amazed at how helpful they were. One bit of advice was not to leave the microwave on which has a clock, as this will save me £30-£40 per year. I also put foil behind my radiators to stop the heat from going into the walls. I was also provided with a new cooker as the last one was very unsafe, the glass door kept falling out and I was worried about my daughter being injured. I was also provided with £130 for my fuel bills and I have really noticed a difference with my fuel bills since I have made changes."*

Ventnor Children's Centre

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[www.footprint-trust.co.uk](http://www.footprint-trust.co.uk) Winner The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2013.

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