



FUEL POVERTY

The Behaviouralist

Developing an open source platform to help identify and target households experiencing fuel poverty

Fuel poverty - living on a lower income in a home which cannot be kept warm at a reasonable cost - is a big issue for local government. According to the Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics Report 2017 (2015 ONS Data) currently, over 2.5 million households have to choose between heating their house and other essential costs, which leads to a multitude of health and societal issues.

Identifying households that are in fuel poverty is difficult and expensive. This often means local government and other organisations (utility providers, charities, third sector) spend vital money in both identifying which households are experiencing fuel poverty and inaccurately target communications or interventions on the wrong household.

We worked with Cadent gas on two projects to help them tackle this problem. During the first, we built and tested a highly accurate machine-learning algorithm that uses publicly available data to identify households at risk of being in fuel poverty. Using data that covers the entirety of England – over 18 million unique households – we can predict with 80% accuracy whether a household is experiencing fuel poverty.

This first step allowed us to, as a part of our second project, propose an integrated approach using the insights from our machine learning toolkit to target behaviourally informed communications and other interventions.

The resulting product is a web-based platform that can be used by local authorities to identify households in fuel poverty and target interventions aimed at improving energy efficiency and keeping houses warm. Using the data from the platform can be a key asset for local authorities in their policy making process, as it can help them understand the distribution and concentration of population with high health and wellbeing risks.

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