



working together for warm homes

Getting Warm in the Zones

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The results of a unique Government funded research evaluation have been welcomed by Warm Zones Limited, the social enterprise now owned by energy efficiency charity National Energy Action (NEA). But the company warns there is 'no magic wand' to address the issue of fuel poverty as energy costs are increasing for millions of homes across the UK.

Warm Zones Limited welcomes the key findings of the independent evaluation into the pilot schemes, which identified the value of the Warm Zones approach, including the coordinated delivery of energy efficiency improvements and income maximisation measures. The initiative was particularly effective in accessing 'hard to reach' households.

Warm Zones Ltd., is a not-for-profit company, which was initially established to run five pilot Warm Zones in 2000 throughout the country. The pilot phase finished in March 2004 and the best practice identified has now been incorporated into all ongoing Warm Zones activity.

The evaluation report prepared by the Energy Saving Trust for the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs is unique, as it is the only independent evaluation completed on any large-scale fuel poverty led programme.

The pilot zones faced difficult challenges and explored different approaches towards tackling the identification and elimination of fuel poverty.

The Warm Zones approach involves the establishment of strong local partnerships involving local authorities, health agencies, housing providers, caring agencies and community groups. The pilots achieved a considerable amount, although the challenging targets to remove 50% of the fuel poor from fuel poverty were not fully met; the best zone managed 23%. Earlier interim evaluations stated that this target was considered to be very optimistic with the "toolkit" of resources available.

William Gillis, Managing Director of Warm Zones, said: "Warm Zones are not 'a magic wand' and they need vision, commitment, resources and hard work to succeed. They do however have an important part to play although a number of challenges remain. I welcome the recommendation that an expanded Warm Zone programme could play a valuable role in providing local structures for delivering part of the Government's Fuel Poverty Strategy.

"We support the recommendations of the evaluation, that the Government should provide seed corn funding for up to a further 25 zones, targeted at the areas of most need, and we will work hard with partners to turn this into a reality.

"I wish to fully acknowledge the achievements already delivered by the local Warm Zone teams. Support from the participating energy companies, government schemes, housing, energy efficiency, regeneration, health, local authority and all our other partners remains essential to help each Warm Zone deliver more affordable warmth to more low-income and vulnerable households."

The WZL website "Warm Zones Work" contains a free toolkit, information about the zones and contacts for anyone interested in launching a future Warm Zone go to www.warmzones.co.uk

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

Warm Zones was set up in 2000 with Government support, to develop new approaches to fuel poverty. Following this initiative five 'pilot pathfinder' Zones were established in 2001 in Hull, Newham, Northumberland, Sandwell and Stockton to trial a range of different Warm Zone local based approaches. Warm Zones Limited was set up with Government help to manage the 'pathfinder' Zones. The 'pathfinder' zone trials were completed in March 2004 and at that time full ownership of Warm Zones transferred to National Energy Action.

Every household in the area was assessed as part of a rolling ward by ward programme, to collect data on the householder, their income, the heating system in use, and any insulation measures installed; with the specific aim of assisting householders to access:

- all available assistance to improve the energy efficiency of their home ranging from installing or enhancing the level of insulation, and home heating used.
- secure benefits to maximise household income
- help provided by the Government Warm Front Scheme and support from the Energy Efficiency Commitment of the participating energy companies
- improved health and wellbeing by avoiding winter cold related illness and winter deaths

1. National Energy Action (NEA) is the leading fuel poverty. Warm Zones Ltd is now a wholly owned subsidiary of NEA and is operated as a not-for-profit, social enterprise. WZL is 100% independent but it works in partnership with a wide range of energy suppliers, scheme and programme managers to ensure best value offerings for all households.

2. WZL are working with a range of partners across the UK to develop and deliver strategic solutions designed to, reduce winter deaths from cold damp homes, maximise household income, support the vulnerable and low income fuel poor households, enhance social inclusion, secure decent homes, contribute to local skills, training and employment while helping to create a sustainable environment.

3. The Warm Zones approach is simple; a systematic assessment of the energy efficiency and fuel poverty status of all the households in the warm zone area followed by coordinated delivery of energy efficiency improvements and related support services.

4. Much of the work to deal with fuel poverty focuses on installing measures, such as insulation, draught proofing and heating. Warm Zones are locally based, they are proactive and go further by providing energy efficiency advice and benefit entitlement checks to help to reduce the amount spent on energy.

5. The structured and systematic door-to-door Warm Zone approach has now assessed over 450,000 households and secured the installation of measures valued in excess of £35 million, energy and carbon savings and secured additional benefits for clients in excess of £4 million.

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