

## Cross Heath is about to feel the heat from North Staffordshire Warm Zone

Homes in the Cross Heath area are about to feel the heat - thanks to the launch of a major energy efficiency programme across the area.

Over the next two years the North Staffordshire Warm Zone team will visit around 73,000 homes and it's expected that around 35% of them will benefit from free cavity wall & loft insulation work, whilst everyone else could save up to 60% on wall & loft insulation work. All households will benefit from a free and confidential benefits health check and advice on the energy efficiency of their home.

All privately owned and privately rented homes in the Cross Heath area qualify for the scheme. Households on certain passport benefits or, who spend more than 10% of their annual income on fuel bills qualify for a 100% grant.

Over the next coming weeks a letter will be sent to residents telling them about the scheme. That Home Visitors, who will be in Warm Zone uniforms and carry identity cards will visit them and ask a series of questions on their doorsteps after which the data collected will be assessed to determine whether or not they qualify for the free measures. A surveyor will then visit a few weeks later and all being well, arrange for the necessary work to be carried out.

Tracy Hine, Director of the Warm Zone, says the programme will bring immense benefits to the area: "We expect tens of thousands of people will benefit from free measures making their homes much warmer and more comfortable whilst at the same time cutting their fuel bills," she said.

There will also be major benefits to the local economy and environment. "The Zone has already recruited 30 local people and will help sustain many more jobs. We also expect to cut the emissions of carbon into the environment by around half a million tonnes over the next two years making the area a healthier place in which to live," said Tracy.

Simon Tagg, Leader of Newcastle-under-Lyme borough Council commented "Fuel poverty is a major issue for areas of our borough and North Staffordshire as a whole and the Warm Zone initiative will go some way to tackling this.

It will enable eligible households to have physical measures such as loft insulation or cavity wall insulation put in place in their properties free or at a greatly discounted rate. As a result their house will be warmer and their future fuel bills less expensive. It is a classic win-win situation.

We estimate that the Warm Zone Team will target more than 17,000 homes in the most deprived wards of Newcastle over a 2 year period and we very much welcome the start of this work this month"

Councillor John Williams who represents Cross Heath said "I think this will be great for the ward. We have got a lot of private homes in the area that other projects don't cover. Residents will be able to have physical measures put in for free or at a discounted rate which will help them heat their homes for less.

Local Councils play a critical role in reducing green house gases and by funding key initiatives like North Staffordshire Warm Zone everyone benefits."

And Alan Hudson, Newcastle's Corporate Director of Community Services, agreed the benefits will be tremendous: "It's not just about cutting bills and putting more money into people's pockets - it's also about improving health as people live in warmer, more comfortable homes and taking a large step towards meeting all our targets to cut emissions and benefit the environment."

Assistant Director of Housing Services in Stoke on Trent, Alan Slater, said the programme will bring immense benefits: "We have been working hard to create a Warm Zone project in North Staffordshire for nearly a year and I'm delighted that within weeks, our residents will start to enjoy the benefits it will bring. Stoke on Trent City Council is committed to helping cut fuel bills, tackle energy efficiency issues and make life better."

Scottish Power's Energy Efficiency Commitment Manager, Walter French said the company was delighted to be working in Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead Warm Zones and seeing the success in improving the lives of thousands of people. "We very much look forward to seeing the same success in North Staffordshire over the next two years," he said.