

FREE HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECKS IN NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

24th April 2007

More than 1,000 homes have been given a free fire and safety check under the Warm Zone scheme initiative to improve safety and quality of life for residents. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service working in partnership with North Staffordshire Warm Zone are identifying homes who would like a free fire and safety check.

Fire fighters have now visited homes across North Staffordshire - including many occupied by elderly or vulnerable people - to ensure they are not at risk. Additional equipment such as smoke alarms has been provided where necessary.

The latest fire statistics for the UK show that there were 348 deaths and 11,500 non-fatal casualties as a result of dwelling fires. Statistics also show that households with the following housing characteristics are most at risk of experiencing a domestic fire:

- Dissatisfied with current accommodation
- Dissatisfied with the local area
- In rented accommodation
- In a converted flat or maisonette

The focus of the partnership is on the prevention and reduction of fire risk to significantly reduce fire deaths and injuries across Staffordshire.

The Home Fire Safety Checks involve fire crews talking to occupants about the dangers of fire in the home and the devastating consequences. The advice occupants receive during a home fire safety check visit places emphasis on the following fire safety issues:

- Kitchen safety
- Safety of smoking materials
- Smoke alarm ownership
- Fire escape plan

During the visits, fire crews will supply and fit long-life smoke alarms, fire guards (where there are families with young children) as well as other home safety equipment - free of charge.

In addition, general household safety advice is offered and a safety leaflet left with the individual.

Free Home Fire Safety Checks are available to all residents and those who complete a Warm Zone form will also be eligible for insulation grants and other services, for more information visit www.warmzones.co.uk or call **01782 238443**.

Chris Bromley Area Commander for Newcastle Borough said "this is a great partnership which helps us get out and about and into people's homes' and improves both home and community safety. The project has seen an increase in awareness of home and community fire safety."

Chris Plant, Community Fire Safety Officer said "this is a really successful partnership and a fantastic way of raising households' awareness of fire safety in the home."

Tracy Hine, Director of the Warm Zone, says "the programme is pleased to be working in partnership with Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service to help prevent and reduce fire risk and to significantly reduce fire deaths and injuries across Staffordshire.

We offer other services besides Home Fire Safety Checks these include; Benefits Advice; Energy Advice and Home Security Advice and on top of that we offer grants for insulation measures and energy saving light bulbs. Through these services we expect to help tens of thousands of people over the course of the project.

Holditch is the next ward to be visited by our Warm Zone Team. Residents will be receiving a letter in the next couple of days telling them about the scheme.

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

Councillor Simpson who represents Holditch said "I welcome any scheme that tackles fuel poverty, cuts CO2 emissions.

It's refreshing to see that a scheme that helps owner occupied and privately rented households. I would hope that private households take this opportunity to improve their homes and make them safer.

I'm pleased to see that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service is working in partnership with North Staffordshire Warm Zone to increase residents awareness of fire safety issues in the home and community. It's another excellent reason for residents to get involved in the warm zone scheme"