

## Private Households Eligible for North Staffordshire Warm Zone Grants

26<sup>th</sup> March 2007

Private households in Bentilee and Townsend are eligible for grants for loft and cavity wall insulation thanks to North Staffordshire Warm Zone. Grants are only available to households who own their home or live in privately rented accommodation; private residents even qualify if they are in full time employment.

Over the next two years the North Staffordshire Warm Zone team will visit around 73,000 private homes and help cut their energy bills and at the same time reduce their carbon emissions. It's expected that householders could cut their energy use by up to 55% just by insulating their loft and cavity walls.

On average around 35% of households will benefit from free cavity wall & loft insulation work, whilst everyone else will benefit from a heavily discounted scheme which according to government statistics - the average home will recover within 1 to 2 years.

All households upon completion of the grant application form will receive 4 free energy saving light bulbs and energy efficiency advice.

In addition to this North Staffordshire Warm Zone offers a free and impartial benefits advice and has already assisted hundreds of residents on claiming benefits.

Tracy Hine, Director of the Warm Zone, says "More than £7 billion goes unclaimed each year in benefits and grants available to families and the elderly. Many people do not realise, for example, that tax credits are available to households with incomes of up to £66,000.

Home owners and those living in privately rented accommodation assume they are not entitled to benefits and grants, or are put off by the complicated forms.

Warm Zone is working to address these issues by offering a free and impartial benefits health check to anyone completing the application form."

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 doorstep 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.

Councillor Maurice Lewis who represents Bentilee and Townsend said "I think this is a great scheme that will help private homes in the area, already over 38% of residents who have completed the short form have qualified for free insulation measures. Residents can qualify for a full grant even if they aren't on benefits, which is marvellous news for those that spend more than 10% of their annual income on energy bills"

Councillor Downs added "This is a fantastic scheme and I would encourage residents to participate and take advantage of the grants and services available as this will improve their properties and cut their energy bills"