

# What a Benefit

Fuel poor households in Gateshead are getting help in finding their way through the benefits maze thanks to Gateshead Warm Zone's Benefits Advice Team,

The newly created four-strong team, based in GWZ's offices at Swinburne House, have already started working across the borough helping people to claim the benefits they are entitled to.

More than 100 people have been helped in the first month alone by the team who provide a screening service which is followed up with home visits and help to complete the forms needed to apply for the benefits.

One couple were helped by the benefits team to pull in a raft of benefits and entitlements which they were unaware they could claim.

Pension credit, Attendance Allowance at the higher rate, Housing benefit and Council Tax have seen an annual increase in their income of £12,882.48.

Another couple from Felling received a benefits screening and subsequent visit from Benefits Advice Team. As a result they were awarded benefits totaling £7,653.60 a year.

"Millions of pounds in benefits go unclaimed in Gateshead each year as people don't understand what they can claim or how to go about it," explained Keith Smallman, a Welfare Rights worker who is seconded to the GWZ team from Gateshead Council.

"All the cases we work on don't result in such huge sums but it's typically around the £2000 mark which is still significant.

"There are so many people out there who don't know what they are entitled to. y of the residents who are in fuel poverty wouldn't be if they were receiving this extra income."



*The Gateshead Warm Zone Benefits Advice Team*