

## North Staffordshire Warm Zone is Helping to Keep the Cold at Bay this Winter in Burslem North

Homes in the Burslem North area are getting a helping hand keeping the cold at bay this winter – thanks to the launch of North Staffordshire Warm Zone major energy efficiency programme.

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 Burslem North 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.

Councillor Joy Garner who represents Burslem North said "I think this is a great scheme that will help a lot of private homes in the area, already over 38% of residents who have completed a short questionnaire have qualified for free insulation measures.

Even residents that don't qualify for free measures will qualify for a discounted grant. A lot of people are concerned about subsidised grants and the amount they will be asked to pay but I can assure people that with Warm Zone they will only be asked to contribute £149 per measure, not only that households stand to recoup the money within a couple of years through the energy savings they make.

Warm Zone home visitors will be calling on residents in Burslem North over the next 4 weeks, they will be wearing black and red uniforms and carry identification which they show residents when they call. It is important that householders ask for identification from any organisation as unfortunately, you can't always be sure that people turning up on your doorstep are from a bonifide organisation.

I would encourage people to participate and complete the short questionnaire as they will benefit in various ways"

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."

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."

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.