



**Kirkles Council – Warm Homes  
An “area based” approach to energy  
efficiency programme**

## **Introduction**

The Department of Social Development's (DSD) current energy efficiency scheme "Warm Homes" provides energy efficiency measures for householders who receive certain qualifying benefits and own or rent their home from a private landlord. It successfully supports around 9,000-10,000 households per year.

An alternative approach is to pull together sufficient funding to provide insulation free to all suitable homes in an area. This 'area-based' approach avoids the administrative cost of arranging different payment structures for different homes and the social stigma associated with means testing. It can also reduce the cost of installation because installers use their time more effectively.

Kirklees Council in West Yorkshire, which for an identical budget as the Department of Social Development's Warm Homes Scheme, have provided an "area based" approach to all households in the Council area. The success of this approach has enabled Kirklees to help nearly six times as many homes in half the time as DSD's Warm Homes Scheme. The Council believes that this universal approach removes the bureaucracy cost of targeting individuals, which they believe accounts for 25 per cent of any project.

The "area based" approach that is used by Kirklees was originally and successfully piloted by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in 1998 in the Willowfield and Beechmount areas of Belfast.

The Consumer Council believes that an "area based" approach is one way in which the Northern Ireland Executive can further maximise the help and support it provides to households who are in fuel poverty. An "area based" approach could successfully be used to efficiently target the areas that have the highest levels of fuel poverty in Northern Ireland.

## **Kirklees Warm Zone**

Kirklees Warm Zone won the Ashden Award in 2009 for the best local authority sustainable energy scheme in the United Kingdom.

It is the largest local authority home insulation scheme in the United Kingdom and the Audit Commission awarded the scheme its top rating of four stars for overall performance.

A recent report from the Department of Energy and Climate Change showed that Kirklees Council had now the highest percentage of their area's housing stock insulated in the United Kingdom.

## **Background**

The metropolitan borough of Kirklees is in West Yorkshire and includes the towns of Huddersfield and Dewsbury, along with several other towns and

villages. The borough has a population of 401,000 living in 172,000 households. In 2006 it was estimated that there were around 35-45,000 homes (around 26 per cent) in fuel poverty in Kirklees – then one of worst levels in England.

In 2007, the Council set up the Kirklees Warm Zone scheme with the objective of providing a one stop approach to improve the domestic energy efficiency of housing across the local authority. The Warm Zone scheme aims to:

- Tackle fuel poverty
- Reduce carbon emissions
- Improve the uptake of state benefit support by residents; and
- Create jobs

### **Delivery**

All households in Kirklees are visited ward by ward, street by street.

Households are initially contacted by direct mail, informing them that the scheme will soon be in their area. This is strengthened by district wide marketing which reinforces brand recognition and reassures householders that the scheme is backed by the local Council.

Local community and voluntary groups also help to spread key messages and local events are held to raise awareness.

Trained assessors carry out door-to-door visits to check insulation status. If additional insulation is required a contractor installs mineral-fibre insulation in lofts and cavity walls, at no cost to the home owner.

The area-based approach has increased contractor productivity by **50 per cent** as it produces significant savings on travel time for surveyors and installers.

### **Financing**

Total cost: The £20 million cost of the scheme is identical to the Department of Social Development's Warm Homes Scheme.

Kirklees Council believes that this scheme has saved £200 from the fuel bills of households that have been helped with the Kirklees Warm Zone.

### **Progress and Impact**

- **Figures as at 5 Oct 2010** - all households in Kirklees have been visited. 133,759 energy assessments have been carried out. 43,157 properties have had loft insulation and 21,524 have had cavity wall insulation installed. In total 50,598 homes have received both insulation measures, which equates to 29 per cent of all households in Kirklees. ***In a similar time period the***

***Department of Social Development has helped 27-30,000 households for three times the budget.***

- Insulation measures will save the average Kirklees household £200 per year on fuel bills.
- It is estimated that every £1 invested returns £5 into the local economy. The total economic impact is over £80m from a combination of direct funding, job creation, householder fuel savings and increased benefits uptake.
- More than 15,000 homes requested further benefits/money advice, with 238 receiving additional benefits. Average actual increase in benefits is £2,526 (Nov 09).
- Total householder fuel savings are estimated to be £8.5m per year (Nov 2009), but this should reach £10m per year once the scheme is completed and then accumulate year on year.
- Job creation – Kirklees Warm Zone has directly created over 100 jobs per year for three years and indirectly created an additional 29 jobs per year. The indirect jobs are calculated as a result of the extra money generated and spent in the local economy, thus generating more jobs.
- Around 1,000 Kirklees homes have been taken completely out of fuel poverty.

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