Birkenhead MP Learns More About Heating Help for Vulnerable Residents

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Birkenhead MP, Frank Field, has visited a local resident to learn how she has been helped by a warmth scheme, after a faulty boiler left her without heating in her home.

Victoria Ledsham has severe chronic fibromyalgia and osteoarthritis, conditions which cause extreme stiffness and leave her in constant pain. Warmth in the home is crucial to Victoria's health and wellbeing, so when her ageing boiler became increasingly unreliable, often breaking down and leaving her without heating, she contacted Energy Projects Plus, an environmental charity which provides energy advice to Merseyside residents.

Victoria was referred to the npower Health Through Warmth scheme, which works in partnership with Energy Projects Plus, as well as other organisations across England and Wales, to assist vulnerable homeowners with the funding and installation of heating measures.

Homeowners like Victoria, who have a long term illness, a low income with little or no savings and who are unable to fully fund heating measures, such as a new boiler, may be eligible for help through the scheme and they don't have to be or become an npower customer to benefit.

The local Health Through Warmth co-ordinator was able to arrange the installation of a new boiler and an additional radiator, accessing funds from the unique npower Health Through Warmth Crisis Fund. Due to Victoria's previous employment, funding was also accessed from The Charity for Civil Servants, which supports former and retired civil servants or employees of associated organisations.

Frank Field MP joined npower's Matthew Cole, Head of Domestic Policy & Obligations, to find out more about Victoria's experience. On visiting Victoria at her home, the MP said: “For people with conditions like fibromyalgia and osteoarthritis, warmth in the home is very important and with autumn on the horizon, it was vital that Victoria had access to reliable heating. The dedicated team at Energy Projects Plus, together with the assistance from the Health Through Warmth Scheme and The Charity for Civil Servants, made that possible and it's encouraging to know that heating help is on hand for our vulnerable residents.”

Victoria adds: “I knew I couldn't afford to pay for a new boiler, so I was relieved when I found out that Health Through Warmth could help. It has made such a difference.”

Since its launch in 2000, almost 84,000 vulnerable residents across England and Wales have been referred to npower Health Through Warmth. The scheme, together with one of its partners, has been shortlisted in this year's national Charity Times Award in recognition of its partnership approach to heating help.

For more information about npower Health Through Warmth, or to find out if you or someone you know could be eligible for help, visit www.healththroughwarmth.com

To find out more about The Charity for Civil Servants visit www.foryoubyyou.org.uk

Notes to Editors:

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Health Through Warmth was set up in 2000 by npower, in partnership with National Energy Action (NEA), the national fuel poverty charity. The scheme aims to help residents whose health is made worse by cold

living conditions as a result of inadequate heating and insulation in their homes.

Across England&Wales, the scheme works closely with health and housing statutory and community organisations, Home Improvement and Care & Repair agencies and charities to identify residents eligible for help with heating and insulation measures.

Vulnerable residents can be assessed for help from the scheme, provided they have a cold related illness, are a homeowner, have a low household income with little or no savings and are unable to fully fund the required heating and insulation measures themselves.

Health Through Warmth is an npower corporate responsibility initiative, and clients don't have to be, or become, npower customers.

An award winning scheme - On 15 November 2012, npower Health Through Warmth was announced winner of the Energy Institute (EI) Community Initiative Award. The annual EI Awards reward and recognise individuals and organisations across the global energy sector, promoting excellence and innovation across many disciplines.

In 2011 the Health Through Warmth scheme was re-accredited with a Big Tick award by Business in the Community in the Building Stronger Communities category of their Annual Awards for Excellence.

This award recognises the company's continued commitment to responsible business practice and the positive impact that the Health Through Warmth scheme continues to have on the lives of vulnerable people with cold related illnesses who require assistance with installation and funding for heating and insulation measures.

Health Through Warmth and Foundations

Foundations is the national body for home improvement agency and handy person services in England. Foundations is appointed by the Department for Communities and Local Government to:

- develop the capacity of the home improvement agency and handyperson sector
- provide advice and support to the sector, government and commissioners, and
- represent the sector in discussion with government and other stakeholders.

What are home improvement agencies?

Home improvement agencies assist vulnerable people to improve, maintain and adapt their properties so they can continue living independently in their own homes. The services they offer include:

- advice and advocacy – giving people all the information they need to make an informed choice
- handyperson services – carrying out odd jobs, small repairs and adaptations by trusted individuals at reasonable cost
- financial issues - ensuring clients receive appropriate independent financial advice, and offering practical help, such as filling out forms, or checking that they are receiving all the benefits they are entitled to, and
- technical support - providing assurance that repairs will be undertaken to the client's satisfaction, within budget and on time.

Home improvement agency clients include older people, people with disabilities, people on a low income, homeowners and private sector tenants. Many agencies also provide some services to people who rent their home from the council or a housing association.

Foundations Independent Living Trust (FILT)

Since 2009, Health Through Warmth has worked closely with FILT (the Foundations Independent Living Trust). FILT is a registered charity set up to help the most vulnerable home improvement agency and handyperson service clients to stay independent in their own homes and it administers the npower Health Through Warmth Crisis Fund to help finance heating and insulation measures for people with cold related illnesses. Applications to FILT can be made by home improvement agencies across England for clients who are unable to fully fund measures themselves and or they have a grant excess to pay.

For more information please visit

Health Through Warmth and Care & Repair Cymru

Since July 2011 Care & Repair Cymru has held and administered an npower Health Through Warmth Crisis Fund. This is available for caseworkers from Care & Repair Agencies across Wales to apply for on behalf of vulnerable residents who meet the scheme's criteria and need financial assistance towards the installation costs of heating and insulation measures.

Care & Repair Cymru is the national body for Care & Repair in Wales, and the Older People's Housing Champion. The 22 Care & Repair Agencies across Wales actively work to ensure that all older people have homes that are safe, secure and appropriate for their needs.

For further details about Health Through Warmth please visit www.healththroughwarmth.com or emailhealththroughwarmth@npower.com

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npower press office0845 070 2807press.office@npower.com Health Through Warmth was set up in 2000 by npower, in partnership with National Energy Action (NEA), the national fuel poverty charity. The scheme aims to help residents whose health is made worse by cold living conditions as a result of inadequate heating and insulation in their homes.

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For further details about the areas the scheme operates in or more information about Health Through Warmth please visit www.healththroughwarmth.com or email healththroughwarmth@npower.com. You can also check out ourYoutube channel.

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