



RIGHTSto**WARMTH**

Supported by



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PRESS RELEASE

Rights to Warmth: new programme launched to help the old and vulnerable

Attend and **Help the Aged** are launching an innovative nationwide programme aimed at enabling vulnerable people on low incomes to afford and use adequate energy for heating and cooking.

The programme will work at a community level bringing together local teams of volunteer groups, local authorities and other local partners, to encourage vulnerable householders to get in touch and provide them with independent advice and assistance.

David Wood, Attend's Chief Executive, says that the key to the project's success will be to convince elderly people in particular that using enough heating is vital to maintaining their health, independence and quality of life.

"The recent escalation of fuel prices means that more people are now at risk. A failure to use enough heating can lead to progressive health failure for vulnerable people – particularly the elderly and small children."

Mervyn Kohler, Help the Aged Head of Public Affairs, says “We are pleased to support this initiative: Our campaigns have brought considerable success in recent years in raising public awareness of the issue and in prompting the government’s introduction of the winter fuel allowance for pensioners. But research shows that a great many households are still hard to reach. These are often elderly people who live in their own homes and who do not realize that they may be eligible for specific help or who feel that their independence may be threatened by accepting it.”

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Arthur Probert, Joint Programme Director, says that the initiative is designed to address these issues: “although there are many schemes provided by energy suppliers and local authorities, many householders are reluctant to take up these opportunities. Reasons include suspicion of perceived commercial interests, lack of money to make homes more energy efficient, and fear of losing independence through accepting benefits or other financial assistance. Even though keeping warm is a very high priority, far too many do not take advantage of the help available.”

“It is central to the local campaigns that people are encouraged to know that the advice and support on offer is independent and that keeping warm is about maintaining their independence and quality of life.”

“Our aim is to increase the numbers of households where any combination of assistance, advice on selecting an appropriate tariff, financial assistance through benefit entitlement, or grants for energy efficiency improvements at home, will reduce the danger that the old and vulnerable suffer through inadequate heating.”

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Note to editors

The **Rights to Warmth** pilot programme takes an innovative approach, combining local publicity and contacts linked to Help the Aged's national 'Cold Kills' campaign. Working through local community groups, the initiative specifically aims to identify hard to reach households and build trust so that people can feel confident of receiving independent advice and the assistance to which they are entitled.

Energy efficiency is getting increasing publicity in the context of global warming and through Councils' statutory obligations. But research is showing this can be counter-productive in attempts to encourage vulnerable households on low incomes to use sufficient energy to stay warm and healthy.

Right to Warmth will work by bringing together local teams of volunteer groups, local authorities and other local partners, to deliver a locally relevant marketing and awareness campaign to encourage vulnerable householders to get in touch and provide them with independent advice and assistance. A central "energy champion" team backs up the local teams with expertise, project management and information resources.

Rights to Warmth is developing pilot projects across Great Britain with a number of local authorities, their PCTs and other local partners from the voluntary sector. The programme covers a variety of areas – urban, suburban and rural. Each local project is tailored to the needs of the area and complements existing services. The overall programme is therefore designed to build up a range of best practice by finding out what works best in different circumstances. This will support local authorities and health services address a key area of need by delivering significant additional benefit to the hard to reach within communities.

Attend

Attend is a leading UK-wide membership organisation promoting the role of volunteers in health & social care. Attend has 750 member groups with 31,000 active volunteers in hospitals, community care settings, courts and prisons. They run hundreds of shops, cafes, social groups, transport, visiting services and befriending services and raise over £47 million for hospitals and health services every year. It works with national partners to increase the recognition and resources given to volunteering groups and to enable volunteers to give meaningful support and care to people in need.

Help the Aged:

Help the Aged is the charity fighting to free disadvantaged older people in the UK and overseas from poverty, isolation and neglect. It campaigns to raise public awareness of the issues affecting older people and to bring about policy change. The charity delivers a range of services including information and advice, home support and help in difficult times that are supported by its fundraising activities and paid for services. Help the Aged also funds vital research into the health issues and experiences of older people to improve the quality of later life.