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Bright sparks start energy-saving crusade

A team of eco-champions has hit the streets of Coventry to spread the message about climate change and tackling fuel poverty.

Thanks to funding from Whitefriars Housing Group, more than ten resident associations took part in an energy-awareness day aimed at training staff and resident group representatives on ways to save energy. The event was run by Warwickshire Energy Efficiency Advice Centre.

Topics included understanding gas and electric bills and comparing charges and reading meters. Residents also learned the costs of running different appliances in the home, different fuel payment methods and how to get the best out of central heating systems.

Tile Hill resident Shelia Bates said: The event was very useful and it was interesting to see the truth behind some energy-saving misconceptions. We were given some low energy bulbs and also leaflets which I've already distributed to my neighbours.

"I'm quite active in the community so will be talking to other groups about the topic and what I've learnt. Anything that saves money and the world's resources can only be beneficial for residents and I think similar events in the future would be very popular."

It is hoped the green army, now armed with top tips on saving energy and advice leaflets, will spread the word amongst other residents about how they can save their cash - and the environment.

According to research unveiled this week by the Fuel Poverty Advisory Group there are 2.5 million households in England which suffer from fuel poverty. The definition of fuel poverty where the amount spent on heating by an individual is more than 10 per cent of their income.

In addition to completing an improvement programme to homes across the city, which has seen more than 9000 double-glazed windows, 4000 homes have had thermostatic control fitted to radiators and over 5000 homes benefit from better loft installation, Whitefriars has also handed out more than 13,000 energy efficient lightbulbs in the last two years.

Other plans in the pipeline include an interactive website page where residents can access energy saving advice and a central heating guide for all Whitefriars' tenants. This will include information such as how much residents could save each year by reducing their thermostat by just one degree.

Sam Moore, Whitefriars' asset manager, said: "The rising cost of gas will have hit many tenants hard and although the weather is heating up, there's still many in the city who'll be worrying about whether they can afford to turn on their heating.

"It's often the most vulnerable residents, such as the elderly, who suffer from fuel poverty so we want to help them and also do our bit to spread the message on energy saving."

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