



05 December 2005

No frosty reception at Whitefriars

Whitefriars Housing Group has pledged to help protect the environment and help tenants save money on their heating bills, following the launch of an affordable warmth strategy.

The promise by the group follows news from Age Concern that eight older people will die every hour this winter from cold. With the Met Office predicting this winter to be one of the coldest on record, Whitefriars has launched its action plan which will, amongst other things, help tackle fuel poverty,

Fuel poverty is where occupants cannot afford the fuel bills necessary to keep their homes warm. This is defined in the UK Fuel Poverty Strategy as a household needing to spend more than 10 per cent of its income on fuel. There are estimated to be around 3m households suffering from fuel poverty in England.

Whitefriars' massive improvement programme over the last five years has included work to make homes across the city more energy efficient. So far more than 9,000 homes have benefited from double-glazing and 6,000 properties have received new boilers. More than 4,000 homes have had thermostatic controls fitted to radiators and around 5,000 homes have been given new loft insulation.

Other schemes include working with Powergen to offer Whitefriars' tenants on low incomes free energy-saving light bulbs. These use 80 per cent less electricity

and can last for six years. The bulbs are available free of charge at all local offices.

Whitefriars has also commissioned a full energy survey at the Chace Hostel, in Willenhall. Work is set to start early in the new year to meet the survey recommendation and improve the building's energy rating.

To further tackle the issue, Whitefriars will find out how many families remain at risk of fuel poverty and plan how best to improve the situation.

Whitefriars' asset strategy officer Ifat Shanaz, whose role includes the delivery of the new strategy, said: "I believe all organisations have a duty to consider their impact on the environment, so this new policy is a huge step in the right direction. As a landlord, we aim to repair and improve homes to a high standard – and we feel making homes more energy efficient is a part of that.

"Whitefriars does not want to see its tenants living in cold homes because they are worried about high fuel bills. Therefore, by improving the energy efficiency of homes and providing advice, we're giving the environment a helping hand and, at the same time, improving the quality of life for our tenants."

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**For further information please contact Michelle Hallmark at The Bridge Group on
02476 217 398 or m.hallmark@bridge-group.co.uk**