



**BLACK COUNTRY HOUSING GROUP**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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**DRAFT**

**Released:**

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### *Black Country Housing offers a gateway to beating ill health through fuel poverty*

Black Country Housing & Community Service Group (BCH) has been a key player in supporting energy giant npower in delivering their Health Through Warmth initiative to local people. The scheme aims to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable people in the community.

Health Through Warmth, which operates in 16 areas across England and Wales, has linked up with key community focused organisations to help them to identify people suffering from ill health due to living in cold, damp homes. More than 2.4 million households in England alone are unable to afford to pay for the warmth they need, 57% of which are occupied by older people.

In Britain mortality rates increase as the weather turns colder. The excess deaths are from a sudden rise in heart attacks, strokes and respiratory illness. These illnesses generally result from the combination of low income, inefficient heating systems and the cold damp housing as a consequence.

The npower initiative has proved so successful it recently scooped a coveted 'Big Tick' Business in the Community Award. BCH are just one of the partners aiding delivery and are proud to have helped over 500 local people to improve their living conditions.

One Dudley resident has been particularly pleased with the assistance from the scheme with help from BCH. 78 Year old Mrs R from Dudley owns her own home which required a new central heating system as the one she had was unreliable. The heating system, which was over 35 years old, had broken down a number of times and when working was inefficient.

Mrs R has poor health as she suffers with Osteo-arthritis, has had a hip operation and has suffered a stroke. She also previously had cancer of the uterus.

Living on low income supported by benefits, Mrs R was unable to afford the much needed new heating system to improve her quality of life and aid her recovery.

npower Health Through Warmth arranged for a quote for the installation of a new heating, which came in at almost £3000. During communications and visits to Mrs R npower HTW discovered that her husband who had sadly passed away 18 months ago, had served in the Royal Navy for 15 years. With this information it was possible to write to several charities seeking assistance with funds towards the installation of the new heating system. As a result



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£750 was awarded from the Royal Navy, £500 from the Royal British Legion and £200 from the Baron Davenport Charity which raised an impressive £1,450. npower Health Through Warmth paid the balance of £1,550 from their crisis fund.

Soon after the new central heating system was installed and Mrs R is now “relieved and happy” that both npower Health Through Warmth and BCH were able to provide help and support at no cost to her. .

If you know of someone that could be helped by npower Health Through Warmth please call BCH / Health Through Warmth on 0121 5611969. You do not need to be claiming benefits to qualify.

Picture [Mrs R talks to Ken Gray, the gas engineer installing her new central heating]

Attached - npower logo.

***[Editors Note] More information on Health Through Warmth is available from [http://www.npower.com/health\\_through\\_warmth](http://www.npower.com/health_through_warmth) or the npower press office – contact Jenny Simons or Zoe Coombs on 0845 070 2807.***

**Ends**

**Black Country Housing & Community Services Group Ltd.** is a leading social housing provider in Birmingham and the Black Country providing quality homes for rent and shared ownership. We are delivering more services including, training, care, community development and business advice within a wider geographical area. Having achieved preferred partner status with Sandwell and Dudley, we continue to work with other local authorities and organisations on a range of projects and local initiatives.

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**Further information from Sharon Fereday**

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- 1. npower is one of the UK's top three energy suppliers and draws on 50 years experience in supplying electricity and gas. npower offers a range of essential home and business services including conveyancing, to 6 million customers across the UK.*
2. npower is the supplier of green energy to the new Wembley Stadium and sponsor of the Test Match Series in England, Women's Test Series, National Village Cricket Championship and the Twenty20 Cup.
3. Through its clean electricity product npower Juice, npower is the only supplier to offer electricity from renewable sources at no extra cost.
4. In 2004, RWE npower became a 'Percent Club' member for the second time. (We are now one of only 152 companies nationwide who invest more than 1% of pre-tax profits into the communities in which it operates).