



## **Energy Outreach Agents – Background Information**

### **Affordable Warmth**

## **Keep warm and well in Worcestershire / Warwickshire**

This project is funded by the Scottish Power Trust as part of their commitment to reducing fuel poverty. It will be delivered by Community First and Warwickshire Rural Community Council, both of which are part of the National Rural Community Council Network, which works to support rural communities. Community First has been working with local communities for almost 30 years and is taking the lead on the project, which will run until July 2014.

Our aim is to provide advice about energy efficiency and affordable warmth to rural communities in Parishes on the Worcs and Warks border; two rural areas in Wychavon and Stratford Districts which have relatively high levels of fuel poverty and poor access to local services. The Worcestershire Parishes covered in the first year will be Harvington, The Littletons, Badsey, Wickhamford and Bretforton. In year two, it will be Fladbury, Wick, Hill & Moor, Throckmorton and Pinvin

The project employs two part-time staff, Sharon and Alison, who live in the project area. They will be working to 'bridge the gap' between the local community and the statutory and voluntary organisations able to offer help and support to them. We also want to help build up, and make people part of, local community support networks; this means that although the focus of the project is energy and fuel poverty we will also be working to encourage people

to play an active role in their community in all areas of life. We recognise that being part of clubs and societies, for example, not only gets people out of cold homes , it helps to build friendships and support and can create a 'lifeline' for some of the most vulnerable people in the community.

Sharon and Alison will provide face-to-face information and confidential support for any issues relating to affordable warmth. The project will be publicised locally but personal contact by the agents will play a key role in encouraging individuals and communities to get involved. They will do this by making links with parish councils, faith groups, village clubs and societies or by home visits to individuals where appropriate. Both agents have practical experience of energy issues and may either offer help themselves or put people in touch with others who can help. We are intending this to be more than an information service so wherever possible Sharon and Alison will not make sure people have the information they need but will make sure that people are able to act on it. This 'hand holding' service is one of the main ways in which we will help to 'bridge the gap' between people in need and the help on offer.

Some agencies are already working in these areas and we will be working with them, providing 'added value' by making sure people can use their help. Some communities may also be involved with local activities such as community planning or environmental projects which may complement this work and it will also be important to work with them. The Agents will work closely with local service providers and local groups and organisations to make sure that people who get in touch get the advice and support they need from whatever service provider is best placed to give it.