

THAW Orkney is now on hand to help

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‘We, as a community, can make a positive difference to those living in fuel poverty...’

An Orkney charity has launched its affordable warmth service, to help tackle the serious fuel poverty problem in the county. The goal of THAW (Tackling Household Affordable Warmth) is achieving affordable warmth for households throughout the islands.

Orkney currently has the second highest levels of fuel poverty within Scotland. The 2011-2013 Household Condition Survey states that 58% of households are fuel poor – a figure that rises to 82% for pension households.

Working in partnership with the Orkney Care and Repair (OCR) and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), THAW Orkney is now ready to accept referrals and has a team in place to provide help.

Based at The Housing Centre, 15 Victoria Street, Kirkwall, according to THAW, the team will also be able to make home visits throughout the county. In total, five staff will work together to help support clients with energy saving, energy switching, income maximisation and energy efficiency advice, which, they say, can often be a confusing and daunting affair.

Affordable Warmth Officer Stacy Johnston said: “It’s important that we raise awareness of the high percentage of fuel poor households and encourage local folk to identify and refer these households to us. We, as a community, can make a positive difference to those living in fuel poverty and provide them with the necessary support to not only achieve affordable warmth but to also help folk to live in a more sustainable and comfortable environment.”

THAW Orkney Manager Paul Gray added: “Although the pipeline approach, whereby clients are hand held through a step by step process, isn’t new this is the first time any organisation has used it to address fuel poverty. This makes what we are trying to achieve all the more exciting.”

A partnership project has been set up by THAW Orkney, CAB and OCR with a strong focus on helping those who are most vulnerable through a process which has been designed to provide maximum support in terms of property, financial, health and skills related issues that people living in Orkney may face.

Moreover, THAW Orkney hopes to show that positive health impacts can be achieved, especially in relation to the well-being of those most vulnerable, by helping people on their journey to affordable warmth. They are also working closely with partnership organisations across Orkney, in order to achieve this goal.

The charity is having an open day event next Tuesday, January 19th, at the Kirkwall Town Hall from 11.30am – 2.30pm.

THAW Orkney was established following a fuel poverty workshop in the county in October, 2013. At this event, it was agreed that a new, independent Orkney-based body be set up with the exclusive goal of addressing fuel poverty.

In October, 2015, it was announced that the Affordable Warmth Partnership – involving THAW Orkney, Orkney Care & Repair and Orkney Citizens Advice Bureau – had secured almost £400,000 from the British Gas Energy Trust Healthy Homes Scheme to establish a team to help folk through the often – confusing world of energy efficiency programmes.

For further information or advice, contact THAW Orkney at 15 Victoria Street, Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1DN, email: info@thaworkney.co.uk or phone 07825349414.