



Media Release

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NEW SCHEME TO MAKE CANTERBURY FAMILIES HEALTHY

A major new home insulation and heating programme has been launched in Canterbury, seeking to secure up to \$5 million in funding to warm up, and make energy efficient, thousands of cold and damp homes.

“The Warm Families project aims to bring together a range of partners to improve the health and wellness of low-income Canterbury families. It will turn their damp, cold homes into energy efficient, warm, dry and healthy homes,” says Jane Cartwright, Chief Executive of Partnership Health Canterbury, a key project partner.

“The focus is on helping low-income Cantabrians to lead warmer, healthier lives by installing insulation and energy-efficient heating in their homes. This will provide health benefits to families and people with identified health issues likely to be made worse by under-heated homes.

“This is Canterbury’s largest community project focused on warming up homes to tackle ill health. The provision of insulation and energy efficient heating in homes is essential to deal with the illnesses associated with harsh Canterbury winters,” Ms Cartwright says.

Organisations involved include the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA), local lines companies Orion and MainPower, power retailer Meridian Energy, the Canterbury District Health Board, Partnership Health Canterbury, Environment Canterbury, Community Energy Action and the Christchurch City Council. Other organisations and supporters are likely to join the project as it grows.

“EECA is a major funder and supporter of Warm Families. We are really excited about this project as it will provide free improvements to those with the greatest health needs,” says Mike Underhill, Chief Executive of EECA.



community energy action
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Warm Families has secured about \$250,000 in local funding for this financial year. Combined with EECA funding, Warm Families will spend more than \$1 million on insulation and heating this year to June 2009 – enough to retrofit more than 400 homes. The Warm Families project aim is to be spending \$5 million per year by 2010. This would retrofit more than 2,000 homes a year.

The retrofitting (upgrading of existing houses) programme is scheduled to begin in January 2009 with a pilot programme of 100 homes of children with asthma, referred by their GP.

“Warming up Canterbury families’ homes will bring numerous health benefits, which will flow through to a reduced need for hospital admissions and reduced medical costs for community members and local health organisations,” Ms Cartwright says.

New Zealand research has already shown warmer homes can significantly reduce respiratory illnesses and have an overall positive impact on the health and wellbeing of residents. International research has similar findings.

The Warm Families programme will initially focus on those considered most at risk – people eligible for the flu vaccine, people over 65, people with a chronic health condition, children under 12 with respiratory illness, and community service card holders. Eligible participants are referred to the project via their GP.

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