



Keep Well this Winter

November 2009



www.kwtw.org.uk

Making the switch

As the cost of energy continues to increase, changing energy supplier can mean considerable savings, particularly for those who have not switched before. In the majority of cases, changing supplier is straightforward, although there are no guarantees that the new tariff you choose will not subsequently rise. When choosing a tariff, look for one that is guaranteed for a set period to ensure you get a substantial benefit as a reward for going through the switching process.

The most important thing is to ensure that you are paying the lowest amount possible for your energy. If you receive pension credit or one of the other means-tested benefits then apply to go onto the Social Tariff with your energy supplier. If you only receive State Pension and/or a small private pension you may still be able to make energy savings. Contact your energy company or the Home Heat Helpline on 0800 33 66 99 and check that the tariff you are paying is the lowest possible. If not, changing energy suppliers might be the most effective way for you to save money.

First, contact your local Age Concern for help or use the Energy Switch Helpline, www.energyhelpline.com, 0800 074 0745 (approved by Consumer Focus), or a price comparison website to find out which supplier can offer you the cheapest tariff. You will need information about your energy use ready to refer to and know roughly how much energy you have used over the past year. You'll find this information on your energy bill.

Once you've found the best tariff and agreed a contract with a new supplier you will receive confirmation by letter within 7 days which will include the proposed date for the change of supplier. In the following weeks your new supplier will contact your old supplier to make arrangements to take over the supply. At no time during the switching process will your energy supply be interrupted.

On the date that your energy supplier is changing, you'll need to take a meter reading to provide to your new supplier. They will use this as a basis to start your new account and pass the reading to your old supplier to finalise your old account. This process usually takes around 6-8 weeks. You should check the meter readings on your bills to make sure they match the readings you gave on the day of the change.

Be sure to check your contract carefully to ensure that your tariff won't increase dramatically after an initially low rate. Older people should also take advantage of free services provided by the energy companies under the banner of the 'Priority Services Register' (more information on page 7), which include quarterly meter readings and increased security.

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Monmouthshire flu events a great success

Two very successful flu vaccination clinics took place in Monmouthshire last month to provide free flu jabs for older people and their carers in Tintern and Abergavenny.

At the event in Tintern, which took place at the Wydean Medical Practice, a total of 320 people were vaccinated with around 250 screening assessments to check people's blood pressure and body mass index.

At the Old Station Practice in Abergavenny, an amazing 1,950 flu vaccinations were provided. A large number of additional visitors were also attracted to the event to obtain information and advice having seen marketing at other practices, one stop shops, charity shops, dentists and optometrists, and many wandered in from seeing the general influx of people.

The local physiotherapy team was also on hand, running a

busy stall and dealing with enquiries. Over the course of the day the team dealt with a total of 188 enquiries, providing advice, changing ferrules, giving out new sticks and crutches and measuring for walking frames.

Some of those who visited the physiotherapy stand were identified as high-risk for falls and were referred to Monmouthshire Falls Coordinator Keli Beamon for further information and advice, demonstrating the importance of events like these in identifying issues that may cause health and/or mobility problems in the future and intervening where necessary.

Dr. Rachel Kettle who coordinates the work of the National Public Health Service in Monmouthshire said:

"We are very happy with the number of people we were able to vaccinate against seasonal

flu at the events in October, with over 2000 flu jabs delivered and a large number of other screenings and referrals. "

"We hope to build on the success of this year's events and plan to include more events and other GP Practices for next year's campaign."

If you're running a Keep Well this Winter event this year, then we would like to know about it. We'll include details of the event in the newsletter and on our website. Once your event has taken place, please feel free to send us a report (with pictures if possible) for us to include in a future edition.

Send your articles/information to Ros.williams@accymru.org.uk or richard.jones@accymru.org.uk

We look forward to hearing from you soon!

Flu jabs for the over 65s are free from GP surgeries, says charity

With supermarkets and chemists offering a flu jab for as much as £10, Age Concern Cymru and Help the Aged in Wales is reminding people that the over 65s can have the same jab for free at their local GP surgery.

The charity's Director of Influencing and Programme Development, Victoria Lloyd, explains: "We appreciate that for many people it may be more convenient to get a flu jab at their local supermarket or high street chemist"

"However, it is important that we let older people know, particularly those living on a tight budget, that the service is available free of charge from their local GP surgery. We do not want older people to miss out on having a flu jab because they believe they have to pay for the service."

According to Welsh Assembly Government figures there were 1,400 excessive winter deaths amongst older people in Wales during 2006/07 with the figure rising to 1,500 during 2007/08.

Sadly, experts expect the figure to have risen even further for the 2008/09 winter period.

Victoria continued: "The winter flu jab can help pensioners stay relatively fit and healthy throughout the winter months, which means they will be in a better position to fend off more dangerous illnesses. We also want to remind pensioners that the current outbreak of swine flu is a separate matter from winter flu as the two illnesses are caused by different viruses."

Say no to salt

Most of us are aware that we should not add salt to food as we eat our meals. When cooking meals salt should be added carefully, not using too much. The average adult salt intake is 8.1g per day for a man and 6g for a woman. When we estimate how much salt we take in our diet in a day we often forget that the food we buy contains salt. Look at the food labelling of the product and see how much of daily allowance is in that specific item and don't choose products with high salt levels.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has been working with companies in all sectors of the UK food industry to reduce levels of salt in food since its

programme started in 2003 including retailers, manufacturers, caterers and trade associations.

Together with these organisations the FSA has been working to reduce levels of salt in a very wide range of foods.

Chief Medical Officer for Wales, Dr. Tony Jewell said:

“Health professionals in Wales are very much aware that a diet high in salt is a significant risk factor in developing high blood pressure, which in turn is a significant risk factor in cardiovascular disease - the biggest killer of the population in Wales (36% of all deaths).

“I endorse the Food Standards Agency's continuing partnership work with food manufacturers to reduce the salt content of our food and welcome this latest phase of the campaign which will raise consumer awareness of the 75% of our salt intake which is hidden in the everyday foods that we eat.”

For further information about reducing your salt intake, contact the Food Standards Agency Wales on 029 2067 8999 or visit www.food.gov.uk/wales



Many food manufacturers have worked with the Food Standards Agency to reduce the level of salt in their food. You still need to be careful, though, as many prepared/processed foods like the ones shown above still contain high salt levels.

The recommended salt intake for adults is 6g per day and about 75% of the salt we eat is already in the food we buy. A ready-made sandwich, for example, can contain more than half of your recommended daily salt intake.

Be sure to check the labels and choose the foods/brands that use less salt in their recipes.

New innovative water and energy advice service

The Energy Saving Trust, working in partnership with Waterwise, has launched a new three year water and energy advice service for Cardiff, London and Edinburgh.

The project is funded by a contribution from the LIFE+ financial instrument of the European Community, Department of Energy and Climate Change and the Scottish Government and is the first of its kind in Europe.

The Energy Saving Trust has been investigating the links between energy and water since January 2009 to develop a way of offering integrated energy and water advice.

Research suggests that consumer understanding of the impact of water and especially hot water use is low. Research commissioned for the pilot, for example, established that only 8% of householders would currently make the link between saving water and saving energy, which demonstrates the need to raise awareness in this area.

Energy Saving Trust advisors will deliver this innovative water and energy advice service to householders in the pilot areas of Cardiff, Edinburgh and London until September 2010.

On average in the UK we are currently using 150 litres of water per person, per day - much of which is wasted. If every UK home reduced their hot water by just 5%, this would be equivalent to taking nearly 600,000 cars off the road. When taking into account energy used to heat water, there are significant energy, water and



financial savings to be made by only using the water we need.

Heating water for use in taps, baths and showers makes up around 30% of the average household's gas bills - around £200 a year. With 6% of the UK's annual greenhouse gas emissions related to water use, and nearly 90% of those emissions resulting from water use in the home, you can see how reducing your water use can benefit the planet as well as your pocket.

There are a number of ways to waste less water and the energy associated with heating water. Take a look below for the Energy Savings Trust top tips for saving water inside the home:

Snub the tub

If everybody in a four person family replaced one bath a week with a 5 minute shower, you could save between £5 and £15 per year on your energy bill. Opt for short, refreshing showers on a daily basis and keep baths to a minimum.

Fill 'em up!

Make sure that dishwashers and washing machines are full before putting them on and always use the most water and energy efficient settings. When it's time to replace your appliance, look for the 'Energy

Saving Recommended' Logo. Products with this logo will save both energy and water.

Sud's law

Using a bowl to wash up rather than leaving the hot tap running could save around £25 a year on a household's gas bills, if you wash up twice a day. If you must rinse, wash up or prepare vegetables in the sink, use cold water where possible and don't keep the tap running.

Go off the boil

Only boil as much water as you need to avoid unnecessarily heating water you won't even use.

Turn it off

A running tap wastes over six litres of water a minute so turn off the tap whilst brushing your teeth, shaving or washing your face and use cold water where you don't need hot.

Don't be a drip

A dripping tap can waste over 5,000 litres of water a year so make sure your taps are properly turned off and change washers promptly when taps start dripping.

Make it go further

Where possible, try and reuse unused water. Pour your left over glasses of water on houseplants, for example, and avoid wasting water from running taps whilst waiting for hot water.

For further information on the pilot water and energy advice scheme, contact the Energy Saving Trust on 0800 512 012 or visit www.energysavingtrust.org.uk.

Minister hears how Denbighshire will help older people with council tax

Social Justice and Local Government Minister, Dr Brian Gibbons, has heard how pensioners in Denbighshire will benefit from a scheme to help them pay their council tax.

The Welsh Assembly Government has made £2m available to local authorities across Wales for the scheme in 2009-10 and the Assembly's draft budget includes £4m to sustain the initiative in 2010-11. Councils will be free to determine how best to operate the scheme in their areas.

On a visit to Rhyl, Dr Gibbons heard that the council planned to issue public notices and press releases inviting applications from people over 60, who are liable for council tax, but not in receipt of council tax benefit. The grant allocation will then be divided between the



successful applicants and credited from their council tax accounts.

Dr Gibbons said: "Denbighshire's scheme targets those pensioners who are not in receipt of welfare benefits, including council tax benefit, and so help those who are in need, but not eligible for financial assistance."

"Issuing grants directly to councils will allow them to adopt policies that best suit the needs of their local population and fit in with their community strategies,

rather than forcing them to accept and implement a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Councils will be able to determine how best to spend their allocations and implement schemes to fit their own demographics and economy."

"This delivers our 'One Wales' commitment to help older people with their council tax. I look forward to hearing proposals from other local authorities on how they plan to spend their allocation."

Local authorities have until 31 October 2009 to formally accept their allocations and submit details of how they will operate the scheme in their areas.

For more information about plans for your area, contact your Local Authority's council tax department.

First steering group meeting for Care & Repair and Firebrake Wales partnership

Care & Repair partnerships with Fire Service regions are progressing well following the first meeting of the partnership steering group in September.

The partnership was set up recently to enable the two organisations to work together towards common goals. The over-arching goal is to improve the safety and welfare of vulnerable older people in Wales.

Central to achieving this goal has been the extension and development of service delivery partnerships between Care & Repair Agencies and the Welsh Fire and Rescue Services.

Vera Brinkworth, Head of External Relations at Care & Repair Cymru commented, "Care & Repair Cymru is delighted to be working in partnership

with Firebrake Wales to help encourage and promote fire safety to older people across Wales."

"As a movement, Care & Repair welcomes and encourages partnership working with organisations which share a similar vision and aims to Care & Repair. Our partnership can only assist our joint aim of making the homes of older people across Wales safer by helping to reduce the fire risk."

For more information about the services available in your area, contact Care & Repair Cymru on 029 2057 6286 or visit www.careandrepair.org.uk. For more information on Firebrake, contact 01633 654000 or visit www.firebrake.org.



Health Minister to launch new project to help older people

Health Minister Edwina Hart visited Wrexham on 16 October 2009 to launch an innovative pilot project which will support older people who are admitted to hospital to return home as soon as they are well enough to do so.

The project will start in November and will be trialled for six months at Wrexham Maelor Hospital.

The 'Frailty Fast Track Project' has been developed in response to concerns that older people who need hospital treatment for relatively minor conditions sometimes experience unnecessary delays so that their ability to care for themselves declines. It will allow older patients to recuperate and be looked after at home rather than the need to be transferred to a care home.

Frail, older patients will be navigated through the hospital care system to allow them to go home promptly when they are

well. When they return home, patients will have access to extra care and support, if needed, to allow them to comfortably resettle into their daily lives.

This project is an excellent example of the Assembly Government driving forward multi-agency working for the benefit of patient care.

Mrs Hart said:

"This pilot project will be an innovative way to try to streamline care for vulnerable older patients who need hospital treatment for relatively minor conditions but may face unnecessary delays during their stay. Often this delayed transfer from hospital is usually against patients' and carers' wishes and also means additional cost for the health and social services. If this project can reduce the amount of time a patient needs to stay in hospital, it will allow older people to comfortably return to

their daily routine as soon as possible and continue to live independently in their own homes."

Chief Medical Officer Dr Tony Jewell said:

"The project, which will begin in November will support older patients through their stay in hospital and provide extra assistance to help them resettle into their own homes so that they are able to resume their day to day lives as soon as possible."

"Enabling staff to follow the patient from hospital into the community to improve continuity of care for the frail elderly, should improve effective communication between hospital and community services and help patients and families feel supported. That this innovative approach has evaluation built into the project, so we understand whether this really does improve things for people is particularly helpful."

New equipment for Welsh hospitals to help patients with swine flu

The Welsh Assembly Government is funding the purchase of more ventilators for hospitals to help them deal with a potential increase in swine flu patients, Health Minister Edwina Hart has announced. Ventilators are used to help people with respiratory problems – conditions that can be made worse by swine flu.

The £1.429m funding will provide 65 extra ventilators for critical care units in hospitals across Wales. Plans are also in place to double the number of critical care beds in hospitals, should they be required, along with specialist staff.

The announcement follows the start of the swine flu vaccination programme which began yesterday with people in at-risk groups and frontline healthcare staff being the first to receive the vaccine.

For more information on getting the swine flu vaccination, speak to your GP or contact NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47.

Consumer Focus: Don't miss out on free services and other benefits



If you are a domestic consumer of gas and electricity and are of pensionable age, have a disability, are chronically sick, or have a hearing and/or visual impairment, then you can sign up to the 'Priority Services Register' which provides a range of free services available from your energy supplier (excluding households using Liquid Petroleum Gas).

Every gas and electricity supplier has an obligation to provide certain free services, designed to make life easier.

Password protection scheme

For your own personal safety and to make sure you know a caller is genuine, you can agree a unique password with your gas and electricity supplier. Whenever their staff visit your home, they will give you a password. This will protect you against bogus callers pretending to be from your gas or electricity supplier.

Accessing prepayment meters

If you cannot access your gas or electricity prepayment meter because you are frail or in poor health, your supplier will move it to a more accessible location, without charge, providing that it is safe and practical to do so.

Meter reading

Did you know that your gas and electricity suppliers are only required by law to read your

meter once every 2 years? Without accurate readings, many people have found themselves faced with 'catch-up' bills running into thousands of pounds. So it is very important that your bills are based on the energy you are actually using.

If no one in your household is able to read your gas and electricity meter, you can arrange with your supplier to have your meter every quarter and to send bills based on those readings.

Bill nominee scheme

Would you like your bills or a copy of your bills to be sent to a friend, relative or carer, so they can help you read or check them? Your supplier will do this upon request.

Advanced notice if your electricity supply has to be interrupted

If you rely on electricity to power vital medical equipment in your home, your supplier will give you advance notice if your supply has to be interrupted for planned work. This should help



Meters can be made more accessible as part of the scheme



The Priority Services Register offers increased security for vulnerable people

you make any necessary arrangements.

Services for visually or hearing impaired customers

Your supplier can provide information, including meter readings and bills, in a format suitable for you, whether it is Braille, large print, audio tape, or via textphone or Typetalk. They can also help you make a complaint or an enquiry.

How to register

To register for these free services, all you need to do is ask your gas and electricity supplier. You can find their telephone number on your latest bill. If you are unsure about doing this, you may wish to ask a friend to speak to the supplier on your behalf - either way your suppliers are obliged by law to help you.

For independent advice and information on energy matters, consumers can contact Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06 or visit www.consumerdirect.gov.uk.

Diary dates for coming months

Over the next few months Keep Well this Winter events and activities will be taking place throughout Wales to provide older people with help and advice to keep them healthy during the winter period.

If you are running an event that you'd like us to list in the newsletter and on the Keep Well this Winter Website, please contact Ros Williams on 029 2043 1552 or email rosalyn.williams@accymru.org.uk.

Real life stories request

The key aims of the Keep Well this Winter campaign include improving the health and quality of life of older people in Wales. Real-life examples of this can motivate those involved with promoting the campaign by showing what difference has been made to older people. Also, access to a human interest story can be the difference between the media giving press attention to the campaign and highlighting campaign messages, or rejecting the story.

If you know of any real-life stories of how the campaign has helped an older person and could share the story either anonymised or with the older person's consent and identity revealed, then please contact Ros Williams on 029 2043 1552.

December newsletter

It is important that everyone is aware of KWTW activities that are coming up as well as successful events or initiatives that have already taken place. Please forward up-coming dates, articles, photos and ideas to: Ros Williams - Tel: 029 2043 1552; Fax: 029 2047 1418; email: rosalyn.williams@accymru.org.uk

The deadline for the next newsletter is Friday 13 November.

The Editor reserves the right to alter submitted articles.

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Useful websites:

Keep Well this Winter - www.kwtw.org.uk

Welsh Assembly Government - www.wales.gov.uk

Age Concern Cymru and Help the Aged in Wales - www.agecymru.org.uk