

Help with heating costs in Wales

About this factsheet

This factsheet provides information about how to make your home energy efficient and about financial assistance that may be available to help you pay fuel bills and install energy efficiency measures. It also tells you how to choose an energy provider and what to do if you have a complaint against them.

The information given in this factsheet is applicable in Wales. Different rules apply in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Readers in England should read Age UK's Factsheet 1 **Help with heating costs**. Readers in Northern Ireland and Scotland should contact Age NI or Age Scotland respectively – see section 16 for details.

For details of how to order Age Cymru, Age UK factsheets and information materials go to section 16.

Note: The Age UK family works nationally and locally as Age UK, Age Cymru, Age NI and Age Scotland.

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1 Recent developments

- The Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) has now closed. As of 1 April 2011, a new Welsh Assembly fuel poverty scheme called Nest is now running in its place. See section 3.
- The Warm Home Discount has replaced the previous voluntary agreement with energy suppliers (known as Energy Rebate Scheme) that ended in March 2011. See section 9.
- Winter Fuel Payments have changed since the winter of 2010/11. See section 8.
- The UK Government launched the Renewable Heat Premium Payment scheme on 1 August 2011 to help householders across the country with funding towards the cost of installing renewable heating systems. See section 4.

2 Energy efficiency

You can make your home warmer and reduce your fuel bills by improving your home's insulation, taking a few energy-saving measures and using appliances more efficiently.

Insulating wall and loft spaces can significantly reduce heat loss in the home. Walls are responsible for around a third of the heat lost in most homes and an uninsulated loft for around a quarter of the heat lost. Insulating hot water tanks and pipes will help keep your hot water hot for longer. Draught proofing is a cheap and cost effective way to reduce your heating bills and double glazing can cut heat loss through windows significantly. By installing heating controls, you can control your heating more effectively and save on your heating costs.

If your boiler is over 15 years old you may want to think about changing it to make it more energy efficient. Since 1 April 2005 in most circumstances if you have installed a new boiler or replaced an existing one, you will have had to install a condensing boiler to meet higher standards for energy efficiency. When it is not possible to install this type of boiler a non-condensing boiler will be acceptable. Your installer will use the assessment procedure to decide what boiler to install. If they advise you that it would be unreasonable to install a condensing boiler in your home, they should give you a declaration form. Always use a Gas Safe Register installer or an OFTEC registered installer for oil (see section 15).

Gas and electricity companies will give general advice on the best way to use appliances and on how the effectiveness of your heating system could be improved. You can also get advice from the Energy Saving Trust (see section 15 for details).

2.1 Energy saving tips

- Turning your thermostat down by 1 °C can cut your heating bills by up to 10%
- Close curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows and check for draughts around windows and doors
- Use energy saving lightbulbs. They use a quarter of the electricity of an ordinary bulb and can last 10 times longer
- Only boil as much water as you need
- Don't leave appliances on standby. This wastes electricity.

3 Nest

Nest is the Welsh Government's new fuel poverty scheme. It aims to help reduce the number of households in fuel poverty and make Welsh homes warmer and more fuel-efficient places to live.

Nest offers a range of advice through expert partners, as well as a full home energy assessment and home improvements for the most energy inefficient homes.

They offer free, impartial help and advice about benefit entitlement, making sure you are on the right fuel tariff, managing money and schemes across Wales that offer home improvements at no cost or low cost.

Note: The definition of fuel poverty is when you spend more than 10% of your income on fuel bills.

Nest can offer a full home energy assessment and a range of home improvements that could include:

- a new central heating boiler
- insulation for a hot water cylinder
- loft, cavity wall and solid wall insulation
- draught proofing for doors and windows
- renewable energy technologies such as solar panels.

You may be eligible for home improvements under the scheme if:

- you own or privately rent your home and;
- you live in a home that is not energy efficient (F or G rated – see page 6)
- and you, or someone who lives with you, receives a means tested benefit; for example:
 - Pension Credit
 - Housing Benefit
 - Council Tax Benefit (but not just the reduction for a single person living alone)
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Income Support
 - Working Tax Credit (money coming in is below £15,860 a year)
 - Child Tax Credit (money coming in is below £15,860 a year)

A home with some or all of these characteristics might have an F or G energy rating:

- no central heating
- a boiler that is at least 15 years old – though some newer boilers can also be inefficient
- a hot water cylinder with no insulation
- solid or cavity walls with no insulation, or walls built from non-traditional materials
- no loft insulation or not enough insulation (less than 100mm thick)
- single-glazed windows
- no draught proofing around doors and windows.

You can call Nest on 0800 512 012 from a landline or 0300 456 2655 from a mobile. You can also request a call back from their website:
www.nestwales.org.uk/contact-us

4 Renewable Heat Premium Payment Scheme

The UK government launched the Renewable Heat Premium Payment Scheme on 1 August 2011 to help householders across the country with funding towards the cost of installing renewable heating systems. The new £15 million initiative will support up to 25,000 installations.

Approximately, 4 million householders in the UK do not have mains gas and have to rely on more expensive, higher carbon forms of heating, such as heating oil and electric fires. The scheme will mainly focus on these households. The following technologies will be available through the scheme:

- Ground Source Heat Pump - £1,250 grant (for homes without mains gas heating)
- Biomass boiler - £950 grant (for homes without mains gas heating)
- Air Source Heat Pump - £850 grant (for homes without mains gas heating)
- Solar Thermal hot water panels - £300 grant (available to all households regardless of the type of heating system used)

Householders will need to ensure they have basic energy efficiency measures in place before applying. The Energy Saving Trust will be managing the scheme. Grants will be available on a first come, first served basis and the scheme will close on 31 March 2012.

For further information and how to apply for the scheme, contact the Energy Saving Trust on 0800 512 012 or visit the website: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/rhpp.

5 Help from the local authority (council)

Local authorities have a general power to help improve living conditions. Help can include an adaptation or improvement of living conditions by providing a grant, a loan, materials or any other form of assistance. Each local authority must have a published policy describing the sort of help it offers.

Your local home improvement agency, called Care and Repair may be able to provide you with more information and assistance. To find out whether there is one in your area, contact your local Age Cymru/Age Concern, your local council's housing department or Care and Repair Cymru. See section 15 for more details.

Further details about the assistance available for housing improvements and repairs are explained in Age UK's Factsheet 13 **Funding repairs, improvements and adaptations**.

6 Charis grants

Charis grants are responsible for administering a number of utility Trusts and Funds. Anyone in need, hardship or other distress (particularly those struggling to pay for their domestic supply of gas, electricity and water) can apply to these.

In exceptional circumstances, help is also available to clear other priority household debts such as rent or council tax arrears, or to purchase essential household items, for example, a new washing machine. Such payments, known as Further Assistance Payments, may be particularly important to older people who maintain payments for their utilities but have no spare money if their cooker breaks down, for example.

Further information on which utility companies offer these grants can be viewed on their website: www.charisgrants.com.

Important: Seek money advice before applying for a grant. Your local Age Cymru/Age Concern may be able to offer you a full benefits check which could maximise your income.

7 Grants and loans from the Social Fund

If you receive Pension Credit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance, you might be able to get a Community Care Grant or Budgeting Loan from the Social Fund.

Community Care Grants are to help people live independently in the community or to ease exceptional pressures. They do not have to be paid back.

Budgeting loans are for people who have been receiving benefits for more than six months. They are interest-free but have to be paid back. They are designed to help with intermittent expenses which are difficult to budget for.

If you do not receive any benefits you may be able to apply for a Crisis Loan if you have emergency needs or are involved in a disaster (eg fire or flood), where the loan is necessary to prevent serious damage or risk to your health and safety. Crisis Loans are interest-free but have to be paid back.

There are different rules for each type of payment about what sort of costs can be met. Some items are specifically excluded, for example you will not be awarded a Community Care Grant towards the cost of fuel or standing charges. It might be possible to get a grant or loan towards the cost of installing a pre-payment meter, connection charges when moving home, minor repairs and improvements, and essential household equipment such as cookers and heaters.

You should apply to your local Jobcentre Plus office for a Social Fund payment. It is often a good idea to get advice about which type of payment to apply for, and completing the application form, especially for Community Care Grants. For more information about the Social Fund see Age UK's Factsheet 49 **The Social Fund**.

8 Other Social Fund payments

8.1 Cold weather payments

You are entitled to a Cold Weather payment for any week between 1 November and 31 March when:

- the average temperature in your area has been, or is expected to be, 0°Celsius or below for seven consecutive days; and
- you have been awarded Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance for at least one day during the period of cold weather and you are getting disability premium or you are responsible for a child under five; or
- you have been awarded Pension Credit for at least one of those days; and
- you are not in a care home.

You do not need to make a claim as payments are made automatically.

Cold Weather Payments are £25 a week.

8.2 Winter Fuel Payments

Winter Fuel Payments provide help with the cost of fuel bills for pensioner households. There are no income or savings limit, and they are not taxable. You are entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment for the winter of 2011/12 if you reach the qualifying age in the week beginning on the third Monday in September (the qualifying week). The qualifying age is currently rising in line with women's State Pension age. In 2011/12, you will meet the age condition for a Winter Fuel Payment if you were born on or before 5 January 1951. You are not entitled to a payment if you fall into one of the following categories in the qualifying week:

- you have been receiving free inpatient treatment in a hospital or similar place for more than 52 weeks
- you are getting Pension Credit, Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance and you live in a care home and have been in the home for the 12 preceding weeks

- you are not ordinarily resident in Great Britain or subject to immigration control (but there are some exceptions to these rules)
- you are serving a custodial sentence.

You should receive the payment automatically if you received one last year or if you are receiving a State Pension or social security benefit (apart from Child Benefit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit) during the qualifying week.

In other cases you will need to make a claim by 31 March following the qualifying week. Men who were aged 60 to 64 in 1997/98, 1998/99 or 1999/2000 may still be able to make a claim for those years.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Winter Fuel Payments helpline 0845 915 1515 can give you information about making a claim or answer questions about the payments.

Payments for 2011/12

The payment is an annual lump-sum payment of £200 if you have reached the qualifying age but you are under age 80 and live alone, or are the only person in the household who qualifies. It is £300 if you are aged 80 or over and live alone or are the only qualifying person in the household.

If you share your home with anyone else who qualifies (as a partner, relative or friend) you will usually get £100 if you are under 80 and £150 if you are over 80. If one of you is over 80 and the other isn't, you will get £200 and £100 respectively.

However, if you (or your partner) receive Pension Credit, Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, no adjustment will be made if there are other qualifying people living in the same household. If you are a couple, the claimant will receive one payment for both of you. The amount will be £300 if one or both of you are over 80, or £200 if not.

If you are living in a care home throughout the qualifying week and the 12 preceding weeks and are not getting Pension Credit, Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance you are entitled to £100 if you are aged under 80 or £150 if you are over 80.

9 Help from energy suppliers

9.1 Help with insulation

You may be able to get help from your energy supplier (electricity or gas company) to improve the energy efficiency of your home.

If you are aged 70 or over, or receiving disability or income-related benefits (including Pension Credit, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit), and live in private rented accommodation or are an owner-occupier, you may be able to get free cavity wall and/or loft insulation.

If you do not receive relevant benefits you may still be able to get a 50% discount on the above insulation measures.

For more information contact your local Energy Saving Trust or the Home Heat helpline (see section 15). Your local council or energy provider should also be able to advise you further.

9.2 Social tariffs and the Warm Home Discount

Social tariffs (which should equal the suppliers' cheapest deals), and are offered to consumers who are having difficulty paying their bills, are currently being replaced by the **Warm Home Discount**, a compulsory scheme which will be phased in over the next four years.

Under the scheme, in the financial year 2011-2012, eligible customers will automatically receive rebate of £120 on their electricity bill. Customers are eligible if they are responsible for the electricity account where they live and they receive the Guarantee Credit part of Pension Credit only (that is they do not receive any Savings Credit). The majority of the rebates will be delivered in the winter months.

Energy suppliers are also required to provide the same discount to other vulnerable groups of customers but they will have discretion over establishing eligibility criteria for these groups. Contact your energy provider to find out which groups of customers qualify.

There may be some existing social tariff customers that may not be eligible for the Warm Home Discount. Energy suppliers have committed to provide some form of transitional support to their customers who are not eligible for the Warm Home Discount.

Suppliers will continue to accept new applications for their existing social and discounted tariffs for a short period of time.

Some customers may still be able to get a better deal by switching to another supplier, particularly if they are also able to change their payment method (see section 10).

For more information visit the Consumer Focus website or talk to Consumer Direct (see section 15). For details of currently available social tariffs contact your supplier.

10 **Changing energy supplier**

You may be able to save money on your bills by changing your energy supplier. You will still use the same meters and have the same gas pipes and electric cables. All that will change will be the company that sells you your electricity and gas, and sends you bills.

10.1 **How to find the best deal?**

Comparison of prices can be difficult because different suppliers use different methods of charging, and the actual costs will depend on how much gas or electricity you use and how you decide to pay your bills. For example, some suppliers do not have a standing charge but have a higher price per unit. This could be attractive if you do not use much gas or electricity in a year. Paying by direct debit tends to be cheaper than paying quarterly or having a prepayment meter.

To find the best deal you need to work out how much you are paying for your gas and electricity each year. You can do this by looking at your last four quarterly bills. Then you need to find out which other companies operate in your area and how much they charge; they should be able to send you pricing details on request.

You can find contact details for energy companies on the Consumer Focus website or call Consumer Direct for more information (see section 15). Consumer Focus has a tool on its website that enables you to compare gas and electricity prices in your area for all energy suppliers.

Alternatively, there are websites that will calculate which gas and electricity suppliers can offer you the cheapest deal. Websites listed below have signed up to the Consumer Focus Confidence Code, a voluntary code of practice for companies providing price comparison services to consumers.

They are:

Website	Telephone
www.confused.com	
www.energyhelpline.com	0800 074 0745 (free call)
www.energylinx.co.uk	0845 225 2840 or 0800 849 7077
www.moneysupermarket.com	0845 345 5708
www.beatthatquote.com	0800 599 9955
www.simplyswitch.com	08000 111 395 (free call)
www.theenergyshop.com	0845 330 7247
www.ukpower.co.uk	0800 093 2447
www.unravelit.com	0800 862 0021 (free call)
www.uswitch.com	0800 051 5493 (free call)
www.whichswitch.co.uk	
www.switchthenation.com	0800 310 2187 (free call)
www.fuelswitch.com	

Some providers have special tariffs such as capped/fixed-price tariffs or specialist tariffs aimed at a particular group of qualifying customers (such as older people) and offering special benefits; they may not be included in price comparison websites and you should check with individual providers what is available. Be aware that these tariffs may be more expensive than a company's current standard tariff.

Price is not the only reason to change supplier. You might want to ask the company the following questions before you make a decision:

- What payment methods are offered? Some payment methods may be cheaper than others; for example, it is usually cheaper to pay your bills by monthly direct debit or over the internet, than to pay by cheque on a quarterly basis
- Are there any special discounts or schemes? Some suppliers offer special discounts when they supply both gas and electricity to consumers (ie dual fuel)
- Are there any extra or hidden charges? Some suppliers add a standing charge to your bill; others do not but they may charge a higher unit price
- How well do they perform? Consumer Focus has a website page with details of the number of complaints received from consumers about individual suppliers, and Consumer Direct should be able to send you a printed version if you do not have access to the internet (see section 15)
- Do they offer any other services? (And are you interested in them?) All suppliers have to offer special services for older, disabled or chronically sick people (see section 13)
- What are the supplier's policies on debts and disconnection? (see section 11).

Changing supplier to help the environment

You can help to stop climate change by changing to a supplier that sells green energy. You will not necessarily pay more than for the traditional suppliers. Use the above guidelines and websites to compare the prices.

10.2 The contract

To change supplier, you will have to sign a contract with the new supplier. This is legally binding so you should not sign it unless you are quite sure you want to, and you know what it means.

If a sales person calls at your home to try to sell you their gas or electricity supply you may want to follow these guidelines:

- Ask them for identification – all sales people must carry this

- If you are still in doubt about them, check with their company that they are who they say they are. Get the company number from directory enquiries or the phone book (not from the caller)
- Do not let them into your house if you are in any way unsure or unhappy
- If you want a friend or family member to be with you then ask the sales person to come back at a convenient time
- Remember, that sales representatives only work for one energy supplier so they will only inform you about deals from that particular supplier.

Sales representatives have to abide by certain rules. For example, before you sign up to a new deal the sales person has to give you a written estimate, and where possible a written comparison with your current energy deal. If you make a decision to switch, your future supplier has to provide you with a copy of the contract, and an explanation of what happens next and your cancellation rights.

10.3 **What to do if you change your mind after signing a contract?**

The new supplier is required to contact you within 24 hours following the sale to check if you want to proceed with the switch. In addition, you have seven working days (or more if the company says so in their information) to cancel the contract that you have signed in your home, regardless of whether the salesperson had a pre-arranged appointment or not.

If you change your mind about switching to the new supplier, inform the new company immediately, confirm any phone call you make in writing and keep a copy of your letter.

For further information and advice contact Consumer Direct or see Consumer Focus website (see section 15).

11 Disconnection

If you are threatened by disconnection because you cannot pay your bills, contact the energy company straight away. You might be able to agree payment arrangements for your arrears or, if you have not been able to manage a payment arrangement, you might be offered a prepayment meter (if safe and practical) as an alternative to disconnection. The Consumer Focus website (see section 15) has more information and a template letter to help you request a reduction in your repayment rates if you cannot afford what they are asking you to pay.

11.1 Codes of practice

Both gas and electricity suppliers are obliged to publish codes of practice on their policies for dealing with customers in arrears and when they will or will not disconnect.

Some suppliers will not disconnect certain groups of people at particular times of the year. For example, they will not disconnect if:

- you agree and keep to the payment plan
- all the people in the household are of pensionable age (or everyone in the home is of pensionable age and under 18) they will not disconnect between 1 October and 31 March unless it is clear that you have sufficient money to pay
- the debt is in the name of a past customer and you have made arrangements to take over the supply.

The codes of practice may also advise you of when disconnection can be delayed if you take action. For example, if you are over retirement age, disabled or sick, disconnection can be delayed for 14 days, or 21 days if you inform the fuel companies that you are contacting the social security office or the Social Services department for help.

11.2 Fuel direct

If you have a fuel debt and are receiving Pension Credit, Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, you may be able to avoid disconnection or get reconnected by going on 'fuel direct'.

This would mean that some of your benefit would be deducted every week and paid direct to the company. Contact the office paying your benefit for advice.

11.3 Prepayment meters

If you have a fuel debt and are unable to agree on an affordable repayment plan with your supplier, then installing a prepayment meter may be your only option. They can be a useful way to budget if you are on a low income and can be used to pay off arrears as an alternative to disconnection, but the cost of fuel is generally higher with prepayment meters. If you cannot afford to buy tokens or recharge the card or key you could be without fuel, it may be difficult to get to a charging point and you will not be able to spread the larger winter bills over the whole year. Contact your energy supplier to discuss all options before committing to a prepayment meter.

11.4 Payments to landlords

Some tenants pay their landlord for their electricity and gas. There is a maximum price that landlords can charge tenants called the Maximum Resale Price. Visit the Consumer Focus website or contact Consumer Direct for more information (see section 15).

12 How to complain about a energy provider

If you have a complaint, contact your energy supplier in the first instance and follow their complaints procedure. If your complaint has remained unresolved within the period of time specified by the complaints procedure or you are unable to reach an agreement with the company, take your complaint to the Energy Ombudsman (see section 15). If you are unable to reach an agreement, ask the company to confirm this in writing.

If you need to get further advice, contact Consumer Direct (see section 15). Consumer Direct will not take on individual cases but will give advice on the best way to progress a complaint against the energy provider. It can also refer some cases to Consumer Focus (see below).

Consumer Focus is a consumer watchdog set up to protect the interests of gas and electricity consumers (see section 15). It has a website with factsheets and a frequently asked questions section including information regarding your rights, changing your fuel supplier and contact details for energy suppliers.

Consumer Focus will not accept complaints directly from members of the public. It will only take on complaints from consumers who are referred to it by Consumer Direct and who are in one of the following categories:

- threatened with disconnection
- have been disconnected
- have experienced a failure in a prepayment meter system
- are vulnerable.

For the purpose of the referral, a consumer will be seen as vulnerable where it is not reasonable to expect that person to pursue their own complaint because of:

- personal circumstances
- the urgency/seriousness of the situation and the inability of the consumer to be able to handle the issue within the necessary timeframe
- the complexity of the problem for that particular consumer
- any combination of the above factors.

In all other circumstances Consumer Direct will advise the customer or advice agency on how best to pursue the complaint.

13 Priority services

All gas and electricity suppliers are required under a code of practice as part of their licence conditions to give priority services on request and without charge to people of pensionable age, people with disabilities and the chronically sick.

These services are:

- free gas appliance and installation annual safety check if you receive means-tested benefits and either all adults in the household are eligible for free services or there is a child under five years old
- a meter-reading service on a quarterly basis if no one in the household is able to read the meter themselves
- if you have difficulty using your gas and/or electricity appliances or reading your meter, your company may be able to provide special controls and adapters to help you
- if you are disabled and find it difficult to access or read your gas/electricity prepayment meter, your supplier may be able to move the meter, free of charge, to a more convenient position
- sending a bill to a nominated third party for payment
- providing a unique password for the person to confirm the identity of an electricity or gas employee calling at their home
- if you are visually or hearing impaired your energy company must provide you with information, including meter reading and bills, in a format suitable for you. They must also have suitable facilities to enable you to make complaints or enquiries. Consumers must provide their own textphone equipment but many companies provide Braille and talking bills
- priority service in getting your gas supply restored or, if necessary, arrangements made for temporary heating and cooking facilities, provided that all adults living in your home are eligible for the priority service
- if you rely on electricity to power your medical equipment at home, you can get advance notice if your electricity supply has to be interrupted for planned work.

For more information contact your supplier or get advice from Consumer Direct (see section 15)

14 Gas and electricity safety

Electricity

If there is a power cut or you suspect you have a problem with the external wiring, call the emergency number given by your supplier to get someone to come and deal with it. If you have a problem with the wiring inside your home or any of your electrical appliances, you need to contact a qualified electrician to deal with it.

Gas

If you suspect you have a gas leak you should immediately phone the National Grid Gas Emergency Service 0800 111 999 (free call) and report it. The number is open 24 hours a day. The operator will get an engineer to attend a gas escape free of charge. If the leak is inside your house, the engineer will make the situation safe, either disconnecting the dangerous appliance or, where necessary, disconnecting the whole gas supply.

You will then have to arrange for someone who is registered under the Gas Safe Register Scheme to come and do the necessary work. You must not reconnect the appliance or gas supply until the work has been done. You can find details of engineers who are registered with the Gas Safe Register in your Yellow Pages or Thompson Local Directory, or on the website www.gassaferegister.co.uk or by calling the Gas Safe Register on 0800 408 5500 (free call).

If the faulty appliance is owned by your landlord get in touch with them as quickly as possible so that they can organise the necessary repairs.

If you qualify for a free annual safety check (see section 13) this will show whether your gas appliances and installations are safe. The check consists of a basic examination; it is not a substitute for regular servicing. If you have mobile heaters that use liquefied petroleum gas you should also have these serviced regularly.

If you are a tenant, your landlord is legally required to arrange for the gas appliances they provide to be checked for safety at least once a year. They are required to keep a record of these checks, which you can ask to see. If you own any gas appliances in a rented property, then it is your responsibility to get these checked.

15 Useful organisations

Age Cymru

Your local Age Cymru/Age Concern may be able to inform you of help available in your area to assist you with your fuel or heating problem. For the address of your local Age Cymru/Age Concern call Age UK Advice on 0800 169 65 65 or visit the website www.agecymru.org.uk.

Care and Repair Cymru

The National body that actively works to ensure that all older people have homes that are safe, secure and appropriate to their needs. There are Care and Repair agencies in every county in Wales.

Tel: 029 2057 6286

Website: www.careandrepair.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau

You can get advice on general heating problems by calling at your local Citizens Advice Bureau (look in the telephone book). They may help to negotiate with the fuel suppliers on your behalf where disputes arise.

Tel: 0844 477 2020 (Adviceline)

Website: www.adviceguide.org.uk

Consumer Direct

A government helpline that provides information and advice to consumers by telephone and online.

Tel: 08454 04 05 06

Website: www.consumerdirect.gov.uk

Consumer Focus

An organisation created through the merger of Energywatch, the National Consumer Council and Postwatch to champion consumer interests. Consumers cannot contact Consumer Focus directly but they can access information on the website. For advice about a problem with an energy company contact Consumer Direct (see above).

There are plans by the UK government to abolish Consumer Focus. No date has been announced as of yet.

Tel: 020 7799 7900

Website: www.consumerfocus.org.uk

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

DWP administers pensions and benefits for older people through the Pension Service (see below). For details of your local office check in the telephone book under Pension Service, social security office, or ask at your local library or advice centre.

Energy Ombudsman

Independent body set up to resolve disputes between consumers and their energy suppliers. Before you take your complaint to the ombudsman you have to complain to your supplier first by following their complaints procedure.

Energy Ombudsman, PO box 966, Warrington, WA4 9DF

Tel: 0300 440 1624 or 01925 530263

Website: www.energy-ombudsman.org.uk

Energy Saving Trust

The Energy Saving Trust is a non-profit organisation that provides free and impartial advice on energy efficiency. It provides information on grants and schemes to improve energy efficiency that may be available in the area.

Tel: 0800 512 012

Website: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

Gas Safe register

Replaced CORGI 1 April 2009

Tel: 0800 408 5500

Website: www.gassaferegister.co.uk

PO box 6804, Basingstoke, RG24 4NB

Home Heat Helpline

Provides advice to vulnerable customers on keeping warm and reducing energy costs that includes advice on payment methods, available grants and benefits.

Tel: 0800 33 66 99

Website: www.homeheathelpline.org.uk

Nest

Nest is the Welsh Government's new fuel poverty scheme. It aims to help reduce the number of households in fuel poverty and make Welsh homes warmer and more fuel-efficient places to live.

Tel: 0800 512 012

Website: www.nestwales.org.uk

Oil Fired Technical Association (OFTEC)

OFTEC registered technicians are the only people defined as 'competent' and able to self certify their work without the need for informing the local building control department.

Tel: 0845 65 85 080

Website: www.oftec.org

Pension Service (The)

For details of state pensions, including forecasts and how to claim your pension.

Tel: 0845 60 60 265

Website: www.directgov.gov.uk

Social Services

Your local social services department may be able to help in a number of ways. If you are disconnected, it may be able to lend you heating, cooking and lighting appliances.

It may arrange for you to have short-stay daytime or full-time care at a day centre or a care home if you are without heat and light at home.

Your local social services department can be contacted through your county council.

16 Further information about Age Cymru and local Age Cymru partners

Age Cymru is the new force combining Age Concern Cymru and Help the Aged in Wales. For information visit the Age Cymru website at www.agecymru.org.uk or call Age UK Advice on 0800 169 65 65. Age UK and Age Cymru are working together to provide Age UK Advice. Age Cymru works in partnership with local Age Cymru partners across Wales.

Call Age UK Advice on 0800 169 65 65 if you would like:

- to order copies of any of the Age Cymru and Age UK information materials mentioned in this factsheet
- to request information in large print
- further information about our full range of information products
- contact details for your nearest local Age Cymru/Age Concern organisation.

Age Cymru

Along with Age UK, Age Scotland and Age NI, Age Cymru is a member of the Age UK family. Age UK and Age Cymru are working together to provide Age UK Advice.

Age Cymru

Age UK Advice: 0800 169 65 65

Website: www.agecymru.org.uk

Age UK

Age UK Advice: 0800 169 65 65

Website: www.ageuk.org.uk

Age NI

Age NI Advice: 0808 808 7575

Website: www.ageni.org

Age Scotland

Tel: 0845 125 9732

Websites:

www.olderpeoplescotland.org.uk

www.agescotland.org.uk

Support Age Cymru

Age Cymru needs your support to enable us to remain the best informed and most influential national charity for older people in Wales.

If you would like to support our work in Wales to enable us to continue distributing our free information and advice, please call 029 2043 1555 to make a donation (national call rate, Monday to Friday, 9.15 am–5 pm) or donate online at www.agecymru.org.uk/donate

Legal statement

Age Cymru is the new force combining Age Concern Cymru and Help the Aged in Wales. Registered address: Tŷ John Pathy, 13/14 Neptune Court, Vanguard Way, Cardiff CF24 5PJ. Company number 06837284. Registered charity number 1128436.

Age Cymru works in partnership with local Age Cymru partners across Wales.

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Age Cymru is the new force combining
Age Cymru yw y grym newydd sy'n cyfuno



HELPTHEAGED WE WILL

Help the Aged yng Nghymru
Help the Aged in Wales

Age Cymru is working in partnership with local Age Concerns
Mae Age Cymru yn gweithio mewn partneriaeth ag Age Concerns Lleol