

**Help at Home Warm Homes**

Stones End Centre  
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**020 7358 4077**

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**www.ageuk.org.uk/lewishamandsouthwark**



# Keep warm and well this winter

Home information pack

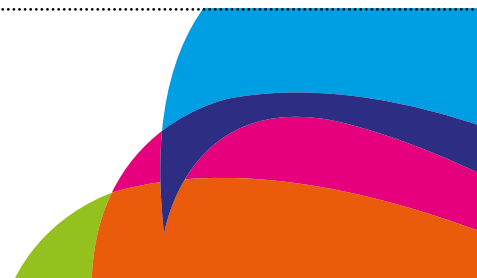


Any further queries, problems or someone to talk to, call us on

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## Why should I keep warm?

**Cold homes have a significant impact on people's health. One of the best ways of keeping yourself well during winter is to stay warm. Cold weather can lead to serious health problems such as heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia and depression.**

The chances of these problems are higher if you are vulnerable to cold-related illnesses and are:

- over 60
- on a low income (so cannot afford heating)
- have a long-term health condition such as heart, lung or kidney disease
- disabled

Every winter in the UK, 25,000–30,000 deaths are linked to the cold weather. Approximately four million households in the UK are in fuel poverty. This is when a household spends more than 10% of their income to keep warm.

There are many health impacts that can occur due to a cold damp home including:

- increased suffering
- problems caring for vulnerable people at home – reducing recovery from illness
- increased risk of relapse/reoccurrence
- heart attack
- stroke
- respiratory illness – bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma attacks, cold and flu, arthritis and rheumatism
- falls, accidents, mobility problems
- hypothermia
- mental health issues
- other health conditions affected by extreme temperatures

### A chilling thought!

After a cold snap – your local hospital will gear itself up to deal with the following increase in illnesses triggered by the cold weather.

Over half of excess winter deaths are from cardiovascular disease. A third are from respiratory disease and 93% are those aged over 65.

**Most of these health impacts are avoidable**



## How can I keep warm?

### During the day

- avoid going outdoors unless necessary – but keep active and moving around your home as much as you can
- keep your home at recommended indoor temperatures
- if you cannot heat all of your rooms, keep your living room warm throughout the day and heat your bedroom before going to bed
- set the timer on your heating to come on before you get up and switch off when you go to bed
- in very cold weather, rather than turn the thermostat up, set the heating to come on earlier so that you will not be cold while you wait for your home to become warm

### During the night

If you use a fire or heater in your bedroom during the winter, open the window or door a little at night for ventilation. Keep your bedroom at recommended indoor night-time temperatures. Never use an electric blanket and hot water bottle together as you could electrocute yourself.

If you have an electric blanket, check what type it is – some are designed only to warm the bed before you get in and should not be used throughout the night.

Make sure that your electric blanket is safe by getting it tested every three years by an expert. The Fire Brigade and Trading Standards can test your electric blanket for safety. If buying a new electric blanket look for CE, BEAB or IMQ safety markings.

DO NOT use a gas cooker or oven to heat your home, as this is inefficient and there is a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. More information is available from the NHS Keep Warm Keep Well webpage:

[www.nhs.uk/Livewell/winterhealth/Pages/KeepWarmKeepWell.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/winterhealth/Pages/KeepWarmKeepWell.aspx)





## How do I keep my house warm?

### Being energy efficient

You can speak to your energy supplier or to the **Energy Saving Trust 0800 512 012**, but for the time being here are some energy saving tips:

- 1 If you have a timer, set the heating and hot water to come on only when required – 30 minutes before you get up in the morning and set to turn off 30 minutes before you are due to leave the house
- 2 Set the hot water cylinder thermostat to either 60 degrees Celsius (140 degrees Fahrenheit).
- 3 Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows and check for draughts around windows and doors.
- 4 Always turn off the light when you leave a room. Don't leave appliances on standby and remember not to leave laptops and mobile phones on charge unnecessarily.
- 5 Try to ensure that you only boil as much water in your kettle as you need
- 6 A dripping hot water tap can waste enough energy in a single week to fill half a bath. So fix leaking taps and make sure they are fully turned off
- 7 Energy saving light bulbs last up to ten times longer than ordinary bulbs and can save around £45 over the lifetime of the bulb

With a little effort and research you can ensure that you are not spending any more on energy than you absolutely need.



## How can I save money on my fuel bills?

Gas and electricity prices have risen but there are still ways to cut the cost of your energy bills. Developments in the energy market have made it easier for you to shop around and choose the best deal.

Information required in making an informed choice:

- Annual statement or copy of bills over the last 3 months
- If you use a card, token or key meter, have an idea of how much you spend a week/month on energy
- The name of the tariff you are currently on (if you don't know contact your supplier).
- How much was spent on energy in the last year
- How you currently pay for your energy
- Your postcode

### Is changing supplier risky?

- There is no danger of your energy supply being disconnected.
- You will not need a new meter
- The gas and electricity you receive in your home will remain the same
- The only difference you will see is that your bill will be from your new supplier
- If you currently have a fixed term contract there may be a penalty to pay for terminating a fixed term contract early

### Comparing prices

Approved online price comparison sites are listed on [www.consumerfocus.org.uk](http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk)

If you cannot access the internet, you can call **Consumer Direct** on **0845 404 0506** for a pricing factsheet for your area or general advice. Alternatively, you can phone your supplier direct.

The Winter Fuel Payment helps with the costs of keeping warm in the winter for people born on or before 5 January 1951. Payments vary between £100 and £300 depending on individual circumstances.

For more information, contact **0845 915 1515** or visit [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)



## Where can I get help if I can't pay?

### Getting help with your energy bills

If you are having difficulty paying your bills and are worried about money, there are a number of people who can help. Suppliers offer those considered 'vulnerable' access to the company's cheapest tariff. Typically, vulnerable people may be those that are elderly, disabled or on low incomes. You will need to approach individual suppliers to see what schemes they have in place. You can get help to do this from any of the organisations listed below.

### Age UK Lewisham and Southwark

We can give general financial advice and check that you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to. Call **020 7358 4077**.

### The Home Heat Helpline

Also offers advice for people having difficulties in paying for their bills. They can help you access all the help and information you need and you can call them free on **0800 33 66 99** or visit

[www.homeheathelpline.org.uk](http://www.homeheathelpline.org.uk)

For help and advice about fuel debts, contact your local advice agency. Full details are available at [www.southwarkadvice.org.uk](http://www.southwarkadvice.org.uk)

### Southwark CAB

Telephone advice

**0844 499 434**

### Peckham CAB

97 Peckham High St, SE15 5RS

Drop in service Monday, Wednesday and Friday  
10.00am-1.00pm

### Bermondsey CAB

8 Market Place, Southwark Park Road, SE16 3UQ

Drop in service Tuesday and Thursday  
10.00am-1.00pm

### Blackfriars Advice Centre

131 Camberwell Road

London SE5 0HF

Drop in service Monday to Thursday

10.00am-12.00 noon

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 2.00-4.00pm

Reception desk is open for enquires Monday to Friday between the hours of 10.00am-12 noon, 2.00-4.30pm, 5.00-7.00pm (Wednesday only)

Blackfriars Advice Centre can give you information and help. They can be contacted on **020 7358 7035** or visit [www.blackfriars-advice.com](http://www.blackfriars-advice.com)



## Dealing with arrears

If you think you might have difficulty paying for your bill, contact your supplier immediately to discuss the situation – this is the best way to avoid recovery action such as disconnection or installation of a pre-payment meter. Most energy suppliers offer some form of help to customers struggling to pay their bills.

Some examples include:

- rebates to certain customers who qualify if they are over 60, on certain benefits or who are on a low income
- money off your energy bill
- benefit entitlement checks to ensure the customer is receiving all government benefits and any grants that they may be entitled to, for example to write off debts of purchase new appliances

Energy suppliers have to let you repay arrears at a rate that is affordable to you, even if it means the arrears will not be cleared within 12 months or some other period of time.

If you are having difficulty paying your energy bills or are in arrears, come in to your local advice centre or Citizens Advice Bureau to find out what assistance you can get.

If you are in receipt of certain benefits and have fuel arrears over a certain amount, you may be able to apply for direct deductions from your benefit towards your arrears and ongoing usage. This scheme is called Fuel Direct and is available by contacting your local benefits office. Further information about this is available from all the advice sources listed above.

### Priority Service Register

If you are of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick, you can qualify for your supplier's Priority Service Register (PSR). The PSR is available to anyone who is of pensionable age, living with a disability or chronic illness, or with a visual or hearing impairment.

Joining the PSR entitles them to the following free services:

- a gas appliance and installation safety check (where everyone in the household is eligible for the PSR).
- help with moving a meter if it is in an inconvenient position
- a personal password system for gas and electricity staff to use every time they call at the person's home, to confirm they are genuine
- help if they have difficulty in using certain appliances
- bills supplied in different formats, such as large print or Braille, by cassette or in a different language.

To find out if you qualify for the PSR or to register, either contact your supplier direct or get help from any of the advice agencies listed above.





## Am I entitled to more help with money or improvements?

If your home could benefit from additional insulation, there may be help available with the costs. Large energy providers run insulation schemes which offer subsidised cavity wall or loft insulation to anyone who owns their home or privately rents from a landlord. Usually, you do not need to be supplied by the energy provider offering the grant to take advantage of their scheme, though customers often get greater discounts. These schemes also offer free insulation to those over 70 or in receipt of certain benefits. If you qualify for free insulation, it is well worth taking advantage of these schemes as once the insulation is installed you can start saving money straight away.

We have teamed up with the RE:NEW scheme to offer residents who own their home or rent privately, a free energy assessment of their home, a series of easy to install measures such as energy monitors which will be fitted for you and depending on your circumstances you may also benefit from free virgin loft or cavity wall insulation. A cashback reward is available for loft and cavity wall insulation – this will be discussed with you during the visit.

For more information, contact the **Help at Home** team on **020 7358 4077** or go to [www.ageuk.org.uk/lewishamandsouthwark](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/lewishamandsouthwark)



## Useful Contacts

### Age UK Lewisham and Southwark

Information and Advice service. The Help at Home team offer advice, information and support in and around the home.

**020 7358 4077**

[helpathome@ageuklands.org.uk](mailto:helpathome@ageuklands.org.uk)

### Southwark Keep Warm Keep Well Partnership

[www.southwarkadvice.org.uk](http://www.southwarkadvice.org.uk)

### Citizens Advice Bureau Southwark

**0844 499 4143**

Monday 1.30–3.30pm

Tuesday 4.30–6.30pm

Wednesday 1.30–3.30pm

Thursday 11.00am–1.00pm

Outside of these times you can obtain pre-recorded information on this number on a wide range of topics.

### Southwark Carers

A free advice service on energy saving and fuel debt.

**020 7183 2286**

[www.southwarkcarers.org.uk/energycare](http://www.southwarkcarers.org.uk/energycare)

### Blackfriars Advice Centre

A general advice service offering free advice & assistance to Southwark residents.

Drop in service and appointments at Cambridge House:

Cambridge House, 131 Camberwell Road, SE5 0HF

**020 7358 7035**

[www.blackfriars-advice.com](http://www.blackfriars-advice.com)

### Home Improvement Agency

The Home Improvement agency provides a service to improve or repair your home and is available for homeowners or private tenants if you are elderly, disabled or live with someone who is disabled.

**020 7525 1873**

[home.improvementagency@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:home.improvementagency@southwark.gov.uk)

### Southwark Council handy person scheme:

**020 7525 1863**

[handyperson@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:handyperson@southwark.gov.uk)

### Dulwich Helpline

**020 8299 2623**

Offers volunteer support, activity groups, hospital visiting and one-off practical help.

[www.dulwich-helpline.org.uk](http://www.dulwich-helpline.org.uk)

### Time and Talents

Offers community led services and activity groups to people of Rotherhithe and Bermondsey

**020 7231 7845**

[www.timeandtalents.org.uk](http://www.timeandtalents.org.uk)

Advice for people having trouble paying bills

### Home Heat helpline

**0800 33 66 99 (freephone)**

[www.homeheathelpline.org.uk](http://www.homeheathelpline.org.uk)

### Consumer Direct

**0845 404 0506**

[www.consumerdirect.gov.uk](http://www.consumerdirect.gov.uk)

### Energy Saving Trust

Advice on improving energy efficiency of home

**0800 512 012**

[www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)



