

Winter 2004/2005

Keep Warm Keep Well

Advice on:
Keeping warm and healthy
Home improvement grants
Heating your home
Help with bills

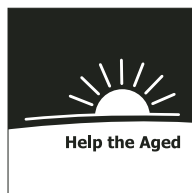
A WINTER GUIDE



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A joint venture by:



Why keeping warm matters

To keep well during winter, it's essential to keep warm. As the weather gets colder, we are all more likely to catch colds or flu; and if your body temperature drops then the risks of a heart attack, stroke or breathing difficulties increase. This is especially true for older people, or if you have a chronic disease, or are vulnerable due to a physical disability.

So the best way to combat winter is to keep warm and follow as healthy a lifestyle as possible. What you eat and drink, and the exercise you take, can make a big difference. And, as part of keeping well, it's vital to keep your home warm and keep yourself warm when you go out.

This booklet has advice on how to keep warm and well this winter. Many of the suggestions are common sense, but are still important to remember. And you may find some practical ideas and useful information that are new to you. There is news of:

- **more help for people aged 60 or over - a £200 winter fuel payment to help towards the cost of keeping your home warm**
- **extra help for fitting insulation or even a new central heating system in your home.**

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If you have any questions about keeping warm and well, call the **winter warmth advice line on 0800 085 7000**.

It is staffed by people who should be able to answer your questions ... or put you in touch with someone in your area who will be able to help. There will be an interpreter to provide advice in your own language if you need this. Your call is free.

keep well



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WINTER WARMTH ADVICE LINE
8am to 8pm Monday to Friday

FREEPHONE 0800 085 7000
TEXTPHONE 0800 085 7857

Be prepared for winter

Keeping well. To keep fit and well in winter you should try to carry on doing the things that keep you fit and well during the rest of the year. So get ready for winter by looking at what you normally do every day.

Smoking. If you smoke, try to stop now. The evidence shows that giving up smoking can improve your health, no matter how old you are. For confidential advice and support with giving up smoking, call the **NHS Smoking Helpline: Freephone 0800 169 0 169.**

Eating. Try to eat a mixed diet and take plenty of hot drinks on cold days.

Exercise. Stay as active as you can during winter, as well as during the rest of the year.

Have a flu jab. Flu is a particular winter problem. It can be a serious health hazard for anyone in an "at risk" group. Flu immunisation is strongly recommended for these groups, and is free. Talk to your GP or local surgery.

You are "at risk" if you:

- are aged 65 years or over
- have chronic heart disease, chronic respiratory disease, including asthma, chronic renal disease, diabetes mellitus
- have lowered immunity due to a disease or treatment.

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NHS Direct. For advice on health matters, anytime, you can call NHS Direct and speak in confidence to a qualified nurse. You don't need to be ill to use the service; it's there to help you keep healthy as well. **NHS Direct: 0845 46 47.**
Local call charges apply.



keep healthy

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FREEPHONE 0800 085 7000
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Keep warm, dress well

There's an increased risk of becoming ill if you get cold outdoors, as well as at home. These simple steps will help to protect you.

At home

Wear several thin layers of clothes rather than one thick layer – the warmth from your body will get trapped between the layers.

Choose clothes made with wool, cotton, or fleecy synthetic fibres that are designed to be light and warm.

In the coldest weather, a good way to keep warm in bed is to wear bed socks and a night cap or scarf round your head, as well as thermal underwear and a warm nightdress or pyjamas.

Outdoors

Several thinner layers of clothing under your coat will keep you warmer than one thick layer.

Wear something on your head, otherwise you'll get cold very quickly.

Wear warm, dry, flat, non-slip shoes or boots, especially in frosty weather.

dress well

Keep warm, eat well

Food is fuel, it helps keep you warm. Follow these suggestions for eating well this winter.

Aim to have at least one hot meal a day and have hot drinks regularly through the day.

Have a hot drink before bedtime.

Prepare a thermos flask of a hot drink to have by your bed in case you wake up in the night feeling cold.

Include something from each of the five main food groups in what you eat each day.

Try to keep a stock of food from all these groups in case you can't get out to the shops in very cold weather. If you are on a special diet, talk to your doctor before you make any change in what you eat or drink.

Group 1: bread, cereals, potatoes, pasta, chapatis

Group 2: fresh fruit and vegetables (try to have at least five portions during the course of each day)

Group 3: milk and dairy foods

Group 4: meat, fish, eggs, peas and pulses such as beans (including baked beans)

Group 5: foods containing fat and sugar

Keep warm, keep moving

Moving around generates extra body heat, so any kind of activity will help to keep you warm.

Don't stay sitting still for long periods.

Spread chores out through the day so you can alternate between rest and activity.

Moderate exercise, such as walking, has real health benefits if you do it regularly all year round.

Try to keep your exercise up in winter, without taking risks in wet or icy weather



keep moving

Keeping a warm home

Get your home ready for winter

There are a range of things that can be done to help keep your home warmer during winter. If you need help, contact your local council or the organisations listed at the end of this guide. They may also be able to advise you whether a grant may be available to help pay for the work.

Take these steps to get your home ready for winter

- **Fit draughtproofing to help seal gaps around windows and doors.**
- **Lay insulation in the loft to reduce heat loss.**
- **Ensure your hot water cylinder and pipes are lagged, including pipes in the loft.**
- **Check your heating system is working properly and serviced at least once a year. (Your gas or electricity supplier may offer free safety checks.)**
- **Make sure you know how to set the heating controls.**

Buying new heaters or fires

If you're planning to buy individual fires or heaters, call the **Energy Efficiency Advice Centre: Freephone 0800 512 012** to help you choose what's best for your home. Your local energy company will also give advice.

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If you're a tenant, check with your landlord what they can provide, and that there are no restrictions on the types of heater you can have.

If you're buying an electric heater ensure it has a thermostat.

If you're buying a new open fire, check it has air control to regulate the burning rate.

For specialist advice, call the **Solid Fuel Association: 0845 601 4406** (local call charges apply).

heat well



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WINTER WARMTH ADVICE LINE
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Financial help for a warmer home

Warm Front Scheme (WFS)

The Warm Front Scheme (WFS) is available to households in England¹ in receipt of a qualifying income-related or disability benefit.

Grants are available from the government's WFS scheme to help older people and some others with the cost of making their homes warmer.

Warm Front Plus Grant

Grants of up to £2,500 to cover the cost of insulation measures such as loft, cavity wall and draughtproofing and, where appropriate, installing a central heating system in the main living areas. To be eligible you must be aged 60 or over and in receipt of an income-related benefit.

Warm Front Grant

Grants up to £1,500 are also available for households if you are in receipt of a qualifying disability benefit; or if you have a child under 16 living with you, or are pregnant, and the householder receives a qualifying benefit.

The scheme is run by two managers from E.ON UK plc and the Eaga Partnership who can help make your application, and arrange for the work to be done. For information call: **Freephone 0800 952 0600** (Eaga Partnership) **and 0800 952 1555** (E.ON UK plc).

¹ Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own separately funded schemes

Local council grants

If you have a low income, your local council may be able to offer financial help for:

- **house renovation and improvement, including insulation**
- **installing facilities that help disabled people to live independently in their own home**
- **home repair assistance for small work.**

The grant will vary according to the cost of the work and your own financial circumstances.

Contact your local council for more details and an application form. Or, if you prefer, ask a friend, relative or helper to call on your behalf. Age Concern or other local organisations (see page 26) may be able to help with any paperwork.

If you apply for a grant, don't start any work before your application is approved.

The local council may need to send someone to inspect your home. Always ask for proof of identity before letting anyone in.

Keep warm, heat well

These are recommendations on how best to heat your home. It will help if you have a room thermometer in your main living room.

If you can, try to keep a temperature of 21°C (70°F) in all the rooms you use during the day.

If you can't, at least keep your living room warm throughout the day and warm your bedroom and bed before going to bed.

Keep your bedroom window closed at night in winter; it's when temperatures reach their lowest.

Use an electric blanket OR a hot water bottle in bed, but NEVER both together. Many electric blankets are designed only to warm the bed before you get in; if yours is like that, turn it off before you get into bed.

If you have central heating, these tips will help keep winter at bay.

Set the thermostat at around 21°C (70°F).

If a room gets too warm, turn the thermostat down.

Set the timer to come on before you get up and switch off when you go to bed.

In very cold weather set the heating to come on earlier, rather than turning the thermostat up higher.

If you have an open coal fire, try to keep the grate filled to a depth of 3 to 4 inches (75-100 mm) of fuel. Use the air control to set the burning rate. And remember to have your chimney swept at least once a year. Call the **Solid Fuel Association on 0845 601 4406** (local call charges apply) for more advice.

Take care

- to put guards on all open fires
- not to sit too close to a fire
- not to hang washing to dry too close to fires. It will cause condensation as well as being a fire risk
- not to block up any air bricks in your walls.



Help with heating bills

Winter Fuel Payment

This winter the government will be making payments to people aged 60 and over to help with the costs of keeping warm in winter¹. The payments are:

- a **Winter Fuel Payment of up to £200; and**
- **the 80+ Annual Payment of up to £100.**

The amount of money you get depends on your age and circumstances during the week of 20-26 September 2004.

You should qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment if you are aged 60 or over on or before 26 September 2004 and normally live in the United Kingdom. People aged 80 and over during the week of 20-26 September 2004 who are entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment will also get an extra payment of up to £100. This will be paid with the Winter Fuel Payment automatically, without the need for a separate claim.

¹ Do use this money for heating your home; it will help you to keep well this winter.

You should get your Winter Fuel Payment automatically, by the end of 2004, if you receive a State Pension or other social security benefit (excluding Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, or Child Benefit) during the week of 20-26 September 2004. You should also be paid automatically if you have received a payment in a previous year and your circumstances have not changed. If you don't fall into these categories, then you should make a claim.

Winter Fuel Payments will be made over a number of weeks from November 2004. So don't worry if you receive your payment at a different time to someone else in your household, or other people who live near you.



Help with heating bills

If you're not sure whether or how to make a claim, or if you want advice, call the **Winter Fuel Payments Helpline 08459 15 15 15** (textphone 0845 601 5613). Have your pension book (if you have one) or National Insurance number ready when you call. The line is open Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm. Charges are the same as for local calls. Or you can visit the website www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/winterfuel

One-off 70+ Payment

This winter, to help people with their living expenses, including Council Tax bills, the government is making a one-off payment of up to £100 to eligible households with someone who is aged 70 or over and normally lives in the United Kingdom during the week of 20-26 September 2004. If you are eligible for this payment in most cases it should be paid automatically with your Winter Fuel Payment.

Cold Weather Payment

If you are receiving Income Support or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, with either a pensioner premium or disability premium, or have a child under five, or you are receiving Pension Credit, you may be eligible for cold weather payments of £8.50¹ for each period of very cold weather². It will be paid automatically.

Budget schemes

Your electricity and gas companies will have payment schemes which enable fuel costs to be spread evenly over the full year, rather than peaking in winter. Ask them for details of this and other budget or savings schemes.

¹ Do use this money for heating your home; it will help you to keep well this winter.

² A period of very cold weather is when the average temperature is, or is forecast to be, 0°C (32°F) or below over seven consecutive days.

Other financial support

Other financial support is available through other government agencies. This support is not directly connected with heating costs, but this may be a good time to find out if you are eligible.

Pension Credit

Pension Credit is a new entitlement for people aged 60 and over; it replaces the Minimum Income Guarantee. Pension Credit is available to everyone aged 60 or over, with an income of less than £105.45 a week for single people or £160.95 a week for couples. People over 65 who have modest savings or a second pension are likely to be entitled even if their income is considerably higher - up to about £144 for single people or about £212 for couples.

Some people who:

- need help with personal care because of an illness or disability; or
- are a carer; or
- have certain housing costs

can get Pension Credit even if their income is higher.

So it's always worth applying.

More information is available in leaflet *PC1L Pension Credit - Pick it up. It's yours.* from your social security or Jobcentre Plus office or access The Pension Service website www.pensions.gov.uk/pensioncredit

To apply for Pension Credit call the Pension Credit Application Line on **Freephone 0800 99 1234** (textphone 0800 169 0133). An adviser will help fill in the application form with you over the phone and post it to you to check and sign.

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Grants and loans

In some circumstances, community care grants, budgeting loans or crisis loans may be available. **Call the winter warmth advice line for information.**

Benefit Enquiry Line

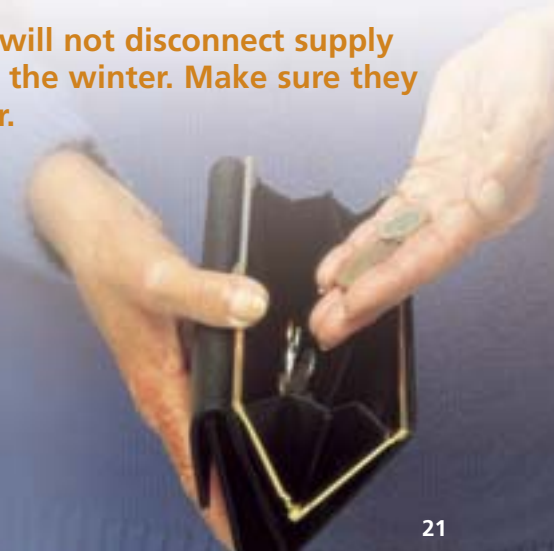
A confidential telephone helpline is available giving advice on benefits for people with disabilities and their carers. **Freephone 0800 88 22 00.** Textphone 0800 24 33 55.

What to do if you fall behind with bills

If you have gas or electricity bills that you can't pay, let your supplier know. They will want to help you find a way of settling the amount, perhaps by spreading out repayment over a longer period. It is best to contact them quickly rather than let the debt mount up.

Gas and electricity companies will not disconnect supply to all-pensioner households in the winter. Make sure they know that you are a pensioner.

If you want independent advice, contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau, Age Concern, or energywatch (the gas and electricity consumers watchdog).



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What to do if you feel ill

There's advice in this section for you, but show it to relatives and neighbours as well, as they may find it useful too.

Coping with flu

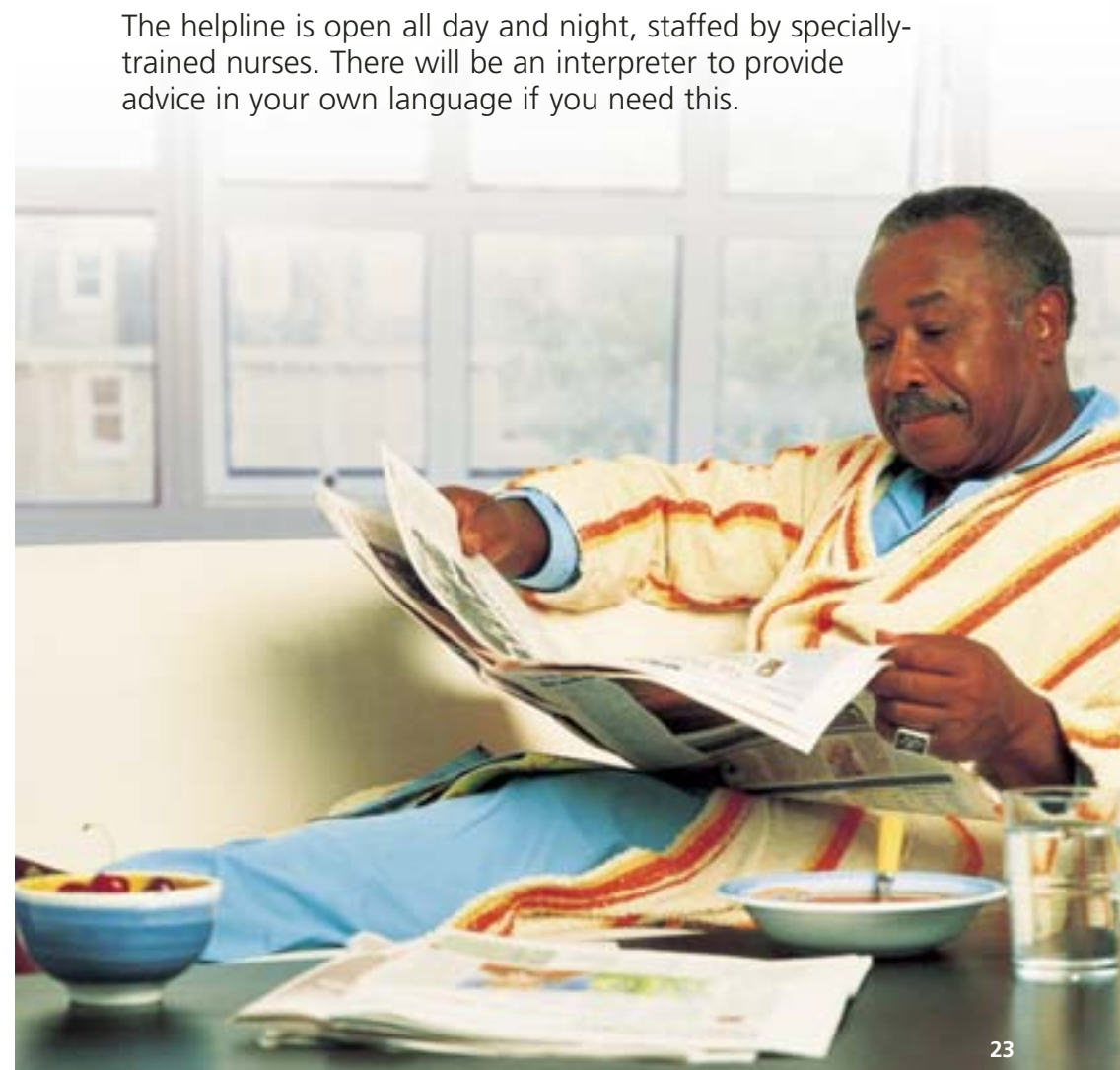
Plan ahead. A well-stocked medicine chest will help you be prepared for treating coughs, colds, and flu. If you go down with flu during the winter, follow this advice:

- **stay at home and rest**
- **take plenty of non-alcoholic drinks to replace the fluid loss from sweating**
- **eat what you can**
- **if you live on your own, let a friend, relative or neighbour know you're ill**
- **if you already have a heart or chest complaint, diabetes, or a serious medical condition, contact your GP**
- **if the flu symptoms persist or get worse, or you feel chest pains or become short of breath, contact your GP.**

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NHS Direct – the health helpline – 0845 46 47

Call NHS Direct for advice and information on health. The helpline is open all day and night, staffed by specially-trained nurses. There will be an interpreter to provide advice in your own language if you need this.



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Dealing with hypothermia

Hypothermia is a dangerous condition which may be caused by short exposure to extreme cold or prolonged exposure to mild cold. Where an older person suffers a collapse, there is a risk that hypothermia may set in. Unless it's treated quickly, this will be fatal. The danger signs are:

- **very cold skin even under clothes, for example, across the stomach or under the arms**
- **drowsiness and slurred speech**
- **not feeling cold even when it is cold.**

What to do

- **call an ambulance immediately**
- **don't impose any sudden change in temperature, but try to warm the person gradually by warming the room. Give a warm drink, but not alcohol.**

Looking out for neighbours

If you have an elderly neighbour or relative, look out for them in the winter months. If the curtains aren't opened during the day, or there are no lights on in the evening, there may be something wrong. Try knocking on the door to see if there's an answer. If not, contact a relative or friend who you think may have a key. If you think there are serious grounds for concern, contact the emergency services (dial 999).



Help and advice

Help and advice for older people are available from a range of sources.

Voluntary organisations

Voluntary organisations aim to provide a range of services and often have local networks that you can contact directly.

General advice and support

Age Concern

Age Concern provides a range of services for older people through its network of 1,400 independent local voluntary organisations. Local branches are listed in your local phone book; or call free: **0800 009966**, 7am-7pm, every day.

Or write to: (in England) Age Concern England, Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER; (in Wales) Age Concern Cymru, 4th Floor, 1 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF1 9SD.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Citizens Advice Bureaux provide general advice on benefits and heating matters. Local branches are listed in the phone book.

Help the Aged

SeniorLine provides information and advice for older people and their carers about welfare and disability benefits, and residential and community care issues. **Freephone 0808 800 6565**.

Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri 9am-4pm; Tues 9am-3pm. Or write to: Help the Aged, 207-221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ.

WRVS

WRVS provides practical help to the housebound, older people, families in crisis and those affected by disaster. To find out more call **01235 442900** or visit www.wrvs.org.uk

Help with insulation and home improvement

Home Improvement Agencies

For help and advice on repairs and home improvements for older and disabled people. Write to: Foundations, Bleaklow House, Howard Town Mills, Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 8HT.

Tel: **01457 891909** or visit www-foundations.uk.com

Help for people with disabilities

Disabled Living Centres

Practical solutions for managing the tasks of daily life. For details of your nearest centre, write to: The Disabled Living Centres Council, Redbank House, 4 St. Chad's Street, Manchester M8 8QA. Tel: **0870 770 2866**.

Disabled Living Foundation

Information and advice on equipment to assist with all aspects of daily living. **Helpline 0845 130 9177**, weekdays 10am to 1pm Mon-Fri (local call rates). Or write to: Information Officer, The Disabled Living Foundation, 380-384 Harrow Road, London W9 2HU.

Help and advice

Government agencies

Government agencies can advise on benefits, other payments and health matters.

Benefit Enquiry Line

A confidential telephone helpline is available giving advice on benefits for people with disabilities and their carers.

Freephone 0800 88 22 00. Textphone 0800 24 33 55.

Pension Credit Application Line

To apply for Pension Credit, an entitlement for people aged 60 and over. **Freephone 0800 99 1234** (textphone 0800 169 0133).

NHS Direct

For advice on health matters, anytime, you can call NHS Direct and speak in confidence to a qualified nurse. You don't need to be ill to use the service; it's there to help you keep healthy as well. **Tel 0845 46 47.** Local call charges apply. You can also visit their website at www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

NHS Smoking Helpline

This is a free and confidential service offering advice and support to anyone contemplating giving up smoking. Call **Freephone 0800 169 0 169.** Callers can also be provided with information on getting help locally to give up smoking.

Social Services

Social Services can be contacted through your local county council, district council or town or city hall.

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Winter Fuel Payment

For queries on the Winter Fuel Payment and the 80+ Annual Payment, call the Winter Fuel Payment Helpline on **08459 15 15 15**, open weekdays 8.30am to 4.30pm (local call rates). Textphone 0845 601 5613. You can also visit the website www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/winterfuel

One-off 70+ Payment

If you think you are eligible, and have not received your payment automatically by the end of 2004, you should call the Winter Fuel Payments Centre on **029 20 428 106** or visit the website www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/winterfuel

Other information sources

Energy Efficiency Advice Centres

Provide free and impartial advice on energy saving measures around the home. **Freephone 0800 512 012.**

Gas and electricity companies

Your gas and electricity suppliers should have a service offering advice on usage for older customers.

energywatch is the independent gas and electricity consumer watchdog. Consumers may contact them for advice and information on a range of energy supply issues, including energy efficiency. They can also offer help in resolving some complaints. For further information call: **08459 060708** (local call rates apply). You can also visit their website at www.energywatch.org.uk

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Help and advice

Warm Front Scheme (WFS)

Grants for insulation and heating improvements.
For information call **Freephone 0800 952 0600**.

National Energy Action (NEA)

NEA is a charity which campaigns for affordable warmth and improved energy efficiency in the homes of people who are vulnerable to the cold.

Write to: NEA, St Andrew's House, 90-92 Pilgrim Street,
Newcastle NE1 6SG.

Solid Fuel Association

Information and advice on all forms of solid fuel heating.
Tel **0845 601 4406** (local call charges apply).

Winter Fuel Payment

Advice on whether or how to make a claim call **08459 15 15 15**
(Textphone 0845 601 5613).

Further information

Call the winter warmth advice line for a single copy of this booklet **Freephone 0800 085 7000**, 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday. The booklet is published in the following languages: English, Bengali, Cantonese, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Polish, Punjabi, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese. There will be an interpreter to provide advice in your own language if you need this.

You may also call to order a simple guide for people with learning disabilities or an audio cassette recording of the text for blind or visually impaired people.

For deaf people who use a text-only telephone there is a minicom winter warmth advice line available **Freephone 0800 085 7857**.

Both winter warmth advice lines are available Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm.

For further copies of this leaflet call **Department of Health Publications 08701 555 455**.

You can also visit our website at **www.dh.gov.uk/kwkw** or **write to** PO Box 777, London SE1 6XH. Fax: 01623 724 524.

