



WINTER BENEFIT AND FUEL ADVICE

Birmingham Financial Inclusion Partnership

November 2018

The Birmingham Financial Inclusion Partnership want to make sure our residents keep themselves warm and well this winter, and their homes heated and maintained.

This Newsletter will introduce those partners who can offer the support and advice needed to do this, along with handy tips and hints.



CATALYST run FREE energy advice and Smart Meter awareness sessions for consumers. They are funded by Central Government to speak to groups who might benefit.



The sessions last about 30-40 minutes and includes information and advice on:

- Changing energy tariffs
- Switching energy suppliers
- Simple tips for saving money
- Advice on some of the grants that are available

Home visits help consumers with the following:

- Direct action to help them switch suppliers
- How to set their heating controls
- Claiming the Warm Home Discount
- Referring them for loft/ cavity wall insulation
- Help with fuel debt
- Advice on how to keep their home warm

To access their free service contact Catalyst Mutual CIC
Tel: **0121 607 1798** or Email: enquiries@catalystcic.co.uk



Simple Energy Advice

GOVERNMENT ENDORSED ADVICE

www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk

This is a useful website which offers impartial and independent advice to help you reduce your energy bills, make your home warmer, plan home improvements and make your home greener.

You can contact them directly on telephone number **0800 444 202** for further advice.

Severn Trent Water is working to help people struggling to pay their water bills through 'The Big Difference Scheme'.

The Scheme is open to all Severn Trent Water customers, whatever your circumstances, and you don't

need to be on benefits. If you qualify you could be eligible to get a reduction on your water bill and, depending on your circumstances, this could range from anywhere between 10-90%* of your yearly bill. You'll remain on the scheme for 12 months, after which you'll need to reapply.

To apply, call **0800 917 6901**

*based on the average water bill for customers in the Severn Trent area



National Energy Action is working to ensure that everyone can afford to live in a warm, dry home. In partnership with central and local government, fuel utilities, housing providers, consumer groups and voluntary organisations, they undertake a range of activities to address the causes and treat the symptoms of fuel poverty.



Action for Warm Homes NEA has developed a series of information leaflets aimed at frontline workers to help provide advice in the community. These are suitable to distribute at public-facing events and to help you share information with those who need it. These leaflets are free to download, print and distribute by community groups, not-for-profit organisations and frontline workers within those. Visit nea.org.uk/advice for advice on :

[Dealing with damp and condensation](#)

[Getting the most from Economy 7](#)

[Using your central heating system](#)

[How to read your electricity bill/How to read your gas bill](#)

[How to read your gas and electricity meters](#)

[Your home energy checklist](#)

Financial Support Available



WARM HOME DISCOUNT SCHEME

£140.00 off electricity bill by March 2019

Qualifying benefit: Pension Credit
Guarantee Credit (if you are on low income or other benefit, check your eligibility with your supplier)

Qualifying date: 8^h July 2018



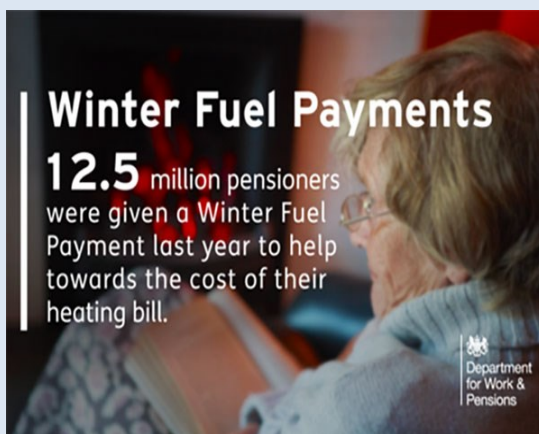
COLD WEATHER PAYMENT

£25 per qualifying week.

Qualifying benefit: Pension Credit, Income Support, Income-Related ESA, Income-based JSA, Universal Credit

Other Qualifications: Temperatures of zero degrees Celsius or below for each 7 consecutive day period between 1 November 2018 to 31 March 2019.

How to apply: Payments should be automatic



WINTER FUEL PAYMENT

You could qualify for between £100 - £300
Qualifying benefits include: Pension Credit, State Retirement Pension, Income Support, Income-related ESA, Income-based JSA, Universal Credit.

Qualifying date: 17 – 23 September 2018

***Born before 5 August 1953**

How to apply: Automatic payment

Deadline to apply: 31 March 2019

Priority Services Register

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is a free service provided by energy suppliers, energy distribution companies and water companies - If you're:

- of pensionable age
- disabled or living with a long-term limiting illness then you may qualify for extra help from your energy supplier (or energy distribution company).

These 'priority services' include: • Providing important communications in Braille, large print or audio CD. • FREE gas safety checks for appliances. • Quarterly meter reading services. • Special controls and adaptations for controlling heating and assistance if there is a power outage. • FREE password protection scheme. • Relocation of meter for improved access • Bill nominee scheme • Advance notice if electric supply is to be interrupted.

Those who are dependant on an electricity supply for medical equipment such as dialysis, nebulisers, oxygen concentrators or artificial ventilators, stair-lifts, bed and bath hoists should register for PSR services. Ask your electricity/gas/water supplier (or distribution company) about their Priority Services Register. See your energy / water bill for contact details of your supplier.

Survival Guide

Vulnerable people can be isolated during cold periods so:

1. Keep a list of emergency numbers by the phone/easily accessible
2. Arrange with friends to phone or for them to visit if possible at given times
3. Get the boiler serviced asap to avoid scarcity of available engineers when the cold starts
4. Stock up with food, water, necessary medication, torch & batteries in advance
5. Make sure there's credit for days in advance on your pre-payment meter if you can
6. Keep an eye on the weather forecast on TV or radio

To help keep warm this winter...

- A shawl or blanket will provide a lot of warmth if you're sitting down.
- Wear warm clothes in bed, including bed socks and even a hat.
- Several layers of clothing will keep you warm rather than one thick layer.
- Staying active is not only good for your wellbeing but generates heat and keeps you warm.
- Hot drinks and meals help to keep you warm.
- Use a hot water bottle.
- Make sure you don't have any draughts—fit draught-proofing around doors and windows.
- Close your curtains when it gets dark.
- Keep all doors closed in order to keep in the warmth.
- Use foil behind radiators in order to reflect the heat.
- Move furniture away from radiators so as to allow the heat to circulate.

To help save money this winter...

- If you are using your dishwasher or washing machine make sure you have a full load at 30 °C.
- Turn your heating down by one degree.
- Only put as much water as you need in the kettle, don't fill it to the top.
- Use energy saving light bulbs.
- Turn appliances off, don't leave them on standby.
- Have a shower instead of a bath.
- Read your gas and electricity meters and give the readings to your energy suppliers.
- Check your gas and electricity tariffs to see if you could be paying less
- Talk to your energy supplier or local advice centre about grants and financial help to install energy saving measures.

Children aged 2 or 3, pregnant women, people with long-term health conditions and those aged 65 or older should get their free flu vaccine

**HELP US
HELP YOU**
STAY WELL THIS WINTER



Remember, remember your flu jab before December!

As flu season approaches, local Birmingham people are being encouraged to have their flu jab before December.

You are entitled to a free flu vaccine if you:

- **Are 65 years of age or over**
- **Are pregnant, no matter how many weeks**
- **Have certain medical conditions (e.g. asthma, COPD, bronchitis, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's or Motor Neurone disease, heart, liver or kidney disease, learning disability)**
- **Are living in a long-stay residential care home, or other long-stay care facility**
- **Are seriously overweight**
- **Have lowered immunity because of disease or treatment (e.g. steroids or cancer treatment)**
- **Receive a carer's allowance, or you are a carer for an elderly or disabled person**
- **Live with someone with lowered immunity**

Anyone in these groups is urged to visit their GP, local pharmacy or talk to their midwife about having their free flu vaccination.

For children aged 2 and 3, the flu vaccine is just a quick nasal spray, which can be given at their GP practice.

Across Birmingham, all children in reception class and school years 1-5, will be offered the flu nasal spray whilst they're at school. It's important that parents remember to sign and return the consent form, when it arrives home in their child's school bag.

If you're a frontline health and social care worker, you are also eligible for an NHS flu vaccine so ask your GP or local pharmacist for details.

Fire Safety in the Home

Smoke Detectors

- Have you got a smoke detector?
- Is your smoke detector working?
- Have you checked the battery?



Did you know that the West Midlands Fire Service can carry out a free home fire safety check?

To book your check call: **0800 389 5525**

Or for more information visit: <https://www.wmfs.net/your-safety/at-home/looking-after-yourself/>

Carbon Monoxide Detector

A carbon monoxide detector or CO detector is a device that detects the presence of the carbon monoxide gas in order to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.



For more information on fire safety in the home, visit:
<https://www.wmfs.net/your-safety/at-home/fire-safety/>