



**November 2008**

**Key points:**

- New Factsheet for Wales
- Replaces Factsheet Supplement dated May 2007

## Help with heating in Wales

This factsheet is aimed at people aged 60 and over living in Wales. It also provides advice and information to older people on the help that is available to assist with heating costs and other fuel problems. **Contact details for Wales are: Age Concern Cymru**, Ty John Pathy, Units 13/14 Neptune Court, Vanguard Way, CF24 5PJ. Telephone: 029 2043 1555 (national call rate); website: [www.accymru.org.uk](http://www.accymru.org.uk).

Readers living in England or Northern Ireland can obtain a similar Factsheet 1 **Help with heating** by calling 0800 00 99 66 (free call) or from the website at [www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk). Readers living in Scotland can obtain a similar Factsheet 1s, **Help with heating** available by phoning 0800 00 99 66 (free call); from the website: [www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk](http://www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk); or by writing to Age Concern FREEPOST (SWB 30375), Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7ZZ.

**Contact details for Age Concern Scotland are:** Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1PR, Telephone: 0845 125 9732 (lo-call rate).

**Age Concern Northern Ireland**, 3 Lower Crescent, Belfast BT7 1NR, Telephone: 028 9032 5055 (national call rate) Monday to Friday 10am – 12pm and 2-4pm, website: [www.ageconcernni.org](http://www.ageconcernni.org).

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## 1. An energy efficient home

You can reduce your fuel bill by taking a few energy saving measures and using appliances more efficiently, as well as improving your home's insulation.

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 your local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre. There is a national network for these centres that will give free and independent advice to all owner occupiers and tenants on energy efficiency. They will also provide information on how to claim the HEES grant and any other grants or schemes that may be available in the area (see Section 2 and 3). They offer a free 'do it yourself' home energy check to help householders discover how they could cut their fuel bills by taking energy efficient measures.

Insulating wall and loft spaces could significantly reduce heat loss in the home. Walls are responsible for around 33% of heat wastage in the majority of homes and 25% of your heating costs could be lost through an un-insulated loft. Insulating hot water tanks and pipes will help to keep your hot water hot for longer and by fitting a British Standard 'jacket' to your hot water cylinder it will cut heat loss by up to 75% and cost you less to heat your water. Draught proofing is a cheap and cost-effective way to reduce your heating bills. Double glazing will cut heat loss through windows by 50%.

If the insulation was fitted before 1998 it is likely to need topping up and should be checked to make sure it is adequate.

If you control your heating more effectively, you could save up to 17% of your heating costs. By installing heating controls, your heating system can react to changes in temperature, provide different temperatures in different rooms and switch your hot water on and off at whatever times you specify. If your boiler is over 15 years old you may want to think about changing it.

From 1 April 2005, in most circumstances when you install a new boiler or replace an existing one, you will have to install a condensing boiler to meet the higher standards for energy efficiency. When it is not possible to install this type of boiler the non condensing boiler will be acceptable. Your installer will use the assessment procedure to decide what boiler to

install. If s/he advises you that it would be unreasonable to install a condensing boiler in your home, they should give you a declaration form for you to keep. Always use a CORGI registered installer (see Section 10).

For more information contact your local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre on 0800 512 012 (free call) or visit the Energy Saving Trust website: [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk).

You may need help from a neighbour or friend to undertake an energy check though it is likely to be worthwhile. A saving of up to 37% can be made by being energy efficient. Some of the ways you can save energy are:

- do not have your water heater set too high. For most people setting the cylinder thermostat at 60°C/140°F is enough for baths and washing;
- by turning your heating thermostat down by 1°C you could cut your heating bills up to 10%;
- close curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows;
- don't leave hot taps running without putting the plug in the sink;
- an ordinary shower uses two-fifths of the hot water needed for a bath;
- fix any dripping hot water tap. In one day this can waste enough water to have a bath;
- do not overfill the kettle for just one drink. Jug type kettles need less water as they have a smaller element;
- when you are not using your television or other electrical appliances, switch it off. Leaving it on stand-by wastes electricity;
- fit energy saving light bulbs. They use a quarter of the electricity of an ordinary bulb and last eight times longer;
- do not leave the fridge door open longer than necessary and defrost it regularly; **and**
- next time you buy an electrical appliance look at its energy labels and buy the most efficient. All white goods and light bulbs are clearly marked with an A-G efficiency rating. An 'A' rating means the product will use energy very efficiently, and a 'G' rating means

the product is less efficient. The most efficient product will also carry the Energy Saving Recommended logo.

The Energy Saving Trust (see above) can also advise you on renewable energy sources and grants and programmes that are available to help with the cost of installation.

## **2. Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES)**

The Home Energy Efficiency Scheme is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. It provides a grant of up to £3,600 to make homes warmer, more energy efficient and more secure. The scheme is split in two: HEES is aimed at families with children under 16 and HEES Plus is aimed at lone parent families with children under 16, people who are 60 or over and those who are disabled or chronically sick. The grant is available to home owners and people who rent their properties, although householders from other types of housing may also apply.

### **Qualifying for HEES Plus:**

Those eligible for HEES Plus are

- householders aged 60 or over
- lone parent families with a child under 16

provided they are in receipt of one of the following:

- Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit)
- Council Tax Benefit
- Housing Benefit
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- The State Pension.

Householders who are disabled or chronically sick will also qualify if they are on one of the following benefits:

- Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit) (which must include a disability premium)
- Income Support (which must include a disability premium)
- Housing Benefit (which must include a disability premium)
- Council Tax Benefit (which must include a disability premium)
- Working Tax Credit (which must include a disability premium)
- Attendance Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance

- Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (including a disability premium)
- War Disablement Pension (including the mobility supplement, or Constant Attendance Allowance or Attendance Allowance)

If you are 60 or over, own your home and **not** on any benefit then you may be eligible for a 25% grant towards the cost of insulation measures up to £500. You may also qualify for security measures such as door and window locks. As of 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2006 the maximum income a household can be in receipt of, including Child Tax Credit and/or Working Tax Credit, in order for them to be eligible for HEES, was increased to £15,460.

### **What does the grant provide?**

HEES may provide a package of insulation and heating tailored to each property including:

- Loft insulation
- Draughtproofing
- Cavity-Wall insulation

Heating measures include:

- Gas room heaters and thermostatic controls
- Electric storage heaters
- Converting a solid-fuel open fire to a modern glass fronted fire
- Repairs to inoperable central heating systems which may include a replacement boiler

There are some extra measures including:

- Energy advice
- Hot water tank insulation
- Two low energy light bulbs
- Smoke alarms

**Application for a grant can be made by contacting HEES on freephone 0800 316 2815.**

### 3. Other grants and schemes

#### 3.1 Help from the local authority (council)

Local authorities have a general power to help with improving 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. This is a discretionary scheme and should give priority to vulnerable and older people. Each local authority must have a published policy describing the sort of help it offers.

Your local home improvement agency, called Care & Repair (or sometimes Staying Put) might be able to provide you with more information and assistance. See section 11. Further information for details.

Further details about assistance available for housing improvements and repairs are explained in Age Concern Factsheet 13, **Older home owners - financial help with repairs and adaptations** available free from Age Concern England (see Section 12).

#### 3.2 Help from the Social Fund

If you receive Pension Credit, Income Support or income-based Job Seekers Allowance you might be able to get a Community Care grant or Budgeting Loan from the Social Fund to help you with exceptional expenses. If you do not receive any benefits you may be able to apply for a Crisis Loan; this loan is for people who have emergency needs or are involved in a disaster (eg, fire or flood) and the loan is necessary to prevent serious damage or risk to their health and safety.

Applications for Social Fund payments should be made at your local Jobcentre Plus office. There is a limited yearly budget which restricts the amount that can be awarded. The Social Fund decision makers look at the circumstances of the people who apply and decide which payments can be made from the money available. The payments can be made for the installation of a pre-payment meter, reconnection charges or buying essential household equipment such as cookers and heaters. Community Care Grants do not have to be repaid but Budgeting and Crisis Loans do.

For more information about the Social Fund see Factsheet 49, **The Social Fund and other sources of financial help** (see Section 12).

### **3.3 Help from Energy suppliers**

You might be able to get help from your energy supplier (electricity or gas company) to improve the energy efficiency of your home. Contact your local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre for more information. Or you can call the Home Heat helpline on 0800 33 66 99 (free call), minicom: 0800 027 2122 (free call). It provides advice to vulnerable customers on keeping warm and reducing energy costs that includes advice on payment methods, available grants and benefits.

### **3.4 Help with insulation for people over 70**

A new scheme, run by energy companies in order to meet government targets to reduce carbon emissions, has recently made loft and/or cavity wall insulation free to anyone aged over 70 who owns or privately rents their home. For further information you can contact the Heat Project on 0800 093 40 50 (free call from BT land lines).

## **4. Help with paying bills**

### **4.1 Cold weather payments**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2008, the government announced an increase in the cold weather payment, from £8.50 to £25 per week. You are entitled to this payment for each qualifying week if:

- the average temperature in your area has been, or is expected to be, 0 degrees Celsius or below for seven consecutive days; **and**
- you have been awarded Income Support 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 5; **or**
- you have been awarded Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit) for at least one of those days and you are not in a care home.

Payment will be made automatically so you do not need to make a claim.

## 4.2 Winter fuel payments

This annual payment is non means-tested and is therefore available to all households with someone aged 60 or over.

You are entitled to a winter fuel payment if you are aged 60 or over in the week beginning on the third Monday in September (the qualifying week).

You are **not** entitled to a payment if during that week you fall into one of the following categories:

- you have been in hospital for more than 52 weeks;
- you are getting Pension Credit, Income Support (IS) or income based Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) and you live in a care home and have been in the home for the 12 preceding weeks;
- you are subject to immigration control;
- you are serving a custodial sentence.

The payment is currently an annual lump-sum payment of £250.

Couples receiving Pension Credit, IS or JSA will get only one payment made to either partner; other couples will get £125 each if both partners are aged 60 or over. If you are living in a care home throughout the qualifying week and the 12 preceding weeks and are not getting Pension Credit, IS or JSA you are only entitled to £125.

In households where there is a person aged 80 or over in the qualifying week, an additional payment of £150 will be made on top of the winter fuel payment. If there is more than one person aged 80 or over in the household they will each receive £75 extra. People living in care homes who normally receive a payment will also qualify for £75 extra.

If you are receiving social security benefit (apart from child benefit, housing benefit or council tax benefit) or a state pension or received a payment last year then you should receive the payment automatically.

In other cases you will need to make a claim by 30 March following the qualifying week.

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

### **4.3 Reduced energy charges for people entitled to benefits – Social Tariffs**

Some suppliers of gas and electricity offer reduced rates for people who receive certain means-tested benefits, for example pension credit (guarantee credit). These are sometimes called “Social Tariffs”.

Contact your energy supplier to find out what they can offer. If your supplier does not offer these, you could consider switching to one that does (further information in section 6).

## **5. Age Concern Enterprises Ltd (ACEnt)**

Age Concern set up a separate organisation in response to concerns expressed by older people about the poor deal they felt they were being offered by many commercial providers. This separate organisation is called Age Concern Enterprises Limited (ACEnt). ACent does not have shareholders: as a social enterprise company, it ploughs its profits back into the charitable organisations it supports. ACent also strives to provide a high level of service to customers and highly competitive prices. Gas and electricity are amongst the many products that ACent offers. ACent can be contacted on **0800 015 6784** (free call) Mon-Fri 8am-8pm or Sat 9am-5pm. ACent strives continuously to provide exclusive benefits to help its customers save on their energy bills. More information is available from the helpline and in printed brochures that you can request.

## **6. Saving money by changing gas and electricity supplier**

You can sometimes 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 who sells you your electricity and gas, and sends you your bills. However, at the time of writing, the number of changes in prices charged is so great that it makes it difficult to make a fair comparison between energy suppliers.

### **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 pre-payment meter. To find the best deal you will 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**
- contact one of the price comparison organisations that have signed up to Energywatch's Voluntary Code of Practice. These are listed on the next page.

Some companies offer special payment arrangements for older people eg, you pay a fixed price for all your energy by monthly direct debit and the price is fixed for 12 months from the moment you signed up. The Welsh Consumer Council may be able to direct you to such a provider if you identify yourself as an older person (contact details in section 11. Further information). Make sure you compare the prices as these deals may not be the cheapest option for everyone.

Here are several websites that will calculate which gas and electricity suppliers can offer you the cheapest deal. Check whether any price comparison provided includes tariffs specifically aimed at older people. Twelve of these websites have signed up to Energywatch's Voluntary Code of Practice for companies providing price comparison services to consumers. At the time of writing, Energywatch is about to cease to exist, but its work will in some ways be provided by the Welsh Consumer Council.

If you do not have internet access, your local Age Concern or public library may be able to help.

The organisations are:

- [www.saveonyourbills.co.uk](http://www.saveonyourbills.co.uk)  
Telephone: 0845 123 5278 (lo-call rate) Mon-Fri 9am-5pm;
- [www.homeadvisoryservice.com](http://www.homeadvisoryservice.com)

- Telephone: 0845 1800 300 (lo-call rate);
- [www.ukpower.co.uk](http://www.ukpower.co.uk);  
0845 009 1780 (lo-call rate);
  - [www.moneysupermarket.com](http://www.moneysupermarket.com)  
Telephone: 0845 345 5708 (lo-call rate) Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm;
  - [www.moneyexpert.com/energy](http://www.moneyexpert.com/energy)  
Telephone: 01942 710 910;
  - [www.theenergyshop.com](http://www.theenergyshop.com)  
Telephone: 0845 330 7247(lo-call rate) Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm;
  - [www.uswitch.com](http://www.uswitch.com)  
Telephone: 0800 404 7908 (freephone) Mon-Thu 8am-8pm; Fri 8am-6pm; Sat 9am-5pm;
  - [www.simplyswitch.com](http://www.simplyswitch.com)  
Telephone: 0800 0111 366(freephone);
  - [www.unravelit.com](http://www.unravelit.com)  
Telephone: 0800 279 4091(free call) Mon-Fri 9am-5pm;
  - [www.energylinx.co.uk](http://www.energylinx.co.uk)  
Telephone: 0845 225 2840 (lo-call rate);
  - [www.energyhelpline.com](http://www.energyhelpline.com)  
Telephone: 0800 074 07 45 (free call) Mon-Fri 8am-8pm; Sat-Sun 9am-5pm;
  - [www.switchwithwhich.co.uk](http://www.switchwithwhich.co.uk)  
Telephone: 0800 533 031 (free call) Mon-Fri 8.30am-6pm; Sat 9am-1pm.

Prices are not the only reason to change supplier. In making your decision 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 to consumers who want them to supply both their gas and electricity (ie dual fuel), others have packages which may include other services such as cheaper telephone services;

- 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? – the Welsh Consumer Council may be able to provide details of the amount and types of complaints received from consumers about individual suppliers (see Section 9);
- does it 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 7);
- what are the supplier's policies on debts and disconnection? (see Section 6).

### **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.

### **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 are certain you know what it means.

If a sales person calls at your home to try to sell you their gas or electricity supply:

- ask the person for identification - all sales people must carry this;
- if you are still in doubt about the caller, check with the company that they are who they say they are. Get the company number from directory enquiries or the phone book;
- do not let the caller 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;
- do not sign anything at the time but leave yourself time to think about what you want to do.

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

If a sales person came uninvited to your home you have seven days (or more if the company says so in their information) to cancel the contract. If you made a verbal agreement with a sales person over the telephone (or signed up over the Internet), you must be sent clear written confirmation of what you have agreed to. You have seven days (or more if the company says so in their information) from the date you received the written confirmation to cancel the contract.

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

For further information and advice contact the Welsh Consumer Council (see Section 11). The Welsh Consumer Council may also provide publications and leaflets that you might find useful, as Energywatch used to before it was closed.

## **7. Disconnection**

If you are threatened with disconnection because you cannot pay your bills, contact the energy company straight away. You might be able to agree payment arrangements to repay your arrears or if you have not been able to manage a payment arrangement, you might be offered a pre-payment meter (if safe and practical) as an alternative to disconnection.

### **Code 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 they will not disconnect between 1st October and 31st 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.

### **Fuel direct**

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

Some of your benefit will be deducted every week and paid direct to the company. Contact your local social security office for advice.

### **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. Energywatch used to produce a leaflet called Maximum Resale Price which included information on maximum charges. It may be that the Welsh Consumer Council will continue to publish this information (see Section 11).

If you are disconnected or threatened with disconnection, contact your local authority immediately and ask it for assistance as it has the powers to safeguard the supply or assist in getting it restored in this instance. Also tell your gas or electricity supplier so that it does not cut you off until the council has had a chance to act.

## **8. Priority services register**

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 are:

- free gas appliance and installation annual safety check if all adults in the home are of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick;

- a meter reading service on a quarterly basis if no one in the household is able to read the meter themselves; bills based on actual readings rather than estimates
- 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 find it difficult to access or read your gas/electricity meter, your supplier will consider moving the meter, free of charge, to a more convenient position;
- sending a bill to a nominated third party for payment;
- providing special means, for example a 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 information about your meter reading and bills.
- The energy company 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 will be made for temporary heating and cooking facilities.

For more information or to register contact your supplier or the Welsh Consumer Council (see Section 11).

## **9. Advice and how to complain about your energy provider**

From the 1st of October 2008 Energywatch (the independent gas and electricity consumer watchdog) ceased to operate and new arrangements were put in place to provide information and advice to consumers who have complaints against their energy supplier.

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 11 for

details). If you are unable to reach an agreement, ask the company to confirm this in writing.

If you need to get further advice you can contact Consumer Direct Wales, which is the Government's service providing advice and information for consumers by telephone and online (see Section 11 for details). Unlike Energywatch, Consumer Direct will not take on individual cases but only give advice on the best way to progress a complaint against the energy provider.

Consumer Focus is a new consumer watchdog set up to protect the interests of gas and electricity consumers (see Section 11). 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:

- are threatened with disconnection;
- have been disconnected;
- have experienced a failure in a prepayment meter system; or
- 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 be able to pursue their own complaint because of:

- the personal circumstances of that particular consumer;
- the urgency/seriousness of the situation and the inability of the consumer to be able to handle the issue within the timeframe in which they need to act;
- 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.

## **10. 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 will need to contact a qualified electrician to deal with it. Your local Care and Repair may be able to suggest a reputable electrician.

## **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, 365 days a year.

The operator who takes your call will give you immediate safety advice and get an engineer to call within two hours, depending on the urgency of the problem.

If the leak is outside the home and the gas supply has to be disconnected for some time and you are an older or disabled person or chronically sick, you should be provided with temporary cooking or heating facilities.

If the leak is inside your home but is on the meter or its supply pipe, the engineer will carry out all necessary repairs without charge.

If the leak is one of your appliances or in the gas pipes between the meter and the appliances, the engineer will repair it if the work can be done within 30 minutes.

If the repair will take longer than this, the engineer will merely 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 CORGI scheme to come and do the necessary work. You must not reconnect the appliance or gas supply until the work has been done.

CORGI stands for Council of Registered Gas Installers. You can find details of engineers who are CORGI registered in your Yellow Pages or Thompson Local Directory, or on the website [www.trustcorgi.com](http://www.trustcorgi.com)

(search by category and postcode). Or you can call CORGI customer services on 0800 915 0485 (free call).

If your housing association or local council normally repairs and services the equipment, contact them immediately.

If the faulty appliance is owned by your landlord, get in touch with them as soon as possible.

If you qualify for a free annual safety check (see Section 8) this will show whether your gas appliances and installations are safe to use. The check consists of a basic examination. This check is not a substitute for regular servicing. If you use mobile heaters which use liquified petroleum gas you should also have these serviced regularly.

If you are a tenant, your landlord is legally required to arrange for 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.

### **Carbon monoxide (CO)**

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas produced by burning any fossil fuel such as coal, wood or natural gas without adequate air ventilation. Known as “the Silent Killer”, carbon monoxide has no smell, taste nor colour – and it can kill without warning in a matter of hours. Around 30 people die in the UK each year from CO poisoning and many more are seriously injured. Older people are particularly at risk.

You are at risk from carbon monoxide poisoning if

- your appliance was poorly installed
- your appliance is not working properly
- your appliance has not been checked for safety or maintained regularly
- there is not enough fresh air in the room
- your chimney or flue gets blocked up; or
- you allow non-CORGI registered engineers to install or maintain your appliance(s).

Apart from getting appliances checked, it is also important that they are used correctly. Appliances must have access to a good supply of fresh

air – carbon monoxide is produced when there isn't enough air circulation.

What to look out for? Signs to look out for on boilers, fires and cookers include

- yellow or orange flames (except for fuel-effect fires which display this colour flame)
- soot or stains around the appliance; and
- a pilot light that frequently blows out.

Other signs include rising condensation around windows and yellowed pilot lights that frequently go out.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning may include

- headaches
- nausea
- tiredness; or
- chest and/or stomach pains.

If you, or a member of your family, experience any of these symptoms, you are advised to seek urgent medical advice.

What do you need to do now? If your appliances have not been serviced recently or have been deemed at risk, call 0870 401 2300 to find a suitable CORGI registered engineer in your area or alternatively, look in Yellow Pages. If you are a tenant at the property concerned, please bring this factsheet to the attention of your landlord.

Approved CO detectors are recommended and can be purchased from retailers, although they must not be used as a substitute for regular checks and servicing by a CORGI registered engineer.

## **Care and Repair**

Care & Repair Cymru's aim is to make sure that all older and disabled people in Wales have a home that is warm, safe and secure and is appropriate to the needs of the individual. Care & Repair agencies do this by bringing together the expertise and finance needed to carry out the necessary repairs, improvements and/or adaptations to enable older or disabled people to remain in their own homes. This takes the form of advice and information, helping to apply for grant assistance where needed, practical assistance in the form of carrying out repairs quickly,

as well as being able to pass on details of reputable builders. (See section 11. Further information).

## **TrustMark**

The Trustmark website offers assistance in finding builders, plumbers, electricians, roofers and other firms that have been awarded the TrustMark by approved scheme operators who comply with government-endorsed standards.

For more information about TrustMark see website:  
[www.trustmark.org.uk](http://www.trustmark.org.uk).

## **11. Further information**

### **Care & Repair**

Care & Repair Cymru's aim is to make sure that all older and disabled people in Wales have a home that is warm, safe and secure and is appropriate to the needs of the individual. It does this through local Care & Repair Agencies that focus on the housing, health and social care needs of older people. Care & Repair Cymru, Norbury House, Norbury Road, Fairwater, Cardiff CF5 3AS. Telephone: 029 2057 6286, website: [www.careandrepair.org.uk](http://www.careandrepair.org.uk).

### **Citizens Advice Bureau**

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

### **Consumer Direct Wales**

Consumer Direct Wales is a government funded organisation that offers practical advice on consumer issues. Telephone: 08454 04 05 06 (lo-call rate). Website:  
[www.consumerdirect.gov.uk/news/press\\_releases/wales/](http://www.consumerdirect.gov.uk/news/press_releases/wales/)

### **Consumer Focus**

Consumer Focus is a new organisation that was created through the merger of Energywatch, Postwatch and the National Consumer Council

in 2008 to champion consumer interests. Consumers cannot contact Consumer Focus directly, but they can access information on their website. For advice about a problem with energy company, consumers in Wales have to contact Consumer Direct Wales (see above). Website: [www.consumerfocus.org.uk](http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk) Address: 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Artillery House, Artillery Row, London SW1P 1RP. Phone: 020 7799 7900.

### **Department for Work and Pensions**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) administers pensions and benefits for older people through the Pensions Service. 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.

### **EAGA**

EAGA was formed in 1990 to deliver the government's Home Energy Efficiency Scheme. Since then it has become an employee-owned limited company. Telephone: 0800 316 6011 (free call); website: [www.eaga.com](http://www.eaga.com).

### **Energy Efficiency Advice Centre**

Each Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (EEEC) provides free, independent and local energy saving information. You can contact your local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (EEEC) by calling 0800 512 012 or go to the Energy Saving Trust website at [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk).

### **Energy Ombudsman**

This is an independent body set up to resolve disputes between consumers and their energy suppliers associated with bill and transfer issues. Before you take your complaint to the ombudsman you have to complain to your supplier first by following their complaints procedure. Your energy supplier must be a member of the Ombudsman service. For more information and/or to make a complaint contact: Energy Ombudsman, PO Box 966, Warrington, WA4 9DF; Telephone: 0845 055 0760 (lo-call rate) or 01925 530263 or 0330 440 1624 (national rate numbers); textphone: 18001 0845 051 1513 (free call) or 18001 01925 430886 (free call); website: [www.energy-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.energy-ombudsman.org.uk).

### **Energywatch**

Energywatch was the independent gas and electricity consumer watchdog. From October 2008, its work will come under the Welsh Consumer Council (see below). However, the Welsh Consumer Council does not intend to deal directly with the public: its website signposts people to Consumer Direct Wales (details above).

**Foundations** is the national co-ordinating body for home improvement agencies. Bleaklow House, Howard Town Mill, Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 8HT. Telephone: 01457 891909, website: [www.foundations.uk.com](http://www.foundations.uk.com).

**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. Telephone: 0800 33 66 99 (free call), minicom: 0800 027 2122 (free call).

### **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 (such as Calor Gas fires and cookers). 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 Local Authority, County or Borough Council.

### **Welsh Consumer Council**

From October 2008, the Welsh Consumer Council will include the work of previous consumer bodies that will cease to exist, such as Energywatch. However, the Welsh Consumer Council does not deal directly with the public: its website signposts people to Consumer Direct Wales (details above).

## **12. Further information from Age Concern**

Age Concern locally may be able to inform you of the help available in the area to assist you with your fuel or heating problem. For the address of your local Age Concern, telephone 0800 00 99 66 (free call) or write to Age Concern FREEPOST (SWB 30375), Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7ZZ. Or go to Age Concern Cymru's website at [www.accymru.org.uk](http://www.accymru.org.uk)

The following factsheets may be relevant:

Factsheet 13      **Older home owners: financial help with repairs and adaptations**

Factsheet 49      **The Social Fund and other sources of financial help**

If you would like:

- to find your nearest Age Concern
- any additional factsheets mentioned (a maximum of five may be ordered)
- a full list of factsheets and/or a book catalogue
- to receive this information in large print

telephone 0800 00 99 66 (free call) or write to Age Concern FREEPOST (SWB30375), Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7ZZ. For people with hearing loss who have access to a textphone, calls can be made by Typetalk, which relays conversations between text and voice via an operator.

If you have any queries arising from this factsheet, or it does not cover the information you require, please contact Age Concern Cymru on telephone: 029 2043 1555 or email: [enquiries@accymru.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@accymru.org.uk), or write to us at Tŷ John Pathy, 13-14 Neptune Court, Vanguard Way, Cardiff, CF24 5PJ.

Age Concern provides factsheets free to older people, their families and people who work with them. If you would like to make a donation to our work, you can send a cheque or postal order (made payable to: Age Concern Cymru) to the Fundraising Officer, Age Concern Cymru, Tŷ John Pathy, 13-14 Neptune Court, Vanguard Way, Cardiff, CF24 5PJ.

Find out more about Age Concern Cymru online at:  
[www.accymru.org.uk](http://www.accymru.org.uk).

Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, companies, products, services or publications in this factsheet does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by Age Concern. Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy, Age Concern cannot be held responsible for errors or omissions. No factsheet can ever be a complete guide to the law, which also changes from time to time. Therefore please ensure that

you have an up-to-date factsheet and that it clearly applies to your situation. Legal advice should always be taken if you are in doubt. **(Age Concern Cymru does not give financial or legal advice).**

This factsheet is based on one of the same title produced by the Information Unit, Communications Division at Age Concern England and is adapted for use in Wales.

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A list of Age Concern organisations in Wales plus a wide variety of information leaflets and factsheets is available on our website:  
[www.accymru.org.uk](http://www.accymru.org.uk)

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