



# STAYING WARM IN WINTER

## What you need to know



Winter 2014

HARTLEPOOL ADVICE PARTNERSHIP EVOLVING NETWORK



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**Prolonged exposure to severe cold weather carries significant health risks, particularly for vulnerable adults. We want to help you keep warm this winter and this leaflet tells you what you need to know about the help that is available, including practical tips to stay warm and safe.**

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## Switching your Supplier

Price comparison tools offer an easy way to compare the prices from lots of suppliers at once to make sure you are getting the best deal. Use comparison websites that are accredited by the Ofgem Confidence Code as this confirms the information on the website is independent, accurate and up-to-date. For more advice see our Price Comparison Sites leaflet.



## What to do if you can't pay your bills

### Behind with your Gas/ Electric Bill?

If you're in arrears with your gas or electricity, it's important to try and sort out the problem straight away otherwise you risk being cut off. You should deal with fuel arrears before other, less important debts like credit card or catalogue debts, overdrafts, loans or money borrowed from family and friends. You can get free help & advice to sort out all of your debts by contacting the HAPEN Advice Network for a specialist debt appointment on (01429) 271294.



### Fuel Direct

If you're on certain benefits, you can arrange to pay your fuel arrears in small weekly amounts which are deducted from your benefit. You will need to contact your supplier / Jobcentre Plus to discuss this.

## Grants to Pay off your Arrears

Some gas and electricity companies have set up independent charitable trusts which can give grants to some of their customers to help them pay for gas and electricity arrears. Contact your supplier for more information on this.

## Pre-Payment Meters

If you're facing disconnection, or haven't been able to keep to a payment plan, the fuel supplier may offer to install a prepayment meter. Resist a prepayment meter if you do not want one and speak to Ofgem if you feel you have been unfairly forced to have one.

## Local Welfare Support

This is crisis funding which can top up gas/electric where there is a cash flow crisis. Call (01429) 523621.



## Help for pensioners or those with ill health

If you are a pensioner, have long-term ill health, are registered disabled or have a hearing or visual impairment, you may be eligible for extra help offered by energy suppliers through the Priority Services Register. Services which might be available include:

- A service more tailored to your needs. For example, you can ask to have your bills and meter readings in Braille, large type or audio tape.



- **Moving your meter free of charge** to make it easier for you to access.
- **Having controls or adaptors** provided to make your meter or appliances easier to use.
- **Free quarterly meter readings** if you tell your supplier you can't read it yourself.
- **Priority reconnection if your supply is interrupted** and advance notice if they have to stop your supply.
- **Alternative facilities for cooking and heating** if your energy supply is interrupted.
- **Additional protection from bogus callers** with a password protection scheme.
- **Arranging for your bills to be sent or copied to someone else**, such as a carer, who can help you read and check them.
- **Free advice and information** about the services available because of your age, disability or chronic illness.

To ensure you receive additional services, you need to sign up to your supplier's Priority Services Register. If you have different suppliers for electricity and gas, you will need to register with each. If you have a carer, they can register on your behalf. There is no charge and you can register for all or some of the services.

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## Other useful information



### Hartlepool Foodbank

can provide you with three days' worth of emergency food & signpost you to other sources of help & support. You need a Food Voucher which you can get from the First Contact & Support Hub at the Civic Centre (Monday to Thursday 8:30am to 5:00pm, Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm) or from Moneywise Credit Union on Avenue Road (Monday to Friday 10:00am to 3:00pm).

### Peoples Relief of Pressure (PROP)

Provides a FREE bowl of homemade soup plus help & advice on how to stay safe and warm during the winter months on a Tuesday evening from 6:30pm to 8:30pm at 17 Lowthian Road.

### Hartlepool Carers

Provide Lunch Clubs at various locations across Hartlepool. For more information call (01429) 283095.

### 3F's Luncheon Group

The Fun, Food & Friendship Luncheon Group at Café 177 on York Road provides a free two course meal for the over 55's on a Tuesday & Wednesday from 11:30am to 1:30pm. Places must be booked in advance by calling (01429) 867016.

### Food Connect

Every Saturday from 9:00am to 10:00am at Café 177 volunteers from Paradox Church are at the café providing a free hot drink and a small bag of food/loaf of bread.

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## Make your home warmer

### Energy Saving Trust

Can provide you with simple yet effective tips & advice for ways to insulate & draft proof your home, to reduce your bills, reduce heat loss & save energy. You may also be eligible for Green Deal which allows you to get energy efficiency improvements to your property without having to pay up front. For more information call 0300 123 1234 or visit [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)



### Stay Safe & Warm

Cleveland Fire Brigade provides advice & short term support by providing emergency heating, electric/thermal blankets, torches & flasks to help people feel safe and warm. For FREE help & advice call (01429) 874063.

## Increase your Income

### Cold Weather Payments

When your local temperature is either recorded as, or forecast to be, an average of zero degrees Celsius or below over 7 consecutive days you may be eligible for a Government payment of £25 per 7 day period if you receive certain income related benefits. To see if your area is due a payment go to the Directgov website. Payments should be made automatically but if you think you are entitled & don't receive a payment contact your Pension Service or Jobcentre Plus office.

### Winter Fuel Payments

You could get between £100 and £300 tax-free to help pay your heating bills if you were born on or before 5 July 1952 & you usually get a winter fuel payment automatically if you get state pension or another social security benefit (not Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Child Benefit or Universal Credit). If you qualify but don't get paid automatically you will need to make a claim. You can claim via telephone on 08459 15 15 15.

### Help with Claiming Benefits

To find out what you can claim contact the HAPEN Advice Network for a free and confidential advice appointment on (01429) 271294.

### Moneywise Credit Union

Become a member & you can apply for a low cost loan. Call (01429) 863542.

## Reducing your Bills

### Energy Saving Quick Wins

There are lots of quick & simple things which you can do to reduce your bills & save energy. For information, tips & advice contact the Energy Saving Advice Service on 0300 123 1234 or visit [www.enersavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.enersavingtrust.org.uk)

### Social Tariffs

All energy providers have to offer social tariffs – cheaper rates if you are on a low or fixed income. Speak to your Energy Provider to check you are on the cheapest tariff for you.

### Warm Home Discount

You may be eligible for a £140 discount off your electricity bill if you're on a low income or in receipt of certain qualifying benefits. Contact your supplier to check if you are eligible.



# Any questions

**Contact the HAPEN Advice Network  
for free and confidential advice.**

**Appointment Line**

**(01429) 271294**

**Monday to Friday 9:00am - 5:00pm**

## **HAPEN Advice Network**

The Community Centre

Miers Avenue

Hartlepool

TS24 9JQ

Tel: (01429) 271275

**[www.hapen.co.uk](http://www.hapen.co.uk)**

A joint publication between the First Contact and Support Hub, West View Advice and Resource Centre and the HAPEN Advice Network.

**First Contact  
and  
Support Hub**

HARTLEPOOL ADVICE PARTNERSHIP EVOLVING NETWORK



West View Advice  
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Serving the Community