

Winter Warmth and Wellbeing

Keep warm to keep well

As we all know, energy bills are a particular worry this winter and there are energy saving tips everywhere. We want to say that while cutting down on non-essential energy use is a good idea to keep the bills down, please make sure that you keep yourself, and your home, warm enough. This is especially important as we get older and become more susceptible to the cold.

Turning the heating down by a degree can cut costs but it is recommended to keep your main living space between 18-21 degrees, making sure you prevent any draughts and keeping doors closed will help keep the heat up with less energy. We have some thermometer cards at our office – let us know if you would like one.

Winter Warmth items from Caring Together

Caring Together will have a small stock of items to help you keep warm this winter such as blankets, duvets, gloves, hats, scarves, and socks. These will be available at our premises at Charing Cross and at our get-togethers and activities that are held in our own premises. Or you can call us if you would like some of these items and we can arrange to get them to you. Thank you to Leeds Benevolent Society for Single Ladies who have given us some money to buy winter warmth items.

Remaining Cost of Living/Energy help payments and when they are due:

- Winter fuel payments should be mostly be paid in November and December – to those who were state pension age on 26th September 2022. This year it will include an extra £300, so the total payment will be either £500 or £600 per household.
- Second instalment of the cost of living payment for those on some means tested benefits (including pension credit). £324, to be paid between 8th and 23rd November.
- £66/67 energy rebate each month till March – this will be automatically applied to your bill by your energy supplier. If you have a pre-payment meter, your supplier will be sending you a voucher each month to top up.
- Warm home discount – opens 14th November 2022. This scheme has changed in 2022. If you received Guarantee Pension Credit on 21st August 2022 (the qualifying date) and your energy supplier is part of the scheme, you will receive £150 credit on your electricity bill automatically before 28th February 2023. You may also receive this if you receive some means tested benefits and your home has a high energy cost score. You'll receive a letter between November 2022 and January 2023 telling you about the discount if you're eligible. Most eligible households will receive an automatic discount. Your letter will say if you need to call a helpline by 28 February 2023 to confirm your details.
- Cold Weather payments – an additional payment of £25 for those on means tested benefits if the weather in your area is zero Celsius or below for 7 consecutive days between 1st November 2022 and 31st March 2023. Paid automatically for each 7 day period.

Extra help if you are struggling to pay your bills:

If you have energy debt or think you will not be able to pay your energy bills, it's important to contact your supplier – most suppliers have hardship funds to help customers but they do also have an obligation to help you find a solution, so speak to them as soon as possible. There may also be help available from other sources. Caring Together can help our members to look at the options and to access the support that is available so please contact us. Even if you are not a member, we can try and put you in touch with the organisations that can offer help.

Can you save on other bills?

A number of phone and broadband companies have cheaper 'social tariffs' for people on low incomes – it is worth calling your provider to ask or look at other providers and it may be worth switching. Yorkshire Water also have schemes to help customers on a low income, you can contact them for advice on 0345 1 299 299.