



# Warm Homes Campaign Newsletter



Issue - December 2013

Dear Stakeholder

## **Prepare your home for Winter**

You might not think you need to do much, but homes are just as vulnerable to the cold as people are. Every winter, thousands of properties suffer burst pipes and their occupiers suffer the misery and inconvenience that go with them.

Most of these bursts could easily have been avoided with just a few simple precautions. Many people think they won't be affected or don't know what they should do to protect their home.

Here are some of the things you can do before winter to make your home less vulnerable to the cold weather.

- Find out where the tap is that turns off the water supply to your house – make sure the tap works because if you do suffer a burst pipe during the winter you will need to turn it off quickly to prevent water flooding out and causing damage.
- Repair any dripping taps – ensure that taps are turned off and ball valves and taps are repaired as they can cause waste pipes to freeze. If the weather is cold enough drips can freeze up before they drain away. If left for long enough pipework can block and cause pipes to burst completely.
- Check you know how to use your heating system properly – so you can heat your home efficiently.
- Keep the heat in – ensure that pipes are properly insulated. You may be entitled to have your house insulated and draught-proofed free of charge if you are in receipt of a qualifying benefit. In the first instance you should contact Warm up North on 0800 2948073
- If you intend to leave your house unoccupied (for more than a few days) – turn off the water supply and drain the plumbing system. If this is not possible ensure there is a low background heating on in the house when you are away. You can also pour salt down sinks, baths, wash-hand basin as this will help prevent freezing. Ask a friend or relative to visit your home every day while you are away to help prevent possible damage. Open your loft door to help keep the loft area, water tanks and pipes in it warm enough to prevent freezing.
- If pipes freeze – you can try to thaw them out by using warm air or warm water – beware of using electrical appliances near water as this can be dangerous. If the pipes are part of the hot water system, turn off or extinguish the source of heat (immersion heater, gas boiler, coal fire etc.)
- If a burst occurs – turn off the main water supply tap for the house. Turn on the taps in your kitchen and bathroom. Switch off the boiler and the immersion water heating system and call a plumber.

### **Priority Services Register for older and disabled people**

The Priority Services Register is a scheme which offers extra free services to people who are of pensionable age, are registered disabled, have a hearing or visual impairment, or have long term ill-health. It is run by energy suppliers.

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.

Each energy supplier has its own Priority Services Register. If you get your gas and electricity from different suppliers, you'll need to register with each one. If you switch energy supplier, you will also need to register with your new supplier.

### **County Durham Hotspots Update November 2013**

Since its launch in February 2008, the Hotspots advice and referral service has helped around 2,000 vulnerable County Durham residents to keep warm, healthy and safe in their homes. The multi-agency scheme provides energy advice, heating and insulation referrals, fuel debt support, benefit checks, fire safety checks and sign-posting to other services. An emergency fund can also be accessed when a residents health may be compromised by a lack of heating or hot water. Funding for this is provided by Public Health, Durham County Council. Key partners include Durham County Council, Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue, Welfare Rights and delivery agent Tadea.

### **New Funding!**

Tadea and Durham County Council are now working with the Prince Bishops Community Bank and Derwentside Homes to provide home visits to the residents of County Durham, utilising funding from Comic Relief. Called 'Managing Money Better', the home visits will help residents to reduce their fuel bills, switch tariffs, access energy discounts and trust funding, maximise their income and much more.

### **How to refer your service users**

To arrange a short training session for your frontline teams, please contact Sarah Lee at [sarah.lee@tadea.com](mailto:sarah.lee@tadea.com) or call 01642 373880. Referral cards, flyers and posters are available and can be distributed during training.

If you want to refer a service user for help you can give them Tadea's free phone number 0800 1244320 and ask for the Hotspots Team or email a referral to [health@tadea.com](mailto:health@tadea.com)

## **Big Energy Saving Week, Monday 27 - 31 January 2014**

Big Energy Saving Week is back! January 2014 will mark the third Big Energy Saving Week, a national campaign to help people cut their fuel bills and get all the financial support they are entitled to.

Big Energy Saving Week events will be coming to a town near you from 27 January, offering you the opportunity to check you're getting the best deal for your energy and any help you're entitled to, explaining how to switch to another tariff or supplier if you can get a better price elsewhere, and giving advice on steps you can take to decrease the amount of energy you use and lose.

Big Energy Saving Week is a joint project between Citizens Advice, Government, energy suppliers, Energy Saving Trust, Acre, Age UK and other voluntary and charitable organisations.

### **Check**

You could save hundreds of pounds a year on your fuel bill by simply checking you're not paying more than you have to for your energy. Contact your energy supplier to check you are on the best tariff and payment method for your circumstances, or if they can offer you any discounts to cut your bills.

### **Switch**

By switching energy suppliers, or joining an oil club, you could be saving hundreds on your fuel bill. Why pay more than you have to? Visit an accredited switching website to see if you could get your energy cheaper elsewhere. If you use heating oil as your main fuel, buy before winter and see if there are any local oil buying clubs you can join. Shop around to get a better deal.

### **Insulate**

How to cut down on wasted energy to reduce your fuel bills. Keep in the heat by insulating the cavity walls and the loft of your home—you could save up to £160 per year. Take steps to save money around the home.

### **Warm up North**

Warm Up North helps you make energy efficiency improvements to your home at no up-front cost, the cost of the work is gradually paid off from the savings you make on your energy bills, some residents depending on circumstances, location and property type may qualify for free boilers and/or insulation or funding towards the costs.

For more information visit the [Warm up North](#) website or call 0800 294 8073

**If you have any comments please contact the  
Housing Renewal and Improvement Team's  
Energy Efficiency Officer**

**Tele: 03000 261079.**

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