With winter almost upon us and escalating food and energy prices rarely out of the news, it’s hardly surprising that many people in Torfaen, especially those who are older, are viewing the coming months with concern, even fear.

Shockingly, every winter people in the UK die as a direct result of cold weather or as a result of ill health linked to cold, damp living conditions. Older people are particularly vulnerable, often because they can’t afford to heat their homes adequately.

Keep Well This Winter is an annual Welsh Assembly Government campaign which encourages people over 60 to:

• keep warm
• keep well
• and keep safe

Local councils and health services organise their local campaigns based on these three main messages by providing information about the wide range of support that is available.

These include:

• financial help with installing new heating systems and home insulation
• energy efficiency advice
• help to maximise incomes

With the average home’s energy bills going up by 40% over the past year, it is more important than ever that all Torfaen homes, whether privately owned or rented, are comfortable, well-heated and energy efficient.

There are a lot of people in this area who will be severely hit by the increase in fuel prices.

Many older people struggle to keep warm throughout the winter months sometimes resulting in extreme measures like staying in bed for long periods of the day, or conversely, staying out all day so they don’t need to heat their homes.

There are many people, particularly elderly and vulnerable residents, who do not claim money that will help them lead much more comfortable lives.
The sad irony is that every year in Wales, thousands of pounds worth of benefits are not claimed, with the result that many people simply do not have enough money to heat their homes and eat properly – and are often forced to choose between the two.

The Keep Well This Winter campaign is trying to change that situation by encouraging more people to claim the benefits and grants that are theirs by right and which, in some cases, are dependent on age and are not means-tested.

This campaign brings together information from the partners who work together to help people

• keep warm
• keep well
• and keep safe

The Council believes that everyone living in the borough should enjoy an acceptable level of warmth in their home and is dedicating resources to ensure that older and vulnerable people are being identified and helped to claim all the benefits and grants that they are entitled to.

The Revenue and Benefits Team organise annual Welfare and Warmth days at Pontypool and Cwmbran. If you miss these events, contact the team on Freephone 0800 652 5422.

The Council’s Energy Manager is working with the SE Wales Energy Advice Service and the utility companies to ensure the best deals are available for the people of Torfaen. The Council has also recruited an Affordable Warmth Officer who will be promoting these deals and provide information about heating grants.

The Welsh Assembly Government funds the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) which provides grants of up to £3,600 for eligible householders in Wales. The scheme funds improvements designed to make homes in Wales warmer, healthier, more comfortable and more energy efficient. Home-owners and tenants have been able to have new energy-efficient boilers or cavity wall insulation fitted at no cost. You can contact the HEES on 0800 316 2815 or visit their website at www.heeswales.co.uk.

Care & Repair Torfaen works in partnership with the Council and other organisations to improve the housing conditions of older and vulnerable disabled people and will arrange for repairs and adaptations to be carried out and help people to access funding from sources like HEES.

Care & Repair Torfaen can be contacted on 08453 101180.

People are also being encouraged to seek information and advice for housing benefit and council tax benefits. There is a benefits advice team which works specifically with people who are receiving social care services who can be contacted on 01495 762200.

The Council works with other local services, such as Age Concern Torfaen, Citizens Advice Bureau, Gateway Credit Union and the Pension Service, to promote and provide benefits advice and debt management for those who do find themselves in financial difficulties.

Duncan Forbes, Chief Executive of Bron Afon, said: “During the current economic climate, and especially with the increase in fuel bills, we want to give our tenants as much help as possible.”
Financial help to keep warm this winter

The fear of running up high heating bills should not stop older people heating their homes to an acceptable level of warmth this winter because there is plenty of financial help available.

Winter Fuel Payment (WFP)

This tax-free annual benefit for people over 60 is usually paid from November. The amount varies depending on age and personal circumstances but may be up to £400 for couples. There is an additional payment for winter 2008/09 of £50 for households with someone aged 60-79 and £100 for households with someone aged 80 or over.

If you are 60 or over by September 21st 2008 and spending 10% of your income on your energy bills, you may be eligible for additional help until Bernard fell ill. Now their home has benefited from free loft insulation as well as minor adaptations, including a new stair banister and shower rails, to make life easier for them; the work was done by Care & Repair Torfaen, completely free of charge.

You may be eligible if you or your partner are aged 60 or over, or disabled, and receive:

- Pension Credit
- Income Support or income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance
- Unemployed families with children under five may also be eligible for the payment.

The Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

The Welsh Assembly Government-funded scheme provides grants of up to £3,600 for eligible householders. There are two levels of the grant:

- HEES (grant of up to £2,000) is for householders who are pregnant and in receipt of a MAT B1 certification or families with children under 16
- HEES Plus (grant of up to £3,600) is for householders who are 60 and over; lone parents with children under 16 and people receiving certain sickness or disability-related benefits.

Qualifying households may be eligible for loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, draught-proofing, hot water tank jackets, central heating and repairs to existing heating systems. In the majority of cases the grant will be enough to cover the cost of work (if there are any additional costs, e.g. installing a gas supply, you will be advised of this before any work takes place).

HEES also offers a benefits entitlement check. Telephone free on 0800 316 2815 or apply online at www.heat2insulate.co.uk

Help from utility companies

If you are over 60, have a disability, or are spending 10% of your income on your energy bills, you may be eligible for additional help from your energy company.

Contact the telephone number on your bill for more information.

Benefit entitlement check

Many people are missing out on Government money that is rightfully theirs because they are unaware of their benefits entitlement.

One 96-year old Cwmbran man has recently received a substantial amount of back-dated benefits after his social worker identified a discrepancy in his benefit entitlement.

Mrs Green explained how her father was able to claim three years’ back-dated benefits. The social worker helped the family to complete the paperwork to claim back payment and his claim was then followed up by the Council’s social care services benefits advice team. The unexpected lump sum has enabled him to move into new accommodation with a much-needed new wheelchair, furniture and personal items.

“We had no idea that he was eligible for a disability allowance,” Mrs Green said. “My father is a very proud man and would never claim for anything. Although it’s your money, you feel almost guilty, like it’s charity – and yet you’ve paid for it. We are very passive as a nation and reticent about asking for help. I was amazed how much he was eligible for. I’ve no worries about my father now, everything is taken care of.”

The Council social care services benefits advice team can be contacted on 01495 762200 for those people who are in receipt of social care services.

However, if you do not have social care services, there are other ways of getting help. The Pension Service will visit people in their own homes to check out their entitlement to a range of benefits as well as providing advice at Torfaen Customer Care Centres in Cwmbran and Pontypool.

Age Concern Torfaen provides home visits for those who cannot get out, and a drop in service at their George Street office in Pontypool. Torfaen Mind, Torfaen People’s Centre and Citizens Advice are some of the other services that can help you.

We’ve already received help

Pontypool couple, Bernard Gibbs, and his wife Gwyneth, were unaware they were eligible for help until Bernard fell ill. Now their home has benefited from free loft insulation fitted under the HEES scheme. “It only took about an hour; there was no disruption to accommodation with a much-needed new wheelchair, furniture and personal items.

“A lot of people are a bit too proud to seek the help they need,” she added. “There is help out there for you, please take advantage of it.”

Cwmbran resident, Frances Brown, 69, has had loft insulation fitted under the HEES scheme. “It only took about an hour; there was no disruption to my home at all,” she said. The house already feels warmer, especially upstairs and I’m hoping the insulation will help to keep my fuel costs as low as possible.”

Mrs Beryl Watkins, 89, is hoping that her recently installed loft and cavity wall insulation will help her reduce her heating bills.

Mrs Watkins has lived in her Cwmbran home for 53 years, and is currently paying £91 a month after her energy bills shot up last winter.

Her daughter learned she was eligible for free insulation under HEES and contacted Care & Repair Torfaen on her mother’s behalf. Mrs Watkins is delighted with the results.

“My heating bills were high and I was worried about them getting higher this winter,” said Mrs Watkins. “When you’re coming up to 90 you have to have heat no matter what the cost, my children tell me that. I’m hoping that the insulation will bring my heating costs down and next year, when they come to reassess my monthly payment again, I won’t have to pay so much.”
Supporting Torfaen’s Carers

Research continually shows that carers are often so focused on the person they care for that they neglect their own health and well-being.

Torfaen’s six-week Support Course for new carers has now been running for two years and feedback from carers has been very positive. The course encourages carers to make better use of the support services that are available to them and thus avoid creating long-term health and wellbeing problems for themselves.

Working on the premise that knowledge is power, the course acts as a one stop shop where carers receive information and advice to support them in their caring role.

The course, which is led by social care and health staff and the voluntary sector, looks at a wide range of issues from carers’ rights, benefits advice, educational, social and career opportunities, health issues, practical support, respite and emotional needs. Advice on looking after yourself and mini health checks are also available.

Every week a different aspect of the caring role is explored with an expert in that field. While primarily targeting new carers, the course is also relevant to those whose caring role has changed.

The course is flexible and responsive to the needs of those who attend; it gives carers an opportunity to talk to other people who understand their feelings. Best of all, it is free and respite for the cared-for person is available.

New courses start approximately every two months and are free. All six sessions take place on Wednesday mornings between 10.30am to 12.30pm at Canalside, Joint Assessment and Resource Centre, Five Locks Road, Pontnewydd, Cwmbran. NP44 1AP.

Group size is not limited; however in practice around ten people usually attend each course, which encourages discussion and participation.

It’s up to you whether you bring your loved one with you to Canalside where we will care for them, or if you prefer, we will arrange for them to be cared for at home. Transport is also available on request.

For more information or for an informal discussion about the course, please contact Keith Wheeler, Carers’ Support Worker, on 01633 648532 or email keith.wheeler@torfaen.gov.uk or cplandevelop@torfaen.gov.uk.

Torfaen Carers’ Centre also provides support and information for carers. Open from 11am to 3pm, it is located at Acorn Suite, 3 Central Mews, Crane Street, Pontypool. Telephone 01495 753838.

Disabled Facilities Grant

A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a means-tested local government grant to help towards the cost of adapting your home to enable you to continue to live there. A grant is paid when the Council considers that changes are necessary to meet your needs, and that the work is reasonable and practical.

In Torfaen, the Disabled Facilities Grant is administered by the Disabled People’s Service, which provides a single point of access to meet the social care and housing needs of all disabled people.

You may be eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant if you have a permanent or substantial physical disability; adaptations must be made to your only or main home in Torfaen and must be tailored to meet your needs. A full assessment of your needs and your home will be carried out to determine your eligibility and what work needs to be done.

We use qualifying or eligibility criteria to establish whether an individual can be considered for social care services; our criteria apply equally to applications for housing adaptations. Depending on your financial circumstances, the grant may cover all or some of your costs up to a maximum of £36,000.

You must apply for a grant before you start any work – you will not normally get a grant if you start work before the Council approves the application.

You do not need to be the disabled person – you can apply on behalf of a spouse/partner or a child; however, you must be:

- The owner or owner-occupier
- A private tenant (with the landlord’s permission)

More information is available in the publication ‘Housing Adaptations and the Disabled Facilities Grant’ available from Customer Care Centres, GP surgeries, libraries, health clinics and other outlets in the borough.

To apply for a DFG contact Customer Care on 01495 762200.

Examples of major adaptations:

- Widening doors
- Installing ramps or providing wheelchair thresholds
- Improving lighting
- Improving access to rooms such as the living room
- Converting bathrooms or adding a downstairs bathing facility
- Installing a stair lift /through-floor lift
- Provide access to the garden
Are you living in rented accommodation in the Torfaen area?
Do you need support to manage your Tenancy?
TeSS can offer free and confidential support for up to two years.

For more information or a referral form phone the TeSS Co-ordinator on 01495 756646
Or e-mail: TeSS@torfaenvoluntaryalliance.org.uk
**TOP TIPS for Winter Wellbeing**

If you are fit and healthy and live in a comfortable, well-heated home, the chances are you will not feel at risk from the cold. However, there are groups of people who should take special care during the winter – including the elderly, the very young and the sick and disabled who are less active.

The Top Tips for Winter Warmth is full of advice and information that can help keep you warm and healthy this winter.

**Keep Your Home Warm**

The most beneficial way of keeping the heat in is to insulate your home. There may be grants available to help you to do this from a variety of sources.

These grants cover the following measures:

- Loft insulation
- Cavity wall insulation
- Tank insulation
- Heating – installation and repairs
- Draught proofing for doors and windows

Information on grants can be obtained from the South East Wales Energy Advice Centre Freephone 0800 512012 or Torfaen County Borough Council’s Energy Efficiency Section 01633 648853.

**Dress Well for Warmth**

It is essential to wrap up warmly indoors as well as outdoors.

Remember:

- Several thin layers trap more air than one thick layer
- Woolly and thermal underwear are effective in keeping out the chill
- If you are going outside, you should always wear a warm coat with a hat, scarf, gloves and boots

If the temperature in your home is too low you may be at risk of hypothermia. This means that the inside body temperature has dropped below 35°C/95°F. Warning signs that you need to look out for are:

- Lack of awareness of cold conditions
- Drowsiness and slurred speech
- Slow pulse and breathing
- Blue lips
- Unsteadiness and slow responses
- Mental confusion
- Pale, cold skin

Try to keep a temperature of 21°C/70°F in all the rooms you use during the day so you don’t put your health at risk.

If your room temperature is higher than this, lowering the room temperature by just 1°C could reduce your bills by up to 10%.

**Keep Warm In Bed**

It is important to ensure that you keep warm at night:

- Use several layers of lightweight bedding or add blankets on top of a duvet
- Never let the bedroom temperature fall below 16°C/61°F
- If your house is difficult to heat you may consider living and sleeping in the same room in very cold weather
- Wear bed-socks, a nightcap and a warm nightdress or pyjamas

**Eat a Healthy Balanced Diet**

Regular, well-balanced meals are an essential part of keeping warm. Follow these guidelines for a better diet:

- Have a good, hearty start to the day with a hot breakfast
- Drink plenty of hot drinks throughout the day
- If you don’t feel like eating much, try a meal replacement drink
- Keep a flask full of a hot drink by your bed at night

**Get Vaccinated**

The flu jab can protect you. It contains no live viruses so it can’t give you the flu. You can get a free flu jab if:

- You are aged 65 years or over
- Have a serious heart, lung or kidney disease or diabetes
- Have a weak immune system, caused by disease or medical treatment
- Have had a stroke or TIA (transient ischaemic attack)
- Are living in a residential or nursing home; or
- Are the main carer for an elderly or disabled person

For more information about flu vaccinations contact your GP or practice nurse.

**Keep Yourself Safe**

Remember to take care and observe the following safety points:

- Keep your gas appliances regularly serviced (gas appliances should be checked every 12 months)
- Never block or obstruct fixed ventilation grilles
- Do not overload electrical sockets by using adapters
- Ensure your electric blanket is tested every year
- Never use an electric blanket and hot water bottle at the same time
- Torfaen Trading Standards can be contacted on 01633 648384 to arrange to carry out free electric blanket testing

Former British boxing flyweight champion, Robert ‘Mac’ Macmillan, now 85, is a firm believer in the merits of being active at any age.

"I have a flu jab every year and I have never been out with flu," he said. "I still keep fit. I have a punch bag in the garage and I still skip everyday – 180 skips to the minute. Doing it to music is the best way and if you can keep it up for even five minutes you’ve done a good bit of training."

The flu jab can protect you. It contains no live viruses so it can’t give you the flu.

Older people and those with chronic illnesses like asthma, heart disease, diabetes and kidney disease are particularly at risk if they catch flu, especially if it leads on to bronchitis and pneumonia.

 Former British boxing flyweight champion, Robert ‘Mac’ Macmillan, now 85, is a firm believer in the merits of being active at any age.
Protect yourself against pneumonia
Are you over 65 and have breathing problems?

If yes is the answer to this question, you may be eligible to have a pneumonia vaccination which can prevent you developing pneumonia. This type of infection can affect the lungs, may lead to blood poisoning and can affect the lining of the heart or brain.
The good news is that you only have to have this once in your lifetime and it can prevent you developing pneumonia. If you are aged over 65 years and have not previously received a vaccination against pneumonia then you may need to have a vaccination. Please speak to your practice nurse or GP for further information.

Do you have Type 2 Diabetes and live in Torfaen?

Do you want to increase your skills, understanding and confidence in managing your diabetes?

The local X-PERT programme is a six-week group diabetes education programme.

You will learn all about the up-to-date treatments and management of diabetes and will have the opportunity to explore and address problems/issues that you may have with your diabetes.
The programme has been shown to improve diabetes control, increase self-management skills and improve lifestyle and quality of life.

Please request a referral onto the programme from your GP/Practice Nurse or contact Sian Bodman, Lead Diabetes Nurse on 01495 332169 for more information.

Expert Patients Programme Wales

The Expert Patients Programme (EPP) is a 6 week NHS based self-management course for people living with any long-term health condition. It helps people improve their quality of life by learning different skills to better manage their condition on a daily basis. Groups of 8 - 16 participants meet over 6 weekly sessions of 2½ hours per week. The courses are run by tutors who live with health conditions. Each session looks at ways to help manage the effects of their long-term health condition. EPP courses are free of charge and regularly run in Torfaen.

For further details of local courses please contact: 01291 672352 www.eppwales.org

Torfaen Minor Ailments Scheme
Pharmacy First

The Pharmacy First Scheme offers FREE advice and treatment from Community Pharmacies across Torfaen for minor ailments for residents of Torfaen who are registered to a local surgery.

Minor ailments include:

- Athletes foot
- Common Cold
- Head Lice
- Heartburn
- Conjunctivitis
- Indigestion
- Constipation
- Sore Throat
- Cough
- Threadworm
- Diarrhoea
- Tummy Upset
- Earache
- Vaginal Thrush
- Hay Fever
- Warts
- Headache
- Verrucas

If you require more information relating the new Pharmacy Scheme, please access the website: www.torfaenlhb.wales.nhs.uk Alternatively, contact: Cheryl Morgan on 01495 332177 or email Cheryl.Morgan@torfaenlhb.wales.nhs.uk
Malnutrition, which can result from a lack of food or lack of the right types of food needed for good health, is still something that the majority of people associate with the developing world where unfortunately food and water shortages are all too common. The thought that some of the most vulnerable people in our ‘richer’, modern society are suffering from malnutrition remains something of a ‘taboo’ subject. However malnutrition is still a significant problem across the UK and older people in particular are amongst the most vulnerable. It comes as a surprise to most people that more than 10% of the over 65’s are malnourished and those living in poverty, are socially isolated or recently discharged from hospital are the most vulnerable.

Becoming under or malnourished can be as a consequence of not eating healthily, however other things can also induce weight loss or affect appetite including chronic disease, multiple medication, and alcohol problems. A whole range of factors can contribute and prevent some older people from being able to access a healthy diet such as living on a low income, lack of local shops selling healthy food, a lack of local transport and difficulties in carrying heavy shopping home, and even depression and dementia. Preventing, identifying and treating malnutrition can be very difficult and many people, including older people and their families, mistakenly believe that becoming thinner is a natural part of the ageing process. As a result, they do not take the appropriate action, such as referring them to their GP when older members of their family or friends or a neighbour become thinner even if they are aware of it.

At some point in our old age most of us will need help from others to do the everyday tasks we previously took for granted, such as preparing meals, getting dressed, bathing and general help around the house and a deficiency such malnutrition can affect all of these everyday tasks. So if you are worried about a relative or friend what should you look out for? Signs can include weight loss or diet changes; signs around their home such as a lack of food in cupboards and fridges or rotting and expired foods; physical problems such as reduced strength and tiredness, difficulty in breathing and feeling the cold; recurring infections and difficulties in recovering from illness; wounds which take a long time to heal; lethargy, depression and self-neglect; and loose fitting clothes or jewellery can all be associated with malnutrition.

The two key factors to ensure you are eating a healthy diet are:
• eating the right amount of food for how active you are
• and eating a range of foods to make sure you are getting a balanced diet

For some quick and easy recipes and top tips on healthy eating, contact the Food Standards Agency Wales on 029 2067 8999 for their free leaflets ‘Recipe for Life’ and ‘The Good Life’.

For more information visit: www.eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages/olderpeople/

Drinking Water can help prevent falls

Dehydration - The lack of water intake - has been identified as a critical risk factor for falls in older people. This is because it can lead to a deterioration in mental state and an increase in the likelihood of dizziness and fainting. As part of an effective falls prevention strategy, the maintenance of adequate levels of hydration in older people can have a highly significant contributory effect.

Not getting enough water can quickly result in tiredness, headaches and constipation - developing into more worrying conditions, such as increased heart rate and breathing rate, dizziness, confusion and eventual coma. During recent studies it has been established that people drinking adequate levels of water will benefit in a number of ways:
• Helps avoidance of falls
• Keeps skin healthy and young looking
• Improves mental performance
• Lowers the risk of diabetes
• Stabilises blood pressure and prevents fainting
• May reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and blood clots
• Reduces risk of kidney stones
• Maintains a healthy urinary tract and kidneys
• Helps to avoid chronic constipation

Research has also suggested that drinking enough water every day, could reduce your risk of developing cancer of the large bowel, breast and prostate at little or no cost.

You can achieve your daily water intake by:
• Try to start every day with a glass of fresh water
• If you are not used to drinking water, try replacing just one of your other drinks a day with water and increase it gradually
• Have a glass of water to accompany your meals
• If you don’t like iced water try keeping a fresh jug of water with a lid in the kitchen and have a glass whenever you go into the kitchen
• Keep a check on your urine. If you are well hydrated it should be plentiful, pale in colour and odourless

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For more information visit: www.eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages/olderpeople/
Keep Safe by following the ‘Doorstep Plan’:

**D**on’t open your door unless you are sure who it is

**O**nly keep small quantities of cash at home

**O**nly deal with people by appointment

**R**eport suspicious people to the Police

**S**ee identification and check it

**T**ry to use tradesmen who are approved

**E**nsure a spy hole or door bar is fitted

**P**revent burglars – keep your doors locked

If you are in doubt about someone calling to your home, please contact Torfaen Trading Standards on 01633 648384.

Crime against older people is not common and you are far more likely to be a victim of crime if you are a young person. Many older people live in fear of crime which can affect their quality of life.

If you have concerns about your safety, contact your Neighbourhood Policing Team on 01633 838111.

Age Concern has a wide range of services, information and advice which is there to help you. The Age Concern Ageing Well Centre in Sebastopol has free parking and the X24 bus stops right outside for easy access. Manager Angela Reed, her staff and volunteers would be very pleased to see you and give you a very warm welcome. They are open Monday to Friday 9:00am to 4:00pm, so drop by or telephone 01495 769264. Here are just some of the things they can provide:

- **Bistro**, open Monday-Friday, 9:30am-3:30pm
- **Health Suite**, open Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30am-3:30pm – holistic and beauty therapies are available, ranging from facials, massage, hair, feet, nail and waxing treatments. Male and female welcome.
- **Pleasure, Leisure and Profit learning courses** are designed for the over 50’s. Professional tutors take into account each and every individual’s needs. At the end of the course there are no exams, you will learn at a pace that suits you.
- **Extend Exercise Classes**
- **Handyperson Scheme** and Everyday Living Aids – please contact Widdershins for more information.
- **advice on income and benefits** – and support to make a claim if you require their help
- **information on home safety and maintenance**
- **information on accessing activities and leisure services**
- **information on caring services, homes and domiciliary care**
- **supporting people to make their flu vaccination appointment**
- **assistance with shopping if you have no one else to help and cannot get out yourself**
- **volunteer opportunities** - we welcome your interest in our wide range of opportunities – please contact Lesley for more details

The Age Concern shop in George Street, Pontypool is also available to give information; advice on welfare benefits; free information and fact sheets on various subjects; newsletter and shopping service (we can either shop for you or accompany you to shop)

We are open Monday to Thursday 9:00am to 4:00pm and on Friday 9:00am to 2:00pm

Please telephone 01495 762151 or pop into the George Street shop in Pontypool for more information.

**care&repairtorfaen** aims to enable older and disabled homeowners in Torfaen to remain at home in greater comfort, warmth and security. We are a free home improvement service for people over 60 or if you are disabled.

**call the careline on 08453 101180**

- We offer advice on repairs, improvements or adaptations to your home and help you to obtain quotes and choose a reputable contractor.
- We can supervise works in progress and ensure that you are satisfied with the work before you pay the contractor.
- Help you to fill in forms and give advice about benefits or other sources of finance that may be available to you.
50 Energy Saving Tips

**COOKING**
1. **HOME LAUNDRY**
   - Always wash with a full load and for smaller loads of washing use a half load programme, if available on your machine.
   - Use the lowest wash temperature that is suitable for the task.
   - Spin dry clothes before tumble drying.
   - Use the shortest setting needed on your tumble drier.
   - Dry clothes outside during warm weather.

2. **HOME HEATING**
   - Try not to overheat your home. A 1°C decrease in room temperature could reduce your fuel bill by up to 10%. Recommended temperatures are 21°C in the living room and 18°C in the hall.
   - It is better to reduce the room temperature by turning the heating down rather than opening windows.
   - Using time controllers on electric heaters will help to control running costs.
   - Use the central heating programmer to control on/off periods for heating and hot water. Time the heating to come on 1/2 hour before you get up or come in, and to go off 1/2 hour before you go out or go to bed. There is no need to have the heating on while you are out or in bed at night.
   - Thermostat controls should be used whenever possible to give the required comfort levels. Thermostat radiator valves allow temperatures to be set for each room for comfort and efficiency.

3. **INSULATION**
   - Insulate your loft with a minimum 250mm fibreglass or similar insulation. Make sure you also lag any cold water pipes in the loft, but don’t lag under the cold water tank. Don’t block off the ventilation path under the eaves.
   - If your walls are suitable, cavity wall insulation will substantially reduce heat loss.
   - Weather-strip doors and windows. A letter box flap can reduce draughts.
   - Seal gaps between floorboards and under skirting boards.
   - Block off unused chimneys (but retain a ventilation grille to keep the chimney in good condition).
   - Drawn curtains will reduce heat loss and increase comfort levels.

4. **LIGHTING**
   - Don’t use higher wattage bulbs than necessary.
   - A fluorescent fitting in the kitchen gives brighter lighting, longer lamp life and reduced running costs.
   - Compact fluorescent lamps are available in a wide range of styles and outputs. Although more expensive to buy, they are five times more efficient and last twelve times as long as ordinary tungsten lamps.
   - Turn off lights when rooms aren’t occupied, without compromising on safety and security.

5. **DISHWASHING**
   - Rinse washed dishes in cold water rather than hot.
   - If you have a dishwasher, wait until you have a full load before washing – many machines have a “rinse and hold” setting.
   - Only use the high temperature wash programmes for really dirty dishes.
   - Some dishwashers have a “quick wash” programme. This cuts washing time and helps you to save on water and electricity.

6. **REALITY CHECK**
   - Don’t open the door unnecessarily and don’t leave it open.
   - Defrost your fridge and freezer regularly.
   - Try to locate your fridge or freezer in a cool position – if possible away from direct sunlight and not next to your cooker.
   - New fridges, freezers or fridge freezers on sale at your electrical retailer carry an energy label. This will tell you how efficient the appliance is, and will help you to purchase the most energy efficient.

7. **WATER HEATING**
   - Use a shower instead of a bath – you can have up to five 5 minute showers for the cost of one bath! This saves water as well as energy.
   - If you have a large kitchen sink, using a washing up bowl will reduce water consumption.
   - Only use an immersion heater when you need it and make sure your hot water tank is properly lagged with an 80mm lagging jacket. If you have an old thin lagging jacket, don’t throw it away – fit a new jacket over the top of it.
   - Make sure your taps are fully turned off when not in use and replace washers on dripping taps.
   - If your central heating system also heats your hot water, tag the pipes between the boiler and tank.
   - If your hot water tank has a thermostat, set it to no more than 60°C.
The Gwent Bobby Van Trust scheme has been operating for over ten years. The aim of the scheme is to secure the homes of the elderly, vulnerable or disadvantaged people in the community by fitting FREE OF CHARGE, security devices such as: door locks, door chains, spy holes, window locks, window alarms, letter box guards, patio door locks, door restrictors, personal attack alarms, dummy CCTV cameras, smoke alarms and property marker kits.

By introducing these measures the scheme hopes to reduce the fear of crime and help older people maintain an independent lifestyle.

If you are one of the many people who are fed up with receiving junk mail or unsolicited telephone calls and would like to do something about them, then there is help at hand. Simply contact the organisations listed below to register your details free of charge.

To reduce the amount of personally addressed junk mail coming through your door contact:
The Mailing Preference Service, FREEPOST 29 LON20771, LONDON, W1E 0ZT
Telephone: 0845 7034599 • web: www.mpsonline.org.uk
Allow at least four months before you see a reduction in the mail you receive.

To reduce the amount of unaddressed leaflets which are delivered by the Royal Mail contact:
Royal Mail Door-To-Door Opt-Outs, FREEPOST RRBZ-TXBT-TTS, Kingsmeads House, Oxpens Road, Oxford, OX1 1RX
Email: optout@royalmail.com
To reduce the amount of unwanted telephone sales calls, contact:
The Telephone Preference Service, DMA House, 70 Margaret Street, London. W1W 8SS
Telephone: 0845 0700707 • Web: www.tpsonline.org.uk
It will take up to 28 days for the calls to be reduced.

For more information contact:Trading Standards on 01633 648384.
A guide to support groups in your area

Alzheimer’s Society Gwent
Befriending Project
Caring for someone with Alzheimer’s? Then the above project may be able to help you with support and advice. Further information from Julie Cooke Tel: 01495 766627

Bipolar Disorder Self Help Group
Support for people with bipolar disorder, their family and friends. Tel: 08456 340 080

Cardiac Rehabilitation
Pontypool Pacers
A community based cardiac exercise support group, working with individuals leaving the hospital based rehabilitation course. The project offers support, exercise and socialisation, all within a safe environment. Further information from Gethin Jones Tel: 01495 773681

Cancer Support (Gwent)
Support and information to families and friends of those affected by cancer. Help and understanding is available. Further information from Peggy Tapper Tel: 01495 768633

Carers Centre (Torfaen)
Open Monday to Friday 11.00am to 3.00pm
Carers and those they care for are given support and information, the opportunity to meet with others and discuss matters of mutual concern. The Centre is staffed by volunteers. Call in at 3 Central Mews, Crane Street, Pontypool or Tel: 01495 753838

Diabetes Support Group (Torfaen) / Cwmbran Diabetes Support Group
Do you, a family member or close friend have diabetes? If so help and support is available from the above support groups. Further information from Mrs Marjorie Wells Tel: 01495 764379 (Torfaen Group) or Val Carnegie. Tel: 01633 866638 (Cwmbran Group)

Expert Patient Programme
six week course of 2.5 hours each week
Do you have or care for someone who has a long term health condition? Free courses, designed to help manage any long term health conditions. Further information from Sarah Cronin, Course Co-ordinator. Tel: 01291 672352

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Group
(Torfaen)
A newly formed support group - meeting monthly for gay, lesbian and bisexual adults in Torfaen. Further information from Richard Tel: 07707 398877

HIV Positive Support Group
Are you affected by HIV and its related issues? This support group meets weekly - partners, friends and family members welcome. For more details contact John Tel: 07891 766152

Huntington’s Disease Support Group
The Torfaen & District Support Group meets informally at the Torfaen Carer’s Centre bi-monthly for support and information in a relaxed atmosphere. Further information from Jackie Peacock Tel: 01873 831931

Mobility Issues
Wheels in Motion – for disabled people of all ages
Wheels in Motion (WIM) are a self help group for people with mobility issues – have your say and promote change within a supportive environment. Further information from Jeanne Tel: 01495 762441 or Rex Tel: 01633 482529

Multiple Sclerosis Society (MS)
Cwmbran & District Support Group
This support group meets weekly aiming to improve self management, providing information, promoting a healthier lifestyle with peer led support. Further information from Sally Bailey Tel: 01633 869580

Older Persons Forum – Torfaen
Older Persons Forum held monthly in Blaenavon, Cwmbran and Pontypool. Informing the Older Persons Strategy and Welsh Assembly Government’s Strategy for Older People in Wales, the Forum has open membership for residents aged 50+. Further information from Sarah Cronin, Course Co-ordinator Tel: 01495 766147

Osteoporosis Support Group
(Gwent)
This support group meets monthly, as well as various socialisation events occurring regularly. Further information from Sue Browne Strategy Co-ordinator Tel: 01495 766147

Parkinson’s Disease Society (Gwent)
This support group meets monthly for information and advice and socialization events occur on a regular basis. Further information from Gwilym Edwards (Chair) Tel: 01495 753771 or Bernard Zavishlock (Secretary) 01873 859882

Respiratory Support Group
Meets monthly and is open to anyone with a respiratory condition. The Local Health Board and the British Lung Foundation support this group under the banner of ‘Breathe Easy’. Further information from Shan Evans at British Lung Foundation. Tel: 01792 455764 or Sarah Bayliss, Respiratory & Rehabilitation Nurse. Tel: 01495 332165

Service Users and Carers of Torfaen Forum
This forum has open membership to service users and carers. It’s aim is to capacity build and enable service user and carers within the community to take part in the strategic planning of services. Further information from Jacki Reardon Tel: 01633 648501

Shopmobility Scheme (Pontypool) – Free use of scooters – open to anyone with mobility difficulties. Further information from Arno Nagel Tel: 07980682635 or Steven Biggs Tel: 01495 766297

Stroke Support Group – Torfaen
Living with a stroke? If so, this new support group could be for you and your carer. The group meets first and third Thursday of the month between 2.00 pm and 4.00 pm. Further information from Lyndon or Lorraine Tel: 01495 753771 or Bernard Zavishlock (Secretary) 01873 859882

Torfaen MIND
Drop In and Informal Support Group, advice & support on mental health issues, including service user forum. Further information from Janice Tel: 01495 759272

Wheels in Motion (WIM) are a self help group for people with mobility issues – have your say and promote change within a supportive environment. Further information from Jeanne Tel: 01495 762441 or Rex Tel: 01633 482529
Ageing Well
Age Concern Torfaen (Widdershins) 01495 769264
Age Concern Pontypool Shop 01495 762151
Age Concern Cymru 029 20431555
Torfaen Carers Centre 01495 753838
TCBC Older Persons Co-ordinator 01495 766147

Money, Benefits, Tax, Tax Credits, Grants & Advice
Affordable Warmth Officer 01495 766225
Benefits Advice Service (for Social Care Service users) 01495 762200
Benefit Enquiry Line for Disabled People & Carers 0800 882200, 0800 243355 (Text Phone)
Citizens Advice Bureau Cwmbran 01633 482464 / 01633 876121
Citizens Advice Bureau Pontypool 01495 757421 / 01495 759814
Citizens Advice Bureau Blaenavon 01495 792125 / 01495 791232
Community Care Grant, Budgeting & Crisis Loans 0800 882200, 0800 243355 (Text Phone)
Dial UK (Disability information & Advice Line 01302 310123 informationenquiries@dialuk.org.uk www.dialuk.info
Directgov www.direct.gov.uk
Disabled Facilities Grant 01495 762200
Energy Saving Trust Wales 0800 512012
Gateway Credit Union 01495 750020 www.gatewaycu.co.uk
Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) 0800 3162815 www.keeswales.co.uk
Home Heat Helpline 0800 336999 www.homeheathelpline.org 0800 027 2122 (Minicom)
National Insulation Association 01525 383313
Pension Service 0845 6060265
Gateway Credit Union 01495 750020
TCBC Customer Care Centre 01495 762200
Torfaen Energy Efficiency Section 01633 648853
Torfaen Revenue & Benefits Team 0800 6525422
Winter Fuel Payment Helpline 08459 151515 0845 6015613 (Textphone)

Health & Wellbeing
Gwent Community Health Council 01495 740555
Diabetes X-Pert Programme 01495 332169
Expert Patient Programme 01291 672352
Food Standards Agency 029 20678999
NHS Direct 0845 4647, 0845 6064647 (Text Phone)
RNIB 0945 7669999
RNID 0808 8080123, 0808 8089000 (Text Phone)
Stop Smoking Wales 0800 0852219

Housing & Care & Repair
Age Concern Handyman Service 01495 769264
Gwent Bobby Van Trust 01633 245202
Bron Afon 0800 111 4242
Care & Repair Torfaen 08453 101 180
Charter Housing (Seren Group) 01633 212 375 contact@seren-group.co.uk
Melin Homes 08453 101 102 enquiries@melinhomes.co.uk
TESS - Tenancy Support Service 01495 756646

Emergency Services, Safety & Trading Standards
Consumer Direct 08545 04 05 06
Emergency Services 999
Gwent Bobby Van Trust 01633 245202
Gwent Police 01633 838 111
Health and Safety Executive Gas Safety Advice Line 0800 300 363
Mailing Preference Service 0845 7034599
Telephone Preference Service 0845 0700707
Torfaen Trading Standards 01633 648384
South Wales Fire & Rescue Home Fire Safety Check 0800 1691234