



Factsheet - December 2016

Keep Warm and Well

Keeping warm over the winter months can help prevent colds, flu or more serious health problems like pneumonia. However, hundreds of people die needlessly every year because they are living in cold housing.

Keep yourself warm and well

Keep your house at the correct temperature to ward off ill health. For a healthy adult your main living room should be between 18-21°C (64-70F), this recommendation is slightly warmer for older adults and vulnerable people at temperatures around 21°C (70F). Other areas of the house should be kept at a minimum of 16°C (61F). You can also use a hot water bottle, or layers of blankets to keep warm while you're in bed. Have regular hot drinks and soups. Keep all doors shut to prevent draughts and pull your curtains at dusk to keep the heat inside. If your radiator is in front of the window, tuck the curtains behind it.

Wear several layers of clothes. Several layers are better than one thick layer, as warmth from your body is trapped between layers. Always wear hats, gloves and scarves. If possible, stay inside during a cold period if you have heart or breathing problems.

Take extra care in icy conditions if you go out - wear boots or shoes with good grip on the soles. The Met Office advises putting grit or cat litter on paths and driveways to minimise the risk of slipping. You should also wait until the roads have been gritted if you are travelling by car. Bear in mind that black ice on pavements or roads might not be clearly visible, and that compacted snow may turn to ice and become slippery.

Some people are more vulnerable than others. This can be due to physical factors, such as the vulnerability of young children and people over 65 years, a long-standing illness or a disability. Vulnerability to excess winter cold may also be caused by a psychological factor, such as a mental disability.

Visit the GP

Contact your GP and get your jabs. If you are over 65, or have long-standing health problems make sure you get a flu jab every year to protect you from flu. You should also have the pneumococcal jab, which is given once and protects you against infections caused by the pneumococcus bug such as pneumonia, meningitis and septicaemia.

It is advisable that if you come into contact with someone vulnerable, to prevent being a carrier of the virus you should also have a flu jab. A nasal spray flu vaccine is now being offered to children aged two, three and four years old.

Get active and out and about

Keep active. Move around at least once every hour and avoid sitting down for long periods of time. Even light exercise will help keep you warm. Age UK and Altogether Better host activities and clubs for Barnet's community. Contact them on:

Age UK - 020 8203 5040

East Finchley Altogether Better – 0203 778 0228

Burnt Oak Altogether Better – 07909 998 463

Dial-a-Ride from Transport for London has a free service for older adults and disabled residents living within Barnet to assist with travel. To see if you qualify call 03432 227 777.

Broken heating?

If you are a Barnet Homes tenant and you have an issue with your heating, please call Barnet Homes on 0800 389 5225.



If you rent your home and there is a serious defect which has not been dealt with by the landlord, please call private sector housing on 020 8359 7995.

Barnet Council's Private Housing Sector has grants available to assist vulnerable residents who own their homes with broken heating. To apply for a grant you must have a vulnerability to excessively cold housing and a long-term health condition, please call 0208 359 7441 or email winterwell@barnet.gov.uk

If your heating is broken and you are a vulnerable person, regardless of your type of housing, please call Social Care Direct on 020 8359 5000 or 020 8359 2000 in an out of hours situation if emergency heating equipment is required.

If you smell a gas leak call National Grid Gas Emergencies line straight away on 0800 111 999 (this is a 24 hour emergency line). Open your windows and doors to let air in, make sure all gas appliances are turned off, and turn the gas off at the mains if possible. Do not turn lights on or off and avoid using other electrical switches and appliances. Do not smoke or light a naked flame. Do not try and investigate the problem or attempt to fix a leak or a faulty appliance.

Switch and save some money

Sign up to the Big London Energy Switch (BLES). On average, Barnet households who switched in May 2015 with the BLES saved £294.08 per year per household. The BLES is a price drop competition amongst energy companies. Whoever drops their price the lowest gets their offer sent out to all the households who signed up to the switch. There is no obligation for these households to switch energy company but if the offer is cheaper than their current tariff, it is easy and simple to do. It costs nothing to switch and you can sign up over the phone. Call 0800 389 5225.



Priority Services and airTEXT

Airtext will alert you when there are high levels of pollution outside or if there is extreme weather in your area and tell you how to minimise the risks associated. Sign up to airTEXT by texting 'AIRTEXT' to 78070. The service is free, but you will be charged at your standard text rate.

This is especially important for people who have Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, asthma, emphysema, heart disease or any other vulnerability to poor air quality.

Vulnerable people should also sign up to the priority services register. In the event of a power outage or an emergency, additional assistance will be offered to those who are vulnerable. To see if your provider will facilitate you additional assistance in an outage or emergency you should contact them. Your water, electricity or gas suppliers are likely to each have their own register.

Winter Benefits

The **Winter Fuel Payment** is an annual one-off payment towards the cost of your heating bills. If anyone living within in a house was born on or before 5 May 1953 they could receive up to £300 annual payment. Call the Winter Fuel Payment Helpline on 03459 151 515 (or 0345 606 0285 for telephone users).

Cold Weather Payments are £25 for every seven days the temperature drops below zero degrees celsius. You may receive a cold weather payment if you receive:

- Pension Credit
- Income Support
- Income based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income related employment and support allowance
- Universal Credit

It should be paid automatically to those who qualify, if it is not contact your pension centre or Jobcentre plus office.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties, Citizens Advice Barnet or Charis may be able to help. Charis has schemes to support those who are struggling in financial hardship. You can contact:

Citizens Advice Barnet on 0300 456 8365
Charis on 01733 421 021.