



Newsletter Winter 2023

Living life later, longer, stronger



**We are an independent local charity
working with communities
throughout the County, helping and
supporting people aged 50+**



Winter has arrived again; a time to reflect on the year that is passing and to begin the process of hunkering down for the winter

Our AGM and Conference aimed to offer a space for consideration, comment and instructive conversation. This day was an opportunity to influence the services, campaigns and direction of Age UK County Durham, to express the needs of people aged 50+ and highlight the barriers and obstacles to living and ageing well.

Hosted at Ushaw College we welcomed over 70 guests. A packed day included taster sessions in Archery, Bellyfit, arts and crafts. Ukulele Smile Time Darlington gave an invigorating performance at lunchtime, raising everyone's spirits and prompting some spontaneous dancing!

We have had a busy and productive year. We have welcomed new members of staff, an Engagement Officer to listen to what people aged 50 plus want and need from us, a Physiotherapist to support physical wellbeing in the community, Benefit advice and Information officers and service development staff. This means we can offer you a wider range of community-based services, give you a voice to change things that matter to you and ensure you have access to the finances and opportunities you are entitled to.

If you are hunkering down for the winter, remember we can help with warm clothing, radiators, food vouchers and small grants to help with the cost of living including utility bills.

Finally, as you read through this newsletter, you will discover the huge range of services we deliver. Let us know what you think, what matters to you and importantly share the information with your friends and neighbours.

Volunteers' Week 2023 is a time to celebrate and inspire

This year as part of the King's Coronation Bank Holiday weekend, we celebrated our volunteers at The Big Help Out



On Monday 8 May 2023, our volunteers and staff gave up their bank holiday to open up our Superstore and Hidden Boutique to welcome visitors and encourage them to become a volunteer.

What made the day even more special was that the BBC saw our Facebook posts on the build up to our Big Help Day and came to find out more about us and our fantastic volunteers.



We had a great time with the BBC crew and the cakes were amazing!

Volunteer spotlight ...

Mike is one of our longest serving volunteers, he has been with us since 2006!

During this time he has been involved in a variety of projects, most recently, helping with our warm homes project and with our retail team. Mike, a

member of Rotary Durham took part in their hugely successful 2023 Swimathon raising £9,000 for groups and organisations in County Durham including £200.00 for Age UK County Durham. Huge thanks to Mike and to Rotary Durham, the donation will be used to continue supporting older people living in County Durham.



HELP!

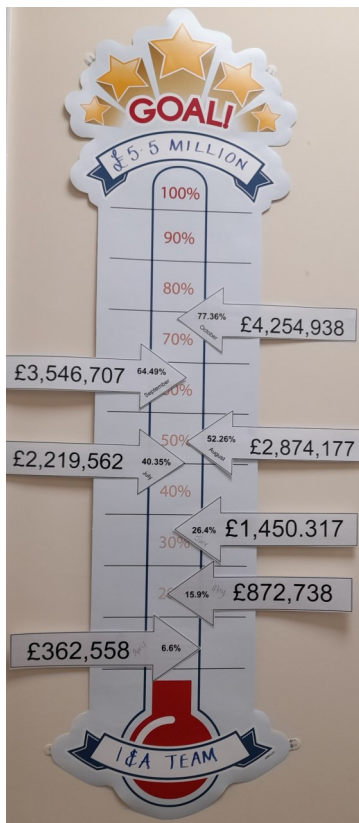
It's been yet another challenging year, but we can choose to respond with kindness, help spread some happiness and hope. If you have some spare time now and again, don't want a regular commitment but happy to help occasionally, call us please. Volunteers make things happen, often unseen, they call lonely people, deliver food and hot meals, protect older people against fraud, man the till at the local shop, help with marketing and publicity and lots more.

Everything we do can be done so much better and bigger with you. Call us today on 0191 386 3856—volunteering is a great experience and it could be yours!



Memory Café visit

Our Information & Advice Manager, Sharon visited The Memory Café in Sedgefield to give a talk about Welfare Benefits available for older people, how to claim your entitlements and maximise your income. Sharon also talked about our Age UK County Durham Information and Advice Service, which supports people to access the services that improve their lives.



So far this year, our information and advice team has helped secure a total of £4,254,938.00 in unclaimed benefits for older adults living in the County.

**Get
information
and advice
from us**



Age UK County Durham's Information and Advice Service is **FREE and confidential**—we can answer your questions, provide more information and help you apply for benefits via telephone appointment or home visit.

Disability Benefits and what you need to know!

There are 2 main Disability Benefits:

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

- Applicants must be under State Pension Age to **apply**
- If appropriate, the benefit will continue **after** State Pension age
- PIP replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA) those claiming DLA will still continue to do so

DWP will notify you if you need to change

There are two components to PIP
Mobility and Daily Living and each have two rates of payment (the rates increase each financial year)

MOBILITY (weekly)

Standard Rate £26.90

Enhanced Rate £71.00

DAILY LIVING (weekly)

Standard Rate £ 68.10

Enhanced Rate £101.75

Mobility criteria: ability to move around outdoors physically and also emotionally being able to manage outside the home.

The Enhanced Rate of Mobility may entitle you to a Mobility Car. Both rates of Mobility *may* automatically entitle you to a Blue Disabled Parking Badge (depending on how your points are allocated).

Daily Living criteria: ability to manage daily tasks-making meals, dressing, bathing also managing money, medication, mixing with others.

- Awards are based on points you receive for the

struggles you face and also any equipment you are using

- Applicants will have a face to face or telephone consultation as part of the application process
- Decisions are usually made within 3 months

Attendance Allowance (AA)

Applicants must be over State Pension age to apply and not receiving any other disability benefit (for example PIP, DLA)

There is no Mobility Component. AA is awarded when health problems and age-related problems begin to impact on personal care tasks. Decisions are usually made in approximately 8 weeks

There are 2 rates of payment:

- Higher Rate £101.75 weekly
 - Lower Rate £68.10 weekly
- (rates increase each financial year)*

Personal Care Tasks include:

- Getting in and out of bed, bathing, dressing, using the toilet
- Managing medication and eating meals
- You may qualify for AA if you're struggling with these tasks, even if no one helps you

Personal Care Tasks do not include:

- Hoovering, cleaning, shopping, gardening
- Getting in/out the car

Both benefits are NONE MEANS TESTED (not linked to income/savings) and are TAX FREE. As both benefits have several rates of payment, you can apply for a review of your award if your situation changes or gets worse. Get advice before applying!

'You In Mind' **Age UK County Durham** **AGM and Conference**

Welcome to our new Chair Denise Elliott



Estate
Planning ...
look out for
more talks



Enjoyed by all!



Darlington Smile Time Ukulele Band lived up to their name, reviving us after a hearty lunch

Archery sessions ...



... hit the spot!

First time
crocheting ...
it's never too
late to learn!



Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy helps to restore movement and function if you are affected by injury, illness, or disability.

The Age UK County Durham Physiotherapy service is delivered within your own home and is tailored to help people whose mental health is negatively impacted upon by a physical/ mobility problem. Helping you to maximise your full potential, by improving physical function and independence, and your psychological and social wellbeing. Additionally, we will educate you and your carer(s) on how to manage specific problems.

What can Physiotherapy help with?

Falls and balance problems – Supporting anyone who has had multiple falls.

Poor mobility - Carrying out mobility assessments, walking aid assessments and offering exercise advice and guidance.

Neurological problems - Supporting people with problems after a stroke or because of illnesses such as Parkinson's disease or Multiple Sclerosis.

Respiratory problems - Helping those living with respiratory illnesses such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or temporary conditions like chest infections to implement effective breathing techniques, and master inhalers.

Pain management - Offering guidance and advice, including non-pharmacological interventions.

Your initial assessment will identify what needs you may have, then an intervention plan will be created based upon to your own personal goals.

If you feel you could benefit from physiotherapy, please contact Age UK County Durham by calling 0191 374 6569 or send an email to wellbeing@ageukcountydurham.org.uk

Dementia Therapy

We have been running a series of MCST projects (Dementia Therapy)

The project consists of weekly sessions. Each session consists of a series of planned activities to cater for a variety of interests and abilities.



The sessions aim to stimulate people's minds in order to keep them active and engaged, to encourage new thoughts and associations, to use reminiscence as an aid to the here-and-now and to exercise motor skills through movement and games.

The project is suitable for clients with early to moderate dementia and gives them a chance to make new friends and to experience cognitive stimulation.

If you or a family member would like more information regarding any future MCST sessions, please call 0191 386 3856 or email us at info@ageukcountydurham.org.uk

(MCST—Maintenance Cognitive stimulation Therapy)

Bereavement Support

Loneliness is a natural part of grief. Many bereaved people find it to be one of the most challenging aspects of life after the loss of a loved one.

Maybe you have lost a close companion who you spoke with daily, a family member you provided care for, or are now living alone for the first time in decades after losing your spouse. Adjusting to life without this person is painful. The death of a significant person can leave you feeling like you have lost a part of yourself, or that you now have a hole that nothing or no one else can fill. These intense emotions can lead to further isolation and separation from our friends and family members when we feel as though no one understands what we are going through.

We want you to know that you are not alone. What you are feeling is normal, and there are other people in your community like you. Healing grief takes time. A good place to start is by allowing yourself to talk about the loss, your loneliness, the changes you are experiencing, and to share memories of your loved one. Speaking with a group of peers can provide you with emotional support, validation, and new connections to help ease loneliness.

If you would like to meet and speak with other people in the community who are also working through a loss, you can attend our Bereavement Support Group. Our group is facilitated by a qualified counsellor and occurs twice a month in Belmont, Durham. If interested please contact Amanda at 0191 374 6570 for a friendly chat.

If talking about grief isn't for you? There are many ways we can support you through this difficult time. Consider joining a local lunch club or trying a new social activity.

**Further details can be found at www.ageuk.org.uk/countydurham/activities-and-events/
or by ringing us on 0191 386 3856**

Mental Wellbeing

Counselling and psychotherapy provide you with a safe and confidential space to discuss your thoughts, emotions and behaviours with a trained professional. Each counselling session will last 50 minutes.

At Age UK County Durham, we have a therapy room where you can engage in face to face sessions.

Through counselling you are given the opportunity to build a healing relationship with your therapist. Your therapist will not give you advice or their opinions, but they will listen to you with understanding, empathy and help you build tools to manage and better understand your situation.

You will first meet with your therapist to have an assessment session, this determines what you might want to get out of the therapy and whether you are able to work together.

People attend therapy for a whole host of different reasons; some may be feeling anxious or depressed, some might have relationship or workplace issues or bereavements, and others might want to explore their past.

Counselling and psychotherapy is suitable for people who want to explore themselves in a safe objective space.



**If you're struggling at the moment you can take the first step today and make yourself a priority and call us on
0191 386 3856**

**You can also email us at
wellbeing@ageukcountydurham.org.uk**

Our staff and volunteers work incredibly hard so we can develop, grow and create new and innovative ways to support anyone aged 50+ living in County Durham

Behind the Scenes

For all of our activities to take place and run smoothly behind the scenes there is a bubbly and friendly project support team whose aim is to ensure all of our members have a friendly and enjoyable time.

Our project support team work hand-in-glove to deliver the ultimate customer experience and our aim is to ensure each phone call results in a positive outcome for the member.

The projects team is a busy environment, no two days are ever the same and everyone works well together to reach the same goal.

There are two distinct parts of the project support team:

Communication - this is key for the success of any organisation

- 👍 Regular contact is made with members and the general public
- 👍 Keeping them updated about their activities; making bookings and any amendments
- 👍 Promoting activities on a daily basis via telephone, leaflets and social media

- 👍 Collating feedback both positive and negative to ensure continuous development for the delivery of all of our projects.
- 👍 Signposting general enquiries to the relevant department within the organisation

Administration - essential for maintaining accurate records

- 👍 Keeping the computer database up to date recording details of the activities
- 👍 Processing participation forms from new members,
- 👍 Recording attendance at activities
- 👍 Producing registers for future activities.

The project support team also help support other projects/teams in the organisation; for instance, several of our staff members are assisting the Community Development Worker in an intergenerational opportunity with Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation – a photo shoot to showcase stylish individuals to comment on the fickle nature of fashion whilst style is something which is timeless!

Finally we would like to thank our fantastic team of volunteers, their work is greatly appreciated and we could not do what we do without them. If you feel you could help us to keep our activities running smoothly behind the scenes why not volunteer with us.

**Please call us on 0191 386 3856
to discuss volunteering
opportunities with us**

Introducing our new staff members



Hi my name's **Laura** and I have recently joined the team as Engagement and Impact Officer. I am going to be working across County Durham to try to establish what our residents want from us beyond the age of 50.

Being aware that individual needs are different in your 50s to what they may be in your 70s, 80s and so on, I am setting up focus groups specifically targeting the ages of people aged 50 to 69 and there are separate groups for people aged 70plus.

Help me to understand what you, your relatives, your neighbours and friends want to see from Age UK County Durham. Come and share your ideas and raise any concerns you may have. Join a forum today in a space local to you. Working together we can strive to create a service that meets the needs of all age groups beyond 50.

**If you want to know more contact
Laura on 0191 374 6572**

Hello, My name is **Jaqui**. I have just started in my role as a Project Support Worker at Age UK County Durham.

I will be helping out behind the scenes on a wide range of projects and services run by Age UK County Durham.

I am really looking forward to visiting some of the activities and chatting with everyone.

Fun fact: One of my favourite places to visit is Scotland.





Hi, my name is **Pauline** and I joined Age UK County Durham in May 2023.

I work with the Information & Advice Team as an Information Support Worker, dealing with enquiries from older people, their families, carers and other people working with them.

It is a pleasure to work with people who genuinely care about their clients, and to know that the company I work for really makes a difference to these people's lives

Hello I am **Louise**, I recently started my role as an Information and Advice Worker for Age UK County Durham.

My main role is to support clients to apply for any benefits they may be entitled to.

Since starting my role, it has been extremely rewarding to see the positive impact that our support has on our client's circumstances.



The whole team are very supportive and are always happy to help if I still have any questions as a new member of the team.

Save money, Save the planet!

Age UK County Durham Superstore and Hidden Boutique are the only Age UK shops in County Durham that directly support local people

Our Hidden Boutique is situated on North Road in Durham City. This little shop may be small but it's a treasure trove of bargains, focusing on vintage and designer clothing, accessories, bric-a-brac and jewellery.

Our womenswear department is in the main shop and is stocked full of everything you need to make the perfect pre loved outfit, complete with matching accessories.

We have a dedicated Men's room selling designer shirts, suits and coats as well as retro toys, vinyl, pictures and quirky household items that would make perfect additions to any man's cave!



After feedback from customers wanting children's clothing earlier this year, we opened another room up filled with designer children's wear, toys and books, this has proved really popular and is always filled with quality items.

In addition to our rooms, we also have a large selection of books, everything from classics, often stocking first editions to modern fiction books and study books. Whatever you're looking for there's sure to be something that will catch your eye.

All funds raised in our shops helps people in County Durham

eBay

Our **eBay** store has been running for three years now with new listings added several times a week, you can find our store on eBay by searching for Age Concern Durham County. We sell everything from new household items, clothes, antiques, books and toys. Purchases are also able to be collected from our **Superstore**.



Our Superstore, based on Belmont Business Park is the place to donate all your too good to throw away items!

We accept donations during trading hours of Monday to Saturday 9.30 - 5.00 and take everything that's still in good saleable condition, all household items, clothing and furniture. We offer a collection service for large items. Don't forget to gift aid your donations so that Age UK County Durham gets an extra 25% when we sell them.

The store is packed with furniture all at great prices, we deliver too so no need to worry about how you'll get your new sofa home. As well as selling furniture we stock everything you need for the home, all our electricals are fully PAT tested, we have beautiful tea sets and endless amounts of crockery, kitchenware, bedding and curtains.

We price our clothing to sell here at the **Superstore** with a large children's clothing department, everyone loves a good rummage through the 3 for £1 boxes, these are filled daily and have items from baby to teenager.

Ladies and Men's' clothes include items from £1 as well as a large shoe display, winter accessories and handbags. Give yourself plenty of time when you plan your visit, there's a lot to see and you certainly won't go home empty handed.

Community Development

Hello everyone I am Naomi, the new Community Development Worker at Age UK County Durham. I started at the beginning of September and have been made very welcome by the team at Houghton House. I come from a museum and history background and so it is exciting to discover the different activities and services out here for people aged 50+ to participate in and access.



I started by visiting some of the activities already up and running from New Age Kurling (which I had never come across before), some lunch clubs and also took part in Seated Exercise at Heart on the Terrace, Murton (which showed me I need to work on my arm muscles). I will see more of you in the coming months!

I realise that there are a few gaps in provision so I am looking forward to hearing from **YOU!** What might you like to do? Then I can begin developing new activities in the coming year.

I have already started a social group that visit inspiring venues (eg the Oriental Museum) through the year to experience something new and exciting that maybe they wouldn't visit alone and also taster sessions at the Community Shed - the Crafty Crew.

I've got ideas for music sessions (including live music and chat), working in partnership with others to offer walks and much more. I have been supported in all this with the Project Team members Karen and Chris and by our wonderful Volunteers.

**Please contact me on 0191 374 6561
with ideas or if you would like to volunteer as a host
for any of these or future activities
Naomi.beeley@ageukcountydurham.org.uk**

Cultural Companions

These new sessions offer you the opportunity for some exciting and different experiences with others including a chat over a cuppa about what you have done. We often want to try new things but are not sure if it is for us – come along to Cultural Companions and try some new things with others who are also trying it!

You will get the chance to have behind the scenes tours, see things members of the public don't normally have access to, or view a film with the group and in a recent session handle some objects from Egypt at the Oriental Museum. Students from South College, University of Durham join us for conversation over tea and biscuits. People have enjoyed meeting new people, discovering new things, thinking about things other than day to day life and sharing experiences in an informal and enjoyable atmosphere.

Over the next year there will be a visit each month to different venues around the county. If you would like to take part in one of the sessions please contact me.

Thai Chi

A new session of Thai Chi has started at St John's Hall, Meadowfield this autumn. Roy is one of many of our long term volunteers with Age UK County Durham and has been running sessions at Shakespeare Hall for some time now. He enjoys sharing Thai Chi with others and it is suitable for all physical abilities as it is a gentle form of exercise for both mind and body. Roy tailors the sessions to suit the participants and there is always a break for a sociable cup of tea as this is important for our wellbeing too. Since joining, one participant said **'her knee is now much better'** and another said how **'sometimes she gets a bit down and looking forward to these sessions helps her'**. Roy is a lovely gentle person and very aware of what people may need. Did you know we are all connected to life forces? Have you tried Thai Chi stood beneath a tree or first thing in the morning to wake you up? It is good for balance and confidence so come and join us on Tuesdays at St John's Hall, Meadowfield.

Activities

Age UK County Durham offers a host of services to promote mental and physical wellbeing including lunch and breakfast clubs, exercise classes, craft and recreational sessions

640 Sessions

4954 Attendances

364 New Clients

During January to March 2023 we introduced 18 new activities under the Keep Warm Keep Moving project.

These activities were hosted in 16 "warm space" community venues during the colder months and were offered free of charge. 156 participants joined us. We launched a new 'Indoor safe Archery' session in 2 community venues which proved extremely popular



Hot Meals Service



Chef Tracy at Shildon Alive

Autumn saw the launch of our Hot Meals service working in partnership with community organisations in Shildon, Sacriston and Newton Aycliffe. During the colder months we aim to support people aged 50 years and over, living in these communities, for whom a hot meal and other support is often out of reach.

If you are lonely and socially isolated, living with a physical or mental disability or struggling financially then this project is for you. So far, over **2400** hot meals have been delivered by volunteers working for Shildon Alive, The Fulforth Centre in Sacriston and Junction 7 in Newton Aycliffe.

In January 2024 the service will also include a Wellbeing Wednesday Lunch Club at Jubilee Fields Community Centre in Shildon. One client told us 'it's a brilliant service and it's really helped me out during a crisis'.

To find out more, just call us on 0191 3863856



A huge thankyou to the members of **Castle Eden Golf Club** for the extremely generous donation of £1200.

We are grateful to Lady's Captain Lis Greenwell for adopting Age UK County Durham as her charity for the year and will use the donation to support older people living alone in County Durham

Getting back to nature

In November, Charles and Julie joined Waterstons (our IT support provider) to plant trees as part of their Giving Back to Nature Day with Make It Wild.

They spent the day helping to plant 250 native trees along the banks of the River Nidd which will help improve the diversity of wildlife.

It was a cold and frosty start, with sunshine and showers and a picnic sat amongst the newly planted trees.

It was a great way to help to help offset our carbon footprint and improve nature at the same time.



Future You Forums

Aged 50 to 69?
We want to hear your thoughts



Helping you to fulfil your 50s and sail into your 60s

Join one of our forums in a space local to you

Have your views heard

Help shape a service that delivers results for you

Create a future that meets your needs

Interested? Call us on
0191 386 3856 or email us at
info@ageukcountydurham.org.uk

Are you worried about keeping warm this winter?



Age UK County Durham have one-off grants* available for people aged 50+ living on low incomes, who are struggling with the rising cost of household essentials such as food and energy costs

**For more information call
0191 3746367**

(*grants are available until April 2024 or until all funds are allocated)

COVID-19 vaccinations

The NHS is urging anyone eligible, who has not yet come forward for their COVID-19 vaccination, to book an appointment now.

Around 1.2 million people in the North East and North Cumbria are entitled to a free COVID-19 booster this winter. This follows advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which includes people aged 65 and over, care home residents, anyone in a clinical at-risk group, people who are immunosuppressed and their household contacts, pregnant women, people with learning disabilities, health and social care workers and carers.

Appointments will be available to book up to 14 December at many sites across the region.

Anyone eligible can book via the National Booking Service, the NHS App or by calling 119.



You can also contact the North East North Cumbria call centre if you are housebound or newly severely immunosuppressed on 0191 486 2001 Monday to Friday (9.00am till 4.00pm)

Flu vaccinations

Flu vaccines will still be available after 15 December, however health experts are urging people to get vaccinated early, well before the Christmas period, when the virus is expected to peak in the population.

Flu vaccinations for over 65s, pregnant women, and people in the clinical at risk are available through their GP or high street pharmacy or they can book online at Find a walk-in flu vaccination site or by calling 119.

School age children will be offered vaccination through their school age vaccination service. Parents of 2- to 3-year-olds can get the flu vaccine, for their children, by calling their GP Practice.

Macmillan Joining the Dots

This is a free and confidential service supporting people aged 18+ who are directly affected by cancer. They support those who live in or are registered with a GP in County Durham with non-clinical needs such as practical and financial issues, emotional concerns, religious, spiritual, family and relationship issues and lifestyle information. The service is a partnership between County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundations Trust and Pioneering Care Partnership and is delivered by Wellbeing for Life. You can contact the Macmillan Joining the Dots Team on 0800 876 6887 or by email at cddft.joiningthedots@nhs.net

A photograph showing the backs of two people walking away from the camera through a field of tall grass and wildflowers. The person in the foreground is a man with short reddish hair, wearing a light blue shirt and grey trousers, with a black backpack. The person behind him is wearing a bright yellow high-visibility vest over a white shirt and blue trousers. The vest has the word "LEADER" printed on it.

Arts, crafts & social activities
Advocacy
Bereavement support groups
Dementia therapies & activities
Exercise classes
Falls Prevention

A photograph showing a group of people, mostly older adults, walking away from the camera through a field of tall grass and red poppies. They are wearing various casual clothing and some have backpacks.

Information and Advice
IT & Digital Inclusion
Mental health & wellbeing
Occupational therapy
Pre-frailty support
Volunteering opportunities

**Talk to us today about
how we can help you**

**We are available Monday to
Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm**
0191 386 3856
info@ageukcountydurham.org.uk

Keep Warm Keep Well

Age UK County Durham works in partnership across County Durham to help older people stay safe and well.

Our **Keep Warm, Keep Well** leaflet is full of practical top tips for keeping warm this winter.

If you'd like a copy of this leaflet, call 0191 386 3856

Winter top tip to keep warm and well this winter

- Wear several light layers of clothing even when you are indoors
- Have regular hot drinks
- Eat at least one hot meal every day
- Keep your heating set to 21°C in your main living area and 18°C in your bedroom
- Keep active – do some chair based exercises (moving your arms and legs and wiggling your toes are helpful if walking is difficult)
- If not already done, book your winter vaccinations
- Be kind to yourself



Check in on your neighbours

This is so important, especially during the winter.

If you think someone is suffering from hypothermia (shivering, cold/pale skin, slurred speech, tiredness, confusion, fast breathing), call 999 immediately. If you are concerned about someone, call **Social Care Direct** on 03000 26 79 79

Safeguarding adults is everybody's business

Concerned about an adult who may have care and support needs?

It could be a family member, neighbour, or someone out and about – if you are concerned that an adult is being abused or neglected, call Social Care Direct on 03000 26 79 79.



**Durham
Safeguarding Adults
Partnership**



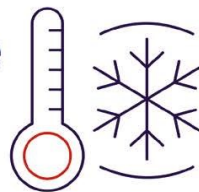
NHS

BE WISE IMMUNISE

The risks of **COVID-19** and **flu** are still real. Get your vaccinations to protect yourself and the people you love. To find out more and book your appointment, visit [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)

**HERE
TO
HELP**

keeping your home warm this winter



The rising cost of living is affecting many of us, especially during these winter months when you might be worried about being able to affordably heat your home.

It's important you feel able to heat your home, to protect your and your family's health. Here's some tips on keeping costs down while ensuring your home is warm this winter:

- If your radiators have valves, turn them up in the rooms you want to keep warm and down in the rooms you aren't using.
- If you have a combi boiler, turn the flow temperature down.
- Use timers on your central heating.
- If you can, set your thermostat at the lowest comfortable temperature (recommended 18°C to 21°C).
- Take regular meter readings to ensure your bills are accurate.
- An annual heating service will ensure the performance of your heating throughout the year. If you rent your home, your landlord will arrange this.
- Open curtains during the day and close them at night, to let warmth in and keep cold out.
- Wash your clothes on a lower temperature if you can.
- Move furniture away from radiators or heaters if you can, to help heat travel around your home.
- Remember, it's important to keep your home ventilated, too. Try not to block ventilation such as windows, air blocks or extractor fans.

Get expert advice

Expert organisations can provide further help and advice. Useful contacts:

- The GOV.UK website hosts helpful information on support with energy bills.
- Citizens Advice can advise on help with energy bills.
- Your energy supplier might be able to help if you're disabled or have a long-term health condition.
- If you rent your home with a housing association, check what services and support they offer.

Visit the GOV.UK website to check if you are eligible for support with the cost of living and funding energy, such as:

- You could get £150 off your electricity bill for winter 2023 to 2024 under the Warm Home Discount scheme if you get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit or are on a low income.
- You may be eligible for Cost of Living Payments which are available to households on means-tested benefits.

If you rent your home with a housing association and are worried about rising costs, being able to afford heating your home, or the implications of not being able to do so, speak to your landlord or visit their website to find out what specialised and personalised support they can offer you.

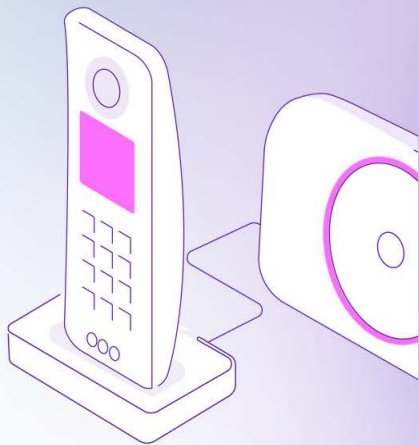
Prescriptions

Make sure you have a supply of medicines for over Christmas or in case of bad weather. You can order repeat prescriptions online. Ask at your GP surgery for more information or look online www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/online-services/how-to-order-a-repeat-prescription/

If you feel unwell, seek advice from your nearest pharmacy about minor health worries or call 111 if you have a more urgent medical problem. In an emergency, call 999.

A guide to Digital Voice

Digital Voice is BT's new home phone service, powered by your broadband connection



For most customers, the switch to Digital Voice will be as simple as connecting your home phone handset to a router rather than the phone socket on the wall.

BT is inviting customers to switch to its digital home phone service on a region-by-region basis.



Over 99% of phone handsets are compatible with our digital home phone service. And if yours isn't compatible, we have a range of handsets that you can add to your order.

FREE

For most BT customers, it is a simple and completely free transition to Digital Voice with no home installation work required. And you can keep your current phone number.



Digital Voice prevents the majority of scam calls, provides clearer call quality and allows users to easily divert calls to their mobile if they're out of the house.



Customers will be contacted four weeks before making the switch, to help ensure they're ready to make the move.

What about customers with additional needs?

Initially, we won't be proactively switching over customers (where this information is available):

- with a healthcare pendant
- who only use landlines
- with no mobile signal
- who have disclosed any additional needs

BT will take extra time and will provide additional support to customers who are over 70 and are ready to make the switch. If customers want to make the switch to Digital Voice, they can contact BT at any time to do so.

What if there's a power cut?

We understand that for many, particularly those with additional needs, the landline is a lifeline. We want to be sure everyone remains connected. We've been working to make battery back-up units available to those that need them. Customers with additional needs such as health pendants or without mobile signal, can take advantage of free additional support, on request. We're also working closely with the power companies to establish processes which help them to restore power as quickly as possible.



For more information, visit www.bt.com/digital-voice

HELPING YOU BE PREPARED

We invest in our network to improve its reliability, but a power cut can happen at any time so it's important to be prepared.

Especially in winter, when severe weather can increase the risk of damage to your local electricity network. To find out what we do every day to reduce the risk for our customers visit [northernpowergrid.com/weather-aware](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/weather-aware)

Prepare

If you have a power cut, we have plans in place to support you and we'll work to safely restore your supplies as soon as possible. It's also important that you have a plan for what you might do if you were ever faced with a longer-duration power cut to make it more manageable for you and your family.

Check out [northernpowergrid.com/be-prepared](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/be-prepared) for latest advice. Also, have you considered making a power cut bag that you can keep handy in your home - just in case? Here's a checklist of what you might include:

- torches and spare batteries
- charged power banks for your mobile phones
- a wind-up or battery-powered radio
- hand warmers, blankets, thermals socks and gloves
- long-life food and drinks that can be consumed cold.

Care

Do you have friends or family members in other areas who, if not affected, you could have an agreement with to visit or temporarily stay with until your power is restored? Could you return the favour for someone you care about?

Is there someone you know who may need extra advice or support in a power cut due to their medical or personal circumstances? If so, make sure they join our free Priority Services Membership today. Find out more at [northernpowergrid.com/care](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/care) or contact our team at priorityservices@northernpowergrid.com or call 0800 169 2996.

Share

Do you know someone who would benefit from knowing this advice or perhaps they should join our Priority Services Membership? Help spread the word and remember...

Prepare...Care...Share

[northernpowergrid.com/be-prepared](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/be-prepared)



Bookmark our [power cut map](#) on your mobile phone so you can report and track your power cut.

It's the quickest way to see what's happened. It shows the same information that our contact centre team has about what we are doing to restore your power.

You can also report a power cut on WhatsApp via 0191 687 22 54 (Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm)

Follow us on Facebook and X for updates and add 105 - the national number to report a power cut or electricity emergency - to your mobile phone.

**POWER CUT?
CALL 105**



Contact us for more information about all our services and activities

0191 386 3856

info@ageukcountydurham.org.uk
ageuk.org.uk/countydurham/



Information and Advice

Help to claim
welfare entitlements
0191 374 6367



your.rights@ageukcountydurham.org.uk

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Age UK County Durham (not Age UK) are used
for the sole purpose of improving and
supporting the lives of older people living in
County Durham**



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