

# 63,700 pensioners in Wales to automatically benefit from £140 winter bill discount

Press release

Nearly 65,000 vulnerable pensioners in Wales will receive a winter windfall of £140 off their fuel bills thanks to the UK Government's efforts working with energy firms to cut their costs.



Eligible Pension Credit customers who qualify for the discount were identified after the Department for Work and Pensions cross-checked its records with energy suppliers.

Customer data was matched with records from more than 50 participating suppliers so that 95% of pensioners nationwide who will get the discount will receive it without having to lift a finger – savings totalling £137 million.

The deduction, called the Warm Home Discount Scheme, will be taken automatically from energy bills before March 2021, with most pensioners receiving their discounts between now and January.

A further 220,000 pensioners across the country who meet part of the eligibility criteria but are not yet benefiting will receive a letter encouraging them to claim via a dedicated helpline.

## **Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:**

The UK Government is committed to bringing down the cost of living and ensuring the most vulnerable in society are helped – particularly during the coldest months of the year.

Alongside changes to Universal Credit, the introduction of the Kickstart Scheme and an increase in the number of Work Coaches across the UK this Winter bill discount demonstrates our support for people of all ages as we build back stronger communities and a

more resilient economy.

## **Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Therese Coffey, said:**

This Government has actively helped pensioners on low incomes with their energy bills. We know how important it is that people keep their homes warm during the cold winter months, which is why I am thrilled that we have used our IT to ensure nearly one million pensioners automatically see their bills reduced.

The Warm Home Discount Scheme will be extended until at least March 2022, reducing the pressures on low income and vulnerable customers worried about being able to pay their energy bills.

The £350m fund, which supports working-age people as well as pensioners, helps the UK Government tackle fuel poverty across Britain by slashing the energy bills of low income households by £140 per year. Pension Credit provides extra income to those claiming State Pension, with 977,000 claimants pinpointed for the fuel discount through a data-matching exercise.

**ENDS**

### **Additional Information**

- Currently, more than 1.5 million older people across Great Britain receive extra financial help through Pension Credit.
- We would encourage anyone who thinks they might be eligible for Pension Credit to visit [gov.uk/pension-credit](https://gov.uk/pension-credit). It only takes a few minutes to get an indication of how much they could get using the online Pension Credit calculator and a claim can be made online or by calling the free claim line 0800 99 1234.
- More information on the Warm Home Discount Scheme is available at [gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](https://gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme)

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**[Appointment of 2 new members to the](#)**

# Civil Procedure Rule Committee

News story

The Lord Chancellor has appointed 2 new legally qualified members to the Civil Procedure Rule Committee.



The Lord Chancellor has appointed Isabel Hitching QC and Tom Montagu-Smith QC as legally qualified members to the Civil Procedure Rule Committee (CPRC) for 3 years commencing 1 October 2020.

CPRC is a non-departmental public body. It was established under the Civil Procedure Act 1997 (CPA 1997) to make rules of court, setting out the practice and procedure, for the Civil Division of the Court of Appeal, the High Court and the County Court.

Legally qualified members of CPRC are appointed by the Lord Chancellor under section 2(1B) of the CPA 1997. The appointment of legally qualified members comply with the Governance Code on Public Appointments and are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

## **Biographies**

Isabel Hitching QC is a barrister and arbitrator practising at Crown Office Chambers and a former lecturer at Christ Church, Oxford. Appointed Queen's Counsel (QC) in 2019 she is a specialist in commercial, construction and related fields. Prior to taking silk Isabel was a member of the Attorney General's panel. She continues to act for the government as a QC as well as for private clients and insurers. Isabel is a member of the Bar Council International Committee.

Tom Montagu-Smith QC is a barrister practising at XXIV Barristers Chambers and was appointed Queen's Counsel (QC) in 2017. Tom was appointed as a judge of the Astana International Financial Centre Courts in 2018. Tom has a broad commercial practice in both arbitration and litigation; and also has particular expertise in cross-border enforcement of judgments and arbitration awards.

## West Bay ready for winter

Press release

The flood defence scheme at West Bay is ready for whatever winter has to throw at it, despite how different it looks from last year.



West Bay, Dorset, ready for winter

Last year the Environment Agency and Dorset Council completed the West Bay coastal defence improvements project that reduces the risk of flooding from the sea to 260 properties and businesses.

Although the beach was returned to its usual shape after the completion of the defence scheme, levels at East Beach have been dropping slowly for most of this year. This has reduced the width of the beach crest, creating a steep beach front in several places. This is likely to be a result of wind and wave conditions experienced so far this year.

Ron Curtis from the Environment Agency said:

The current condition of the beach is not unique to West Bay, with very low beach levels currently at many other beaches across the south coast.

Even with low beach levels, the flood defence is working exactly how it should be. In fact the current steep beach face actually lowers flood risk as it reduces waves running up and overtopping the beach. However, we know this can make access difficult which is why we plan to re-profile the shape of the beach.

The Environment Agency completed work to reduce the steep front face of the beach in March and July 2020. These works have limited flood defence benefit and are only to improve amenity access to the beach.

The Environment Agency has plans in place and is ready to respond to any incidents including using machinery to re-profile and maintain the flood defence.

Cllr Ray Bryan, Dorset Council's Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment, said:

As climate change affects our weather and increases the possibility of flooding in the future, it is vital we continue to work with partners to monitor our coastline and take action where necessary to protect Dorset residents and businesses. On behalf of Dorset Council members and officers, I'd like to thank our colleagues at the Environment Agency for their help with these defence improvements. By working together, we can continue to face and overcome these challenges.

The work at West Bay is part of a wider maintenance programme that the Environment Agency completes throughout the year to ensure flood defences are operating as they should be. Works to re-profile beaches across the Dorset coast are planned in the coming weeks and months to prepare for winter.

## Notes to editors

- Further flood defence works are planned at West Bay with the final phase of the West Bay coastal defence improvements scheme due to be carried out this winter
- Fluvial improvement works to the River Brit riverbank will provide protection against the river overflowing and flooding the Parkdean Resorts West Bay Holiday Park and West Bay as a whole
- This work to improve the riverbank is a partnership between Dorset Council, the Environment Agency, Parkdean Resorts UK, Dorset Coast Forum and Jacobs Consultants and is planned to start on 30 November 2020 and complete in February 2021.
- For more information on this scheme please visit the [Dorset Coast Forum website](#)
- For any interview requests please contact: Environment Agency: 0800 917 9271, Dorset Council: 01305 858233

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# Polling indicates growing public understanding about importance of using health and care data

The National Data Guardian for Health and Social Care (NDG) (1) has conducted polling (2) which indicates that the public understands that data is vital for tackling the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, but also wants to know more about what is happening and still expects people's confidentiality to be protected.

More than half of survey respondents (56%) agreed that during the coronavirus pandemic, they have learned more about how health and care data can be used to monitor public health and for research (3). Among those working in health and social care this was higher at 69%.

We asked people whether what they have learned during the pandemic has made them more accepting of the need for sharing health and care data. Nearly two thirds (63%) agreed and among health and care workers this was 73%.

Around eight in ten people (78%) agreed that during a public health emergency such as coronavirus, it is more important than usual that health and care data is shared with all those involved in the emergency response. When asked if they would like to know more about how information about them can be used to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, 71% of respondents said they would. Among people working in health and care, 81% would like more information.

A majority (64%) said that they would trust government agencies to use information about them such as coronavirus test results. However, a further 17% did not agree with this and 19% were not sure, showing that it is essential that there is an ongoing focus to build public trust in the use of their information to manage the pandemic.

Looking ahead to how data sharing should take place after the pandemic, seven in ten people (70%) said that, data sharing rules should return to what they were before, with around just one in twenty (7%) disagreeing with this and 23% neither agreeing or disagreeing. At the same time 60% agree that after the pandemic, organisations such as local authorities, university and hospital researchers, and private companies should be allowed to carry on using health and care data to improve care (for all people, not just coronavirus patients).

Dame Fiona Caldicott, the National Data Guardian, said: "By building people's understanding about how their health and care data can be used safely and appropriately for their own individual benefit and for the wider public good, we build public trust for the use of that data.

"During the pandemic we have seen members of the public taking a more active part in discussions that were formerly the domain of experts – such as how

data can be used to track disease spread, show us who is most at risk and reveal what treatment is effective. People have been able to see the immediate relevance and need for data to be used.

“This is encouraging but we should remember that trust is hard-won and easily lost. It is essential that clear reasons and explanations are given to the public if their data is to be used. Appropriate safeguards must be in place to protect confidentiality and data security.

“In the first few months of the pandemic, I was pleased to see emergency measures put into place to ensure data could be used when and where it was needed. As we move into the next phase, it will be important to examine which of these needs to continue and what needs changing. By doing this openly and transparently, we can build on what we are seeing about the readiness for people to allow their data to be used in ways that benefit themselves, their families and others both now and in the future.”

## **Comparisons with previous surveys**

Some of the questions we polled had been previously included in comparable polls.

- We polled levels of trust in the NHS and local authorities. In our July 2020 poll 57% of respondents said they would trust the NHS with data about them and 32% trust local authorities. This compares to 59% and 36% respectively when we polled this question in February 2020.
- Awareness about the National Data Opt-out (NDOP) increased between February and July. We asked survey respondents whether they thought individuals could opt out of sharing their confidential information for medical research and planning. When this question was polled in the weeks the launch of the NDOP in May 2018, 57% said yes. This dropped to 33% in February 2020, and then climbed in our latest poll to 41%.
- After being told about the opt-out, 25% said they were likely to opt-out. This compares to 26% in February 2020 and just 20% May 2018, when a significantly greater proportion said they knew about it. Among those working in health and care, likelihood to opt-out remains much higher – it was 46% in July 2020.

## **Notes to editors**

1. The National Data Guardian for Health and Social Care (NDG) is Dame Fiona Caldicott. The NDG is a statutory role which provides advice and guidance on the use of health and care information. The NDG’s aim is to make sure that the public can trust their confidential information is securely safeguarded and make sure that it is used to support care and

to achieve better outcomes from health and care services.

2. The NDG commissioned a survey of 2,114 adults in England which was carried out by Kantar between July 30 and August 6 and included a variety of breakdowns, including individuals who work in health and social care. Polling was conducted by Kantar in England via OnLineBus, an Internet omnibus survey on a sample size of between July 30 and August 6 2020. Interviewing was conducted by online self-completion from 25/04/2019 – 02/05/2019. The sample has been weighted to represent the adult population of England 16+.
3. A further 18% disagreed and 26% neither agreed nor disagreed.
4. Where numbers do not add up to 100, this is due to rounding.
5. For further information contact Jenny Westaway, Head of the Office of the National Data Guardian on [j.westaway@nhs.net](mailto:j.westaway@nhs.net) or 07827 955 604

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## **Northern Irish F gas users urged to prepare for change ahead of 1 January 2021**

Press release

Producers, suppliers, traders and end-users will need to take action to prepare for the end of the transition period



Producers, suppliers and traders of fluorinated gases (F gases) and ozone-depleting substances (ODS) in Northern Ireland are being urged by the UK



Government to take action to ensure they are prepared for the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020.

F gases and ODS are used widely in air conditioning and refrigeration equipment, as well as fire extinguishers, solvents, and insulation foams. They are powerful greenhouse gases, and are subject to regulation in order to reduce their use and tackle climate change.

After the end of the transition period, EU regulations will continue to apply to all businesses in Northern Ireland who produce, supply, import, export or use F gases or ODS.

This means two changes for businesses in Northern Ireland:

- Businesses who import and supply the Northern Ireland market with F gases or equipment containing F gas will need to have enough EU quota/authorisations to cover their imports from Great Britain, if they do not already have this. Engineers and end-users, such as equipment manufacturers, installers and supermarkets, working with F gas should ensure they get their F gas from someone that has EU quota.
- F gas and ODS technicians in Northern Ireland will need to qualify for an Irish certificate if they are to continue working in the Republic of Ireland from January 2021. However, they will be able to continue to work in Northern Ireland with their current certificate.

Businesses in Great Britain using or trading F gases or ODS will fall under new systems for Great Britain from 1 January 2021. This will continue to restrict ODS and phase down F gases in line with current schedules.

All businesses across the UK will need to comply with [new guidance](#) setting out in detail the steps that need to be taken before the end of the year.

The new free-to-use Trader Support Service will provide support and guidance to businesses moving goods under the Northern Ireland Protocol. Businesses who [sign up to the Trader Support Service](#) will be guided through the new processes under the Northern Ireland Protocol and can also use it to complete digital declarations.

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