

# Winter Warmer. Newsletter

Be a neighbourly neighbour by looking out for elderly neighbours in your street or village this winter!

With winter fast approaching we've compiled a list of helpful tips, general information and available services to residents in the District.

## Keeping Safe This Winter

The Sevenoaks District Community Safety Unit (CSU) is a joint initiative between Sevenoaks District Council and West Kent Police, working closely together, based in Sevenoaks District Council's Argyle Road offices. Local residents can use one central telephone line to report non-emergency community safety issues on: **01732 227000**.

The Community Safety Unit understands that some older residents may struggle during extreme weather, including snow, over the winter period. If you do not have help from a friend, neighbour, or relative and you do not receive any other home support services and need additional help during heavy snow, then please contact the CSU. The CSU will try to put you in contact with your local volunteer service or Community Warden.

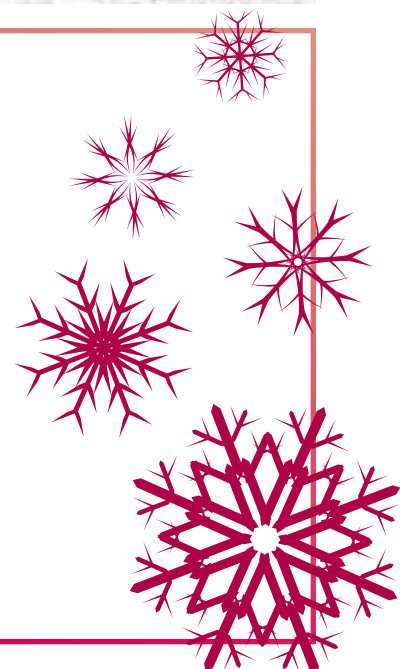
Residents can also obtain advice on crime reduction, Neighbourhood Watch, graffiti removal, anti-social behaviour and other Community Safety issues by contacting the CSU on **01732 227000**.

If your call is regarding an emergency, a crime, or serious incident which is happening now, then dial **999**.



### Additional useful contacts for this winter:

- Sevenoaks District Community Safety Unit **01732 227000**
- Emergency contact **999** • Police non-emergency contact **101**
- Kent Adult Social Services **08458 247 247**
- Snow Clearing & Gritting, Kent County Council **0845 247 800**
- Sevenoaks Age UK **01732 454 108**
- Rural Age Concern Darent Valley **01322 666448**
- Volunteer Driving Service - Dial 2 Drive **01732 469000**
- NHS Direct **0845 4647**
- Urgent out-of-hours GP appointments **03000 242424**
- North West Kent Volunteer Centre (Swanley) **01322 669292**
- Voluntary Action Within Kent (VAWK) **01892 530330**



# Kent Fire & Rescue

As the colder weather takes hold, Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) is appealing to residents to make sure their homes, and those of people close to them, are safeguarded. Fire crews are warning of potential fire hazards as households feel the pinch of fuel price increases and switch to alternative ways of keeping warm over the long winter months.

Help keep safe this winter with the following safety tips:

- If you plan on using an open fire, make sure your chimney has been recently swept as build-ups of soot and ash can cause chimney fires.
- When going to bed, make absolutely certain that any open fire is either out, or pushed back into the grate and a guard used to prevent sparks setting light to carpets or furniture.
- Try to close interior doors when going to bed as they can dramatically reduce the spread of fire.
- Portable heaters, oil and paraffin stoves should be kept well away from furniture and anything that could catch fire.
- Candles should always be placed on a non flammable surface, be away from soft furnishings and never be left unattended. Try using torches instead of candles.
- Never use an electric blanket that is over 10-years-old and always ensure you follow the manufacturer's instructions.

- Make sure you fit, and regularly test, a smoke alarm. It is the single most important piece of safety equipment in any home.

### Free smoke alarms and safety visits:

A home safety visit typically takes around 30 minutes to complete, during which you will be given safety advice and, if required, your home can be fitted with free smoke alarms. Batteries are provided and last up to 10 years for added peace of mind.

Head of Community Safety, Stuart Skilton, said: "Often all that is needed is some practical help to stop fires starting in the first place. Perhaps a person may need some more advice or services to help keep safe. By encouraging those you care about to get in touch with us, you will be playing a huge part in preventing fires and may even save a life."

If you have concerns about keeping yourself or a friend or relative safe, would like further advice or to arrange a home visit, please call Kent Fire and Rescue Service for free on **0800 923 7000**.



# Warm Front

This is a government-funded scheme that provides grants to make your home warmer and more energy efficient. The Scheme is able to provide advice and improvements tailored to each property with a grant of up to £3,500 to make this possible. These improvements could range from loft insulation, draught proofing, cavity wall insulation, hot water tank insulation, gas, electric, LPG or oil central heating and Glass fronted fires. The scheme is available to low-income households, families

and disabled or elderly groups on benefits pension credit, income related employment and support allowance and Income based Job Seekers allowance.

For a full list of details and to find out if you are eligible to receive any help you can contact them on: **0800 316 6011** quoting reference **MK764**. Lines are open Monday to Friday 8.00 am to 6.00 pm and Saturday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm.

# NHS Winter Messages

At this time of year, it is worth planning ahead to protect yourself against winter hazards - such as slipping and falling. With this in mind the NHS has produced a number of helpful tips to help you keep safe during the cold weather ahead.

### Fall Prevention

- Map out the most convenient route to where you want to go and include some extra time to get there, so avoiding any need to rush.
- Always wear shoes appropriate for the weather, such as those with rubber or neoprene soles as these provide better traction on snow and ice.
- 'Black ice' is by far the most dangerous risk as this is so hard to spot, so always try to stay on the clean, clear pathways or those that have been treated with sand or salt.
- Plan ahead for not being able to leave your home by bad weather. Follow weather forecasts and, if possible, keep at least a week's supply of non-perishable food and prescription medication.
- Maintaining and building your muscles will help prevent falls all year-round. Consider enrolling on a Falls Prevention class.

Do you feel unstable or have a history of falls? Free weekly falls prevention classes are running in Sevenoaks, Swanley and Edenbridge. Transport may be available. For more information contact your local GP, telephone the Council on **01732 227000** or contact **Karen Shaw**, Falls Prevention Co-ordinator on **01732 375291**.



### Keeping your home warm

Keeping yourself warm is a key factor in helping to prevent colds, flu and serious health problems such as pneumonia. Help ensure you stay warm this winter:

- Heat your main living room to a temperature between 18-21°C (64-70°F), with the rest of your house kept to at least 16°C (61°F).
- Heat your bedroom before going to bed.
- Set a timer for your heating to come on before you get up and switch off once you go to bed.
- In very cold weather, set your heating to come on earlier. This means you won't be cold while you wait for your home to warm up.

### Local NHS services

- For absolutely any health questions around the clock, and to find your local NHS services, call NHS Direct on **0845 46 47** or visit **www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk**.
- If you need an urgent doctor's appointment, tell your practice and they will try to fit you in.
- If you urgently need to see a GP when your practice is closed, phone **03000 242424**.
- If you have injuries that may need cleaning, stitching or dressing, but which are not life threatening, the Minor Injuries Unit at Sevenoaks Hospital in Hospital Road is open 8am to 8pm every day. Telephone number **01732 470200**.
- Darent Valley Hospital **01322 428100** • Tunbridge Wells **01892 823535**

# Local Volunteer Centres - Can You Help?

In partnership with Sevenoaks District Council, we wish to enlist the help of people who are willing to aid elderly and isolated people in times of bad weather. We are compiling a list of volunteers who could check on the elderly and ensure that they are safe, warm, and have essential supplies. It would be particularly useful to know of 4x4 vehicle owners who would be willing to help in severe weather situations so that we may register their details and create a database of vulnerable citizens, and neighbourly volunteers who might help them.

If you would like to help, please contact: **North West Kent Volunteer Centre Claire** on **01322 669292** or email **info@swanleyvolunteers.com** for Swanley and surrounding areas.

**Voluntary Action Within Kent Fiona** on **01732 454785** or email **Fiona.watkins@vawk.org.uk** for Sevenoaks, Edenbridge and surrounding areas.

## West Kent Boomerang

Boomerang is an innovative volunteer service from West Kent Extra aimed to help your community and get some help in return. It's an exciting opportunity to meet people, swap skills and be part of your community. From collecting someone's shopping to hosting a coffee morning, the list of opportunities is endless.

Building up to the winter months, West Kent Extra are currently seeking volunteers that would be available to help with residents in bad weather. This could involve helping with shopping, clearing someone's driveway, offering transport to those stuck in the snow or just checking to see if everything is ok. If you are able to offer your services during such a time, please contact **Sarah Pearson** on **01732 749911** or email **sarah.pearson@westkentextra.org** for more information.



## Nominated Neighbour Scheme

The Nominated Neighbour scheme is co-ordinated by Neighbourhood Watch and available to help vulnerable and elderly people in the community who might have unexpected or unwanted visitors calling on their homes. When part of the scheme, it allows a neighbour to manage door step enquiries on behalf of a nearby older resident. The resident gives the caller a card with the details of their

'nominated neighbour' on it. The caller must then go to this neighbour, who will come back to the home to ensure that all identification is checked and that the vulnerable person is not alone in the house with the caller.

For more information about the scheme or to request a Nominated Neighbour pack, please contact **Suzanne Daniell** (Neighbourhood Watch Liaison Officer) on **01732 379 373**.

Produced by Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum, with support from



Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum (SDSAF) is open to all people aged 50 or more who live anywhere in Sevenoaks District. Members are invited to raise issues of concern to them and to comment on local services and facilities through their involvement with the Forum. SDSAF aims to keep its members informed of topical and relevant matters on a regular basis. To register for free membership of SDSAF so you can be kept informed about future news and events, please direct enquiries to **sdsaf@7oaks.net** or to **Roger Bryan** on **01322 664754** or any committee member.