

## ABOUT US

### THE COST OF RUNNING YOUR HOME

Hafod is a housing association registered with the Welsh Assembly Government. We are a non-profit making organisation and operate under strict controls. We work with local authorities and other agencies to provide homes and services to people in housing need across South East Wales.

For further information about Hafod please visit our website at [www.hafod.org.uk](http://www.hafod.org.uk) or phone us on 02920 675800.



**Shelter**  
Cymru



**BARCLAYS**

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# THE COST OF RUNNING YOUR HOME

keeping costs down



*making a difference*

## ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

THIS BOOKLET AIMS TO:

- help you to decide whether you can afford the home you've been offered
- help you keep your setting-up and running costs to a minimum once you move in

WE HAVE DIVIDED IT INTO  
THREE SECTIONS:

- we provide information about the costs of setting up and running a home
- we give information about financial assistance that may be available to help you with the costs of running a home
- we have included information about other costs you may face and how to keep them to a minimum

# CONTENTS

# SETTING-UP AND RUNNING COSTS

## SETTING-UP AND RUNNING COSTS

- Furnishing Your New Home
- Council Tax
- Water Bills
- Gas and Electricity Supply
- Television Licence
- Television, Telephone and Internet
- Home Insurance
- Pet Insurance

## GRANTS AND BENEFITS

- The Social Fund
- Council Tax Benefit

## USEFUL CONTACTS

## QUERIES

### BARCLAYS PLC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank Barclays Plc for their generous financial donation which helped pay for the research work by Shelter Cymru which has resulted in the advice in this booklet.

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## FURNISHING YOUR NEW HOME

After you have moved into your new home you will probably want to furnish it. If you don't have furniture from a previous property, we suggest that you shop around before buying because prices can vary hugely.

There are other ways to get furniture if you can't afford to buy new items:

- second hand or charity shops often have great bargains, especially for smaller household items and they are likely to be better quality than cheaper High Street shops. As well as buying good quality products cheaply you will be supporting a good cause

- car-boot sales are a fun way of finding household items. You could also make some money by selling your own unwanted items. Check your local papers and community notice boards for venues. Don't be afraid to negotiate on price the lower they are willing to drop the price the more you save
- jumble sales can provide a variety of goods at low prices, check community, church and school notice boards for your nearest jumble sales

- find out about furniture recycling schemes in your area for refurbished furniture. They offer essential furniture items at very reasonable prices to low income households and sometimes sell refurbished cookers and electrical items too, so it is well worth checking before you buy new
- ask family and friends for unwanted items
- you might be able to borrow money from the Social Fund for some necessary items; please see the section on Social Fund Loans in this booklet for further details

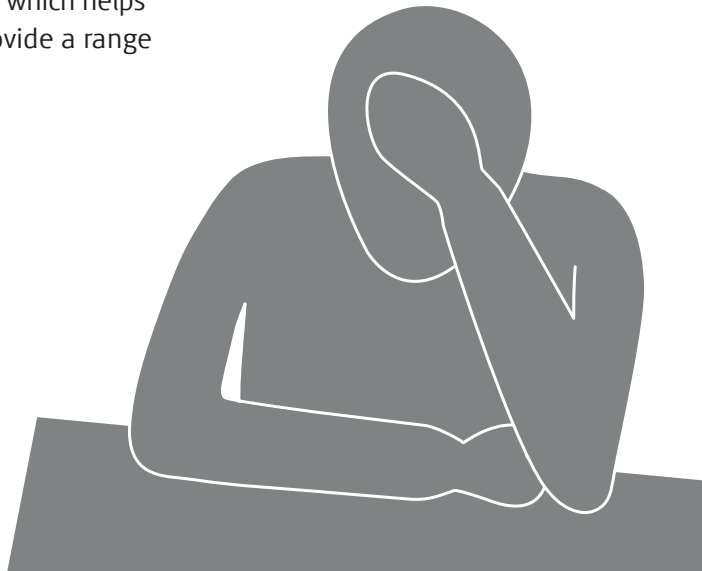
### COUNCIL TAX

After moving into your home you will be liable for Council Tax. Council Tax is a form of local taxation which helps the local authority to provide a range

of services. The Council Tax charge is 50% property based and 50% personal based. It is charged on all domestic properties (homes) in Wales. The Valuation Office Agency places each property in a band (A-I), the higher the band the more Council Tax you will be charged.

Council Tax is payable by people aged 18 or over. However if only one adult occupies the property, a 25% discount may be available. Council Tax may be payable on unoccupied property but certain exemptions apply.

Please see the section on Council Tax Benefit for more details on p. 19.



### WATER BILLS

In South Wales, only one company is responsible for supplying your water – Welsh Water Dŵr Cymru. Whilst you cannot shop around for better deals, you can make significant savings by changing the way you pay your water bills and how much water you use. All our properties built since 2000 are fitted with water meters by law.

The two most common ways to pay for your water are noted on next page:

## WATER BILLS

The two most common ways to pay for your water are noted below, and on next page are two lesser known methods of paying for your water.

TYPE OF CHARGE	WHO IS IT GOOD FOR?	WHO IS IT NOT GOOD FOR?	WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?
<b>WATER METER</b> You will be charged for the actual amount of water you use plus the usual service charges.	Excellent for smaller families. The less water you use, the lower your bill.	Generally speaking, larger families might be worse off with a meter because the bill could increase BUT it is possible to revert back to unmeasured billing between the 12th and 13th month after the meter is installed.	As long as your tenancy is longer than six months, you can ask Welsh Water for a meter to be installed at your property but you must first seek permission in writing from the Association.
<b>WATER RATES</b> Based upon the rateable value of your property and not on how many people reside there or how much water they might use.	This “one charge fits all” structure could be good for larger families who use lots of water.	This is unsuitable for individuals, couples or smaller households of 3 – 4 people who practice careful water conservation	If your new home has a water meter you will not be able to change back to the unmeasured charge.

You can pay your water bills at a Post Office, Paypoint, your bank, or by post. Contact Welsh Water on 0800 052 0145 or [water.enquiries@dwrcymru.com](mailto:water.enquiries@dwrcymru.com) Find a Meter Saving Calculator at [www.ofwat.gov.uk](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk) and see our section on water conservation in our booklet, ‘Making the Most of Your Money’

TYPE OF CHARGE	WHO IS IT GOOD FOR?	WHO IS IT NOT GOOD FOR?	WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?
<b>Assessed measured charge</b> This charge is based upon the band of the water charge and the number of occupants.	Good for small households because you pay a set charge per person.	This method may be more costly than the unmeasured charge for larger households who will pay for more people.	You could ask for this type of billing if it is not possible to have a meter fitted.
<b>VULNERABLE GROUP TARIFF</b> Based upon the rateable value of your property and not on how many people reside there or how much water they might use.	Only available to people with a meter who are on a low income AND have three children aged up to 19 OR have a person diagnosed with certain conditions* residing at the property.	Those who fit the criteria but who are unable to have a meter fitted.	If the charge calculated from using the measured charge is less than the tariff for vulnerable groups, the bill will be based on the actual usage. Obtain application forms from Customer Services.

\* Renal failure (dialysis at home); abdominal stoma; desquamation; weeping skin diseases; incontinence; Crohn's Disease; ulcerative colitis; other conditions resulting in significant additional water usage.

## YOUR GAS AND ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Your water, electric and gas bills are known as utility charges, these will make up a considerable part of the costs of running your home. There are three main ways of cutting your bills; changing to a cheaper supplier, altering the way you pay your bills and reducing the amount of energy you use.

Gas and electric prices have risen steeply in recent years but you can cut your bills by using the following tips:

### COMPARE PRICES OF YOUR ELECTRIC AND GAS COMPANIES

Someone who has never switched their energy supplier could save hundreds of pounds per year by moving to a new company. You can check the most up to date prices at [www.uswitch.com](http://www.uswitch.com) or by phoning 0800 404 7908.

### PAY BY THE CHEAPEST METHOD

You could save a lot of money in just a year by switching from quarterly payments to monthly direct debit and possibly more if you switch to an online account.

Pre-paid meters are the most expensive way to pay for your gas and electric.

### REDUCING THE AMOUNT OF ENERGY YOU USE

For guidance on reducing the amount of energy you use see our section on energy awareness in our booklet called 'Making the Most of Your Money'.

## TELEVISION LICENCE

If you have a television, it is your responsibility to ensure you have a television (TV) licence and you can be fined £1,000 if you do not. Each property must have a TV licence. If you buy a television, the shop will provide TV Licensing with your details.

### WHAT DO YOU NEED A TELEVISION LICENCE FOR?

You must pay for a TV licence if you use any television receiving equipment such as a TV set, set-top boxes, video or DVD recorders, computers or mobile phones to watch or record TV programmes as they are being shown on TV.

### HOW CAN YOU PAY?

You can pay online, over the phone with a debit or credit card, at the Post Office or by post. You must renew your licence every year.

### CONCESSIONS

You are entitled to a free licence if you are over 75 years old, and if you are blind, you can apply for a Blind Concessionary Licence at 50% of the full licence fee.

### WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A LICENCE?

You may be visited by a TV Licensing enquiry officer if TV Licensing suspect you do not have a television licence or if you have not responded to an enquiry letter or licence reminder.



## TELEVISION TELEPHONE AND INTERNET

You do not have to let the enquiry officer into your home. However, if you do not let the enquiry officer in, they may apply for a search warrant.

If the enquiry officer is satisfied that you do not have a television licence and that you should have one, a statement will be taken under caution.

If TV Licensing decide to prosecute, the case will be heard in the Magistrates' Court, which means that ultimately you could go to prison but they cannot confiscate the TV set or

order you to pay the TV licence fee arrears. If you receive a summons you should seek advice from a debt adviser. See our booklet called Debt Guidance for details or ask at your Area Office.

### CONTACT

For further information contact:

Customer enquiries

Tel: 08705 763 763

Website: [www.tvlicensing.co.uk](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk)

Or write to Customer Services,  
TV Licensing, Bristol 1TL

Many of us have a telephone, computer or television all of which will cost you money to run. Here is some guidance on the costs and some tips for saving money:

### TELEVISION

Lots of phone providers offer free basic television packages, which are comparable to the channels available with a Freeview box.

Freeview offers over 40 channels including text services and digital radio. You will need an aerial and a digital set-top box, which can be purchased cheaply on the high street. This is the best option if you can do without pay-as-you-view television or some of the cable and satellite TV packages because you only pay a one-off price for the set-top box.

Cable Television is available from some telephone and broadband providers. You do not usually have to pay line rental but you will pay for calls. Digital cable providers usually offer email from your TV and some internet access, digital Teletext, interactive services and games and digital radio channels. To subscribe to digital cable TV you do not need a TV aerial. Instead, your digital cable TV company will provide you with a set top box and a cable telephone line. Although the basic TV channels (comparable to those available on Freeview) are included in your basic package price, you will have to pay a monthly subscription to receive some channels, so it is easy to run up a large bill.

Satellite Television has the widest choice of channels and pay-per-view movies, events, digital radio channels and other interactive services and games. You need a telephone, a mini-dish and a digibox to get this service. You will pay a monthly fee and if you buy the pay-per-view movies you could run up a bigger bill than you planned.

### **TELEPHONE LANDLINES**

Many phone companies offer unlimited landline to landline calls for a standard monthly fee, which is worth considering if you spend a long time chatting on the telephone or have children,

- remember you will usually be charged for line rental and will be tied into a contract
- some companies offer 'new home deals' so be sure to mention this when you telephone
- make sure you check your itemised bill each month, especially if you have children!
- phoning landlines and premium rate numbers will inflate your bill. Keep your dialling to standard rate landline numbers only

Most companies now offer phone, internet and television packages or bundles, which offer excellent value for money. If you are considering having a landline or the internet installed make sure you shop around; find a company offering the right package at the right price for you. You can do this at the price comparison website [uswitch.com](http://uswitch.com) or by telephoning [uswitch](http://uswitch) on 0800 404 7908. They will be able to tell you who your cheapest provider is and make arrangements for them to contact you.

### **VOIP (VOICE OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL)**

VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) services offer free calls to people who have signed up to the same service as you. Many people use this type of service to call people who live abroad but there are usually charges to make calls to traditional landlines. You must have access to the internet, preferably a fast broadband connection, to be able to set up one of these types of telephone and you may have to pay a fee to set up your VoIP service to receive calls too.

You'll also need equipment such as a headset or a telephone adapter, to make calls. Remember, this will only be a cost effective way of making calls if the other person you are phoning also subscribes to this service.

### **INTERNET**

If you decide to get an internet connection it might be more economical to tie it in with a television/telephone bundle. Decide which type of connection is best for your budget:

Dial-up connections

- Dial-up are still available from ISPs but they are also the slowest and are usually charged by the minute

Broadband (ADSL connections)

- Broadband (ADSL Asymmetric Digital Subscribers Line) connections are widely available. Apart from the speed advantages that broadband connections offer, broadband technology eliminates the need for a second telephone line by allowing voice and data transfer at the same time (you can use the telephone as normal while connected to the internet)

You will need a firewall to protect your PC because broadband connections are always on.

### **CABLE CONNECTIONS**

Cable companies usually offer different packages to suit different internet subscribers, your choice of package, as with all internet connections will depend on how you intend to use the internet. The different packages will offer different speed specifications and bandwidth limits. As cable connection uses a totally separate medium to transfer data it doesn't affect your ability to make/receive telephone calls. Cable connections are not available in every area, you will need to contact the cable company of your choice to ensure that you have coverage.

You will need a firewall to protect your PC because cable connections are always on.

## HOME INSURANCE

As a Hafod tenant you do not need buildings insurance, however, you are advised to insure your own personal possessions, furniture and effects, as these will not be covered by Hafod.

There are different types of home insurance with different levels of cover, these can include:

- cover for personal possessions in your home
- cover for personal possessions away from home
- protection against injury liability
- cover for any loss/damage to the landlord's property
- protection against fire, lightning, explosion, smoke damage, vandalism, theft etc.

- optional cover at extra cost for things such as accidental damage to the property

Make sure you read the insurance policy document so you know exactly what your home insurance for tenants includes and what you're covered for. Please check the small print and make sure you are fully covered before signing an agreement.

Check the internet for the best cover for you at price comparison websites like [www.moneysupermarket.com](http://www.moneysupermarket.com) or [www.uswitch.com](http://www.uswitch.com)

## PET INSURANCE

Your tenancy agreement might allow you to keep pets. Animals can be wonderful company and great fun but when pets become ill or suffer injuries the vet bills can escalate. Sometimes even the smallest ailment can result in a huge bill, so it is wise to consider pet insurance. The best way to do this is through a price comparison website, such as [www.uswitch.com](http://www.uswitch.com)



# GRANTS AND BENEFITS

*“ you can apply for a Crisis Loan if you are aged 16 or over and you don't have enough money to meet your immediate needs ”*

## THE SOCIAL FUND

The Social Fund is administered by Jobcentre Plus and provides lump sum payments, grants and loans. Loans and Community Care Grants from the Social Fund are discretionary and not for a standard amount. You may be able to get help from the Social Fund for important costs that are hard to pay for out of your regular income.

## BUDGETING LOANS

A Budgeting Loan is an interest free loan intended to help spread the cost of intermittent expenses that you are unable to pay. It may help you pay for:

- furniture or household items
- clothing and footwear
- rent in advance or removal expenses (to secure new accommodation)

- expenses associated with looking for or starting work

Savings of £1000 or more (£2000 for those aged 60 or over) may affect how much you get.

If you are in receipt of Income Support, Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance or Pension Credit and you need things for your home or other things that you cannot afford to pay for in a lump sum, you may be able to get a Budgeting Loan. You or your partner must have been getting one of these benefits or entitlements, or payment on account of one of them for at least 26 weeks. Re-payments are usually made through weekly deductions in your benefit until the total loan has been repaid.

You will need to complete SF500 form which you can pick up from your local Jobcentre Plus or download from [www.directgov.gov.uk](http://www.directgov.gov.uk)

## CRISIS LOANS

If you need immediate help with day-to-day living costs or something else in an emergency, you may be able to get a Crisis Loan.

You can apply for a Crisis Loan if you are aged 16 or over and you don't have enough money to meet your (or your family's) immediate needs because of an event or disaster and without the loan there will be a serious damage or risk to your (or your family's) health / safety OR if

you are aged 16 or over and you've been getting a Community Care Grant but you're moving out of hospital or prison or another type of residential accommodation and don't have enough money to pay a landlord.

The amount you can borrow will depend upon your circumstances and is usually made through weekly deductions in your benefit until the total loan has been repaid. You can apply for a Crisis Loan on form SF401 or by telephoning the national Crisis Loan line on 0191 2638100 or 0800 0328341. It is not necessary for you to be in receipt of benefits in order to make an application for a Crisis Loan.

## COMMUNITY CARE GRANTS

If you are:

- leaving institutional care, for example if you have been in hospital or a care home
- need help to stay in your own home
- are part of a family under exceptional pressure
- are caring for a prisoner or young offender on release / licence
- are setting up a home as part of a planned resettlement programme or incurring travel costs for certain specified reasons you may be able to get a Community Care Grant

You will need to complete a SF300 form this can be downloaded from the internet or available from your local Jobcentre Plus. The amount you might get depends on your circumstances. The amount of Community Care Grant you may get is reduced if you have savings of over £500, or where you and your partner are aged over 60 it is savings of over £1,000.

## COLD WEATHER PAYMENTS FOR THE ELDERLY

Cold Weather Payments are issued during periods of very cold weather

to help towards heating costs. A set amount is automatically paid to any eligible person each week of very cold weather depending on which benefits you receive. Most payments are made automatically but some people may need to claim them.

You may be eligible for a Cold Weather Payment if, during the time the very cold weather occurs, you are aged over 60 and may be entitled to an extra amount if you are aged 80 or over during the qualifying week. If you do not receive a payment and think you are eligible you should contact your local Jobcentre Plus.

## WINTER FUEL PAYMENTS FOR THE ELDERLY

A Winter Fuel Payments are an automatic annual payment to help if you are aged 60 and over with the costs of keeping warm in the winter and if you are aged 80 or over and you are entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment, you will get an extra payment. If you do not receive your Winter Fuel Payment and need to make a claim, contact the Winter Fuel Payment helpline on 02920 428100 or 0845 6015613.

# COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT

You may be entitled to council tax benefit if you are in receipt of income support or are on a low income. To claim this benefit you will need to complete a claim form which you can get from your local authority. If you are entitled to housing benefit you will automatically receive council tax benefit.

The amount of benefit you may get will depend on your income and capital. If you have to pay council tax, you can claim council tax benefit as long as your capital, for example, your savings and income are low enough. If you live with your partner, only one of you can claim council tax benefit and your income and capital will be assessed

together. This includes lesbian and gay partners as well as heterosexual partners. It applies whether you are living together as a couple, are married or are in a civil partnership

You must be living in the UK to claim council tax benefit. If you are from overseas or have recently come to live in the UK you may have difficulty claiming the benefit, depending on your immigration status.

If you are not sure about your right to claim benefit, you should phone your area office and ask to speak to our Shelter Cymru Housing Benefit Adviser.

## USEFUL CONTACTS

### **CITIZENS ADVICE WEBSITE**

[www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

### **BENEFITS**

[www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)

Tel: 0800 055 66 88

### **TV LICENSING**

Write to Customer Services,

TV Licensing, Bristol 1TL

[www.tvlicensingco.uk](http://www.tvlicensingco.uk)

Customer enquiries 08705 763 763

### **UTILITIES**

[www.uswitch.com](http://www.uswitch.com)

Tel: 0800 404 7908

### **DŴR CYMRU**

[www.dwrcymru.com](http://www.dwrcymru.com)

[www.ofwat.gov.uk](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk)

Tel: 0800 052 0145

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## QUERIES

If you have any queries, comments or need any further information please contact us by telephone, in person, by post or via our website:

Hafod Housing Association  
St Hilary Court, Copthorne Way  
Culverhouse Cross, Cardiff CF5 6ES

Tel: 02920 675800

E-mail: [enquiries@hafod.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@hafod.org.uk)

Web: [www.hafod.org.uk](http://www.hafod.org.uk)