Help older Cumbrians stay warm this winter – every pound doubled

Monday 10 November, 2025

As winter approaches and temperatures plummet, older people across Cumbria are sharing their fears of having to make an impossible choice: heat their homes or put food on the table.

Every winter, as many as 500 older people in Cumbria die because they cannot afford to heat their homes and eat properly.

Cumbria Community Foundation is calling on people to support its annual Winter Warmth Appeal, which has raised £3m since it was first launched in 2010.

Money donated to the appeal is given out in grants to older people most in need, enabling them to stay warm without worrying about the cost.

Last year more than £270,000 was awarded in grants – through delivery partners Age UK and Copeland Age & Advice Service – benefitting 1,570 vulnerable older people across the county.

John, 85, of Penrith, received a grant from the fund last year. He said: “The cold affects my breathing, and that’s when I start to get angina pains. My flat gets so cold but I’ll sit here with three jumpers on and a blanket because I daren’t put the heating on.

“Last year I got a grant and it meant I knew I could put the heating on once it got really cold. It's been a godsend, it really has. I'd like to say thank you very much, and ask everyone to donate if they can.”

Pat, 80, of Barrow, has received a grant for the past five years. She said: “I feel very fortunate to have received the grant. I have a health condition that means I need to stay warm. I need warmth to stay healthy, like many people of my age do. I’m very, very grateful to everybody that gives to the appeal.”

Christine, 72, of Carlisle, also received a grant last year. She explained what a difference the money made to her: "I have gas central heating but my bills have gone up so much, I worry about turning it on. I'm the coldest person on Earth! The warmest place is in bed, but you shouldn’t have to live like that.

“The grant makes a great difference. I can't stress how much it helps to know you've got that money coming. It's a lot of money to me. It's a great help."

Sheila, 70, of Workington, said: “It just makes you feel less frightened to put your heating on instead of putting on three dressing gowns. I have got emphysema and the dry air doesn't help my breathing. So I like to heat the house through a few times a day rather than have it on all the time. The grant also made me more able to have hot meals."

Cumbria Community Foundation is running a match funding challenge from today [Monday 10 November] which means all donations to the appeal are matched £1 for £1. This is thanks to the generosity of match funding champions Allan Stobarts Lubricants & Fuels, Hadfield Trust, Harvey Family Fund, John Laing Charitable Trust, Johnson Fund, Sellafield Ltd, SP Electricity North West, Roseland Trust, WCF Ltd, Westmorland & Furness Council and private donors.

Karen Hunter, Customer Inclusion Manager at SP Electricity North West, said: “We’re proud to once again support Cumbria Community Foundation’s Winter Warmth Appeal, following the success of last year’s partnership.

“At SP Electricity North West, customers are at the heart of everything we do, and we’re always seeking out meaningful partnerships that make a real difference in our communities.

“As a funding champion, we’ll be doubling donations £1 for £1 over a six-week period starting 10 November, up to a total of £20,000. We hope this inspires both new and returning donors to get involved, knowing their generosity will go twice as far.”

Dr Jenny Benson, Director of Programmes & Partnerships at Cumbria Community Foundation, said: “We know this winter is going to be incredibly hard for many older vulnerable members of our community who cannot afford to heat their homes adequately.

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“We’d like to say an enormous thank you to all of our match funding champions whose generosity means that anyone donating to our appeal before 19 December will make double the difference.

“We are proud to have helped thousands of older people since the appeal began in 2010, but the need has not gone away. Please donate to the appeal if you can to ensure older people don’t have to choose between heating and eating this winter.”

Donate online at:

https://cumbriafoundation.enthuse.com/cf/cumbria-winter-warmth-appeal-2025

To donate by phone, call 01900 825760 between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Please make cheques payable to Cumbria Community Foundation, writing ‘Winter Warmth Fund’ on the back, and send to: Cumbria Community Foundation, Dovenby Hall, Dovenby, Cockermouth, CA13 0PN.

Company Contact:

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Cumbria Community Foundation

T. 01900825760
E. annalee@cumbriafoundation.org
W. https://www.cumbriafoundation.org

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