

Help with your energy costs during the COVID-19 outbreak autumn/winter



Action for Warm Homes
Northern Ireland

You may be worried about managing your energy use and costs during the Coronavirus outbreak. Here is some information to help.

1 If you use a pay as you go/prepayment meter for gas or electricity and are worried about being able to top this up, speak to your supplier about options available. These might include such things as:

- nominating someone to top up your meter for you;
- having additional credit added to your meter;
- having your prepayment meter changed to a credit meter.

Gas PPM customers can also contact their supplier or the Northern Ireland Coronavirus community helpline on **0800 915 4604** if they are unable to get out and do not have anyone to top up their card.

2 If you have a standard credit meter and are worried about affordability or are in energy debt then speak to your supplier about options available, these might include:

- changing your bill payment plan;
- reducing how much you pay or asking for longer to pay off debts.

However, if you are using a credit meter you won't be disconnected during the crisis.

3 There are two types of care register for vulnerable electricity and gas customers.

It's really important that your supplier knows if you are in a vulnerable situation so they can include you on their customer care register. The register can also be helpful for people who are of pensionable age, have children under 5 or have a disability or long-term medical condition. Being on the register means that you will receive priority contact in the event of a supply loss and additional non-financial services such as password security or information in different formats.

If you rely on electricity for essential equipment like a stair lift or oxygen, you should also join the NIE Networks Medical Customer care service. This will give you priority contact and reassurance if there is a power cut. To sign up, contact NIE Networks on **03457 643643**.

4 If you rely on domestic home heating oil and have the finances, you may wish to take advantage of the current low prices and get your tank filled. The Northern Ireland Oil Federation has assured customers that oil deliveries are continuing as normal and companies have removed the need to interact with the driver. If you have a shielding letter and need the delivery through the house, please let your oil supplier know in advance.

5

Make sure that you are claiming all the benefits that you are entitled to. You can ring the free government **'Make the Call' service 0800 232 1271** or **Advice NI on 0800 915 4604** or local advice centre for a full benefit entitlement check.

6

It's important that you use the energy you need to keep warm, safe and healthy at home. Making small changes in how you use this can often have a big impact on bills. For example, using a thermostat to control your heating, washing clothes at 30°C, using LED lightbulbs and not leaving appliances on standby.

You can get more saving tips from the **NI Energy Advice service 0800 111 4455**. You can also visit www.nihe.gov.uk/Community/NI-Energy-Advice/How-to-save-energy-money

7

Switching supplier can save you money on your energy bills. You can speak to your supplier about changing tariff or switch to a different supplier. In Northern Ireland there are five electricity suppliers and two gas suppliers.

The **Consumer Council in Northern Ireland** offers free independent advice on switching **0800 121 6022** (Mon-Fri 9am - 5pm). Please note that as energy suppliers are reporting high volumes of calls you may find it quicker to try online options first if this is possible.

Belfast Warm and Well

NEA runs the Northern Exposure and the Warm and Well Projects which operate across all areas of Belfast supported by the Public Health Agency and Belfast Community Planning Partnership. Support and advice is offered directly to the public or to organisations working directly with people at risk of living in fuel poverty.

The aim is to help local people struggling to keep their home warm, by offering advice and practical support to stay warm and well, and where appropriate, the provision of heating measures and discretionary financial assistance (subject to assessment) to alleviate the effects of living in cold and damp homes. To make a referral contact NEA on **028 9023 9909** or warmandwell@nea.org.uk

USEFUL ENERGY CONTACTS

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIERS

Power NI
03457 455 455

SSE Airtricity
0345 601 9093

Budget Energy Ltd
0800 012 11 77

Click Energy
0800 1 070732

Electric Ireland
0345 600 5335

GAS SUPPLIERS

SSE Airtricity
0345 900 5253

Firmus Energy
0800 032 4567

ELECTRICITY NETWORK

Northern Ireland Electricity Networks **03457 643 643**

NATURAL GAS NETWORK

Phoenix Natural Gas
03454 55 55 55



Action for Warm Homes
NORTHERN IRELAND

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