



YOUR HOME ENERGY CHECKLIST



Action for Warm Homes

Follow these steps to help you manage your energy bills and keep your home warm and safe this winter.

Contact your energy supplier to see if you are on the cheapest tariff or discuss energy debt

If you are not sure which energy tariff you are on, contact your energy supplier to see if you are on their cheapest tariff. If you are worried you are falling into energy debt, contact your energy supplier as soon as possible. If they know there is a problem, they are required to work with you to find a solution. For example, they can help you to set up an affordable repayment plan and take any payment in a format which is suitable to you.

You can also get advice on energy debt from **Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline** on 0808 223 1133 (Textphone users call 18001 0808 223 1133) or your local **Citizens Advice** (call charges may apply).

Maximise your income

Make sure you are claiming the correct benefits. This could increase your income as well as make you eligible for other types of assistance. Take advice from your local Citizens Advice or call the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133 (Textphone users call 18001 0808 223 1133) (call charges may apply) or visit www.gov.uk/browse/benefits.

Check if you can receive any energy discounts or payments

Contact your energy supplier to see if you are entitled to a **Warm Home Discount**. This is best done around October each year (however some suppliers open their schemes earlier in the year). This is a discount of £140 on electricity bills for the winter period.

Those who receive the **Guarantee Credit** element of **Pension Credit** should get the discount automatically. Energy suppliers may offer the discount to other low-income and vulnerable households who meet the qualifying criteria so it pays to check.

If you were born on or before a specific date (this date changes each year but currently it is if you were born before 26 September 1955) you could get between £100 and £300 to help you pay your heating bills.

This is known as a **Winter Fuel Payment**. It is paid automatically between November and December if you have claimed before or are in receipt of some other benefits. Others will need to apply for it. Call the **Winter Fuel Payment Centre** on 0800 7310160.

In addition, some households could be eligible for a **Cold Weather Payment** of £25 per qualifying week. This is paid automatically to those on certain benefits when the average temperature in their area is recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees Celsius or below for seven consecutive days. You'll get £25 for each seven-day period of very cold weather between 1 November and 31 March.

Get crisis support from your local authority

The **Household Support Fund** was launched by the UK Government in October 2021 to support households who may struggle to keep warm this winter. The fund runs until April 2022. It helps with the cost of essentials (e.g. energy, clothing, food), and the funds are allocated by your local authority. Call or check your local authority webpages for further information on how to apply if you are eligible. You can also contact your local councillor or MP who should have access to the details of the scheme.

Take a meter reading

If you take regular meter readings and submit them to your energy supplier this will help you keep an eye on your energy use and keep your bills accurate. If you receive a bill and it has an 'E' marked against the meter reading, then this means it is estimated by your supplier. You may not be paying the right amount for your energy. Having several estimated readings can sometimes lead to large, unexpected bills. Meters are read from left to right. Don't include any numbers that are red or in a red box. You can also ask your supplier if you can have a smart meter installed. This means that your supplier can take automatic readings and can provide a more accurate bill. If you are on prepayment, you may also find it more convenient to top up. If your meter is broken or faulty, contact your energy supplier or landlord, who is required to fix it without any charge. You could be charged if they find the meter is not faulty.

Power cuts and the Priority Services Register (PSR)

If you have a power cut call the **national power cut phone line** on 105. If you sign up to a **Priority Services Register** you can receive extra help from your energy supplier as well as from your distribution network operators (the companies that operate and

maintain the gas and electricity pipes and wires) during a power cut or in general. You can receive the services available if you:

- are of pensionable age
- are disabled or chronically sick
- have a long-term medical condition
- have a hearing or visual impairment or additional communication needs
- are in a vulnerable situation including certain mental health conditions, physical injury as well as temporary situations of vulnerability
- have a child under five living with you

A wide range of support is available including:

- information provided in accessible formats
- advance notice of planned power cuts
- identification scheme, password protection and nominee scheme for a family member or carer on behalf of the customer
- priority support in an emergency
- arrangements to ensure that it is safe and practical for the customer to use a prepayment meter
- meter reading services

All energy suppliers and network operators maintain their own registers but with your consent they can share information with each other, so you don't have to register separately for both. Contact your gas/electricity supplier and/or distribution network operator for more information and to register. Details of your distribution network operator can be found on your energy bill.

What to do if your energy supplier goes out of business

If your energy supplier goes out of business, the gas and electricity regulator, Ofgem, will automatically move you to a new supplier. This should happen within a few weeks. If you have one, don't cancel

your Direct Debit, don't try to switch tariff or supplier until your account is moved to the new supplier. You might find it harder to get any money you're owed if you switch before this happens. Wait for your new supplier to contact you. Before your new supplier contacts you, you should:

- take meter readings - it's useful to take a photo of your meter readings too
- keep any old bills you have - these can help prove your payment history, credit balance or debt
- download any bills from your app if you have an online-only account
- make a note of your account balance - you'll find this on your most recent statement

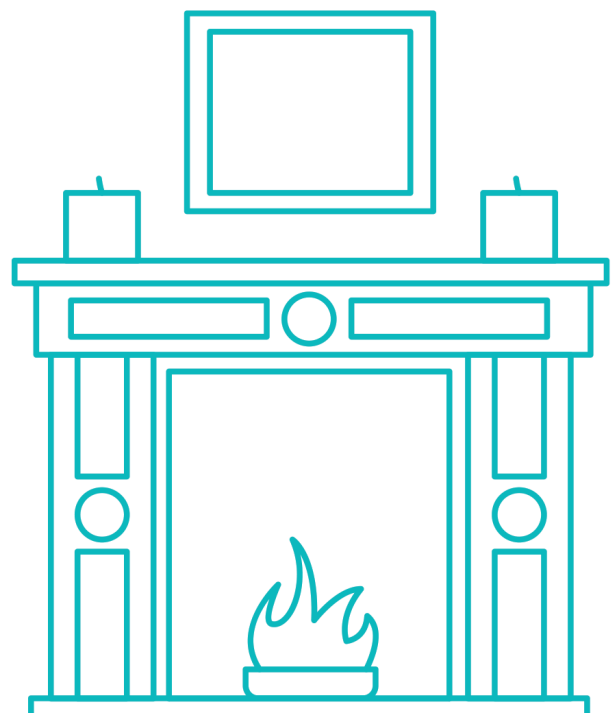
Your new supplier should explain what will happen with your account. They will write to tell you when your new account has been set up. This should happen within a few weeks. You should contact your new supplier if you don't hear from them within two weeks. Your new supplier will also put you on a new tariff - it might be more expensive than your old one. Ask them whether it's their cheapest deal. If they don't contact you, you should contact them to make sure you're on the best tariff for you. You can switch if you're not happy with your new supplier or tariff. You can do this without paying an exit fee. For more information visit: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/problems-with-your-energy-supply/check-whos-taken-over-your-energy-supply/>

Stay Safe

Carbon monoxide is a deadly gas that cannot be seen, smelt or tasted. The common signs of carbon monoxide are gas flames burning orange or yellow instead of the normal blue, soot stains on or above the appliance and/or coal or wood fires that burn slowly or go out. Carbon monoxide can be produced by faulty fuel burning appliances in your home such as a gas boiler or gas fire/heater where there is poor

ventilation. Make sure that fuel burning appliances such as fires, boilers and gas cookers are regularly serviced by a qualified engineer. For gas appliances, engineers must be **Gas Safe** registered. It is also recommended that engineers working on oil or solid fuel appliances are registered with a trade body such as OFTEC or HETAS. Ask your engineer for proof of their registration. You can also install an audible carbon monoxide alarm. These can be bought from DIY stores, supermarkets and high street shops; they cost around £15 and could save lives.

If you rent your home, then by law landlords must carry out an annual safety check of gas appliances in the home and provide you with a gas safety certificate. If you haven't already seen the certificate, ask your landlord for a copy. If you are a homeowner and on certain benefits you may be eligible for a free annual gas safety check. Contact your gas supplier to check your eligibility and ask about registering with their **Priority Services Register**. If you smell gas call the **24-hour Gas Emergency Hotline** on 0800 111 999. For further information on carbon monoxide safety go to www.co-bealarmed.co.uk. If you are older or have disabilities it may be worth checking with your local fire service if they can provide you with fire prevention advice and equipment.



Avoid damp and condensation

When it is cold, condensation can be a big problem in many homes. Try the following:

- Keep temperatures in all rooms above 15°C in colder weather. This will reduce condensation forming on outside walls
- Insulate your home (see right)
- Keep your home ventilated. Make sure vents and air bricks are not covered or obstructed
- Try not to dry washing in the house. If you do, use an airer and don't dry clothes on radiators. Opening windows slightly will allow moisture to escape but be aware of security
- Open window trickle vents during the day or when going out
- Wipe down windows/mirrors/tiles/shower with an absorbent cloth

Open windows after bathing or washing and leave them open for a short while to release steam if it is safe to do so.

Make your home energy efficient

Preventing draughts can be a cheap way of making your home warmer. Draught-proofing products are available at DIY stores. Close curtains at dusk to keep the heat in and use thermal underlay beneath carpets. Loft and cavity wall insulation can also make a big difference to bills and comfort, as can replacing an old inefficient boiler. You may be eligible for free or discounted insulation or heating measures. Contact your energy supplier and see if you qualify for the **Energy Company Obligation (ECO)** or your local council or Citizens Advice and ask about any local schemes operating in your area. If you rent your home, then by law landlords must ensure it is safe and habitable. If you are worried your privately rented accommodation is not safe or habitable, contact your local authority's environmental health team who can assess the property for health and safety hazards and require your landlord to make improvements out of their own funds.



CALL CHARGES

Calling advice lines and other services may incur call charges. 0800 and 0808 numbers are free from landlines and mobiles. Standard rates apply for 01, 02 and 03 numbers (typically 9p-13p per minute from landlines and 3p-55p from mobiles depending on your network), however they are usually included in free call packages. See more information at www.gov.uk/call-charge

nea.org.uk/advice

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