



What to do if you're struggling with your energy bills

[Updated March 2023]

As of October 2022, the number of UK households in fuel poverty is 6.7 million. The average annual energy bill in October 2021 was £1,271, now even with the government support package, it's now around £2,500, on average. The total energy bill is *not* capped – it's the price per unit. If you use more than average, you will pay more. Anyone reliant on a standard variable or default tariff or coming to the end of their fixed term has seen or will see a huge increase in their energy bills.

Below are actions you can take if you're struggling with your energy bills. You might also want to look at our [Additional Help](#) page for support available from other organisations and our wide selection of [resources and guides](#).

Contact your energy supplier

When you're having any issues paying your energy bills or you're worried about falling into debt, the first step is always to get in touch with your energy supplier. If they know you're having problems, they are required to work with you to find a solution. For example, they can help you to set up an affordable debt repayment plan and or change your payment method to better suit you. To find out who your electricity supplier is contact your [network](#). For your gas supplier you can use the [Find My Supplier search tool](#).

Maximise your income

If you've been finding it difficult to afford your energy bills, it's essential you access all the financial support you're entitled to. Make sure you are claiming the correct benefits – this could increase your income as well as make you eligible for other types of assistance. You can check your entitlement yourself using a free online [benefits calculator](#), or 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).

Depending on your circumstances, the [Warm Home Discount](#) rebate in England and Wales could give you an extra £150 credit on your electricity bill. To be eligible for the £150 rebate you need to be supplied by one of the participating energy suppliers. Not all suppliers are part of the scheme. To check eligibility visit the [Gov.uk eligibility checker](#) For people who are eligible, this money will be **automatically** credited to customers' accounts October and March. If you were expecting to receive a rebate and have not received it by **mid January 2023** then you can call the helpline **0800 731 0214**.

The **Winter Fuel Payment** is an annual payment of between £100 and £300 to help older people with the cost of keeping warm in winter. Payments are automatic between November and December to older people who have claimed it before or are in receipt of State Pension or other specific benefits. Other older people will need to apply for it. For more information call the Winter Fuel Payments helpline on 03459 151515 or text phone 0345 6060285.

The **Cold Weather Payment** is paid to eligible households on means tested benefits in areas where 'exceptionally cold weather' is forecast or has occurred. Automatic payments amount to £25 per qualifying week between 1 November and 31 March.

Sign up to the Priority Services Register

The Priority Services Register is a system that energy companies use to make sure the correct support is given to their most vulnerable customers. You can sign up to it to receive extra help from your energy supplier as well as from the company that operates the local energy distribution network. You're eligible to receive the services available if you're a pensioner, are disabled or suffer from a long-term medical condition. You also qualify if you have a hearing or visual impairment or additional communication needs.

Each energy supplier and network operator maintains its own register and 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

Contact your gas/electricity supplier and distribution network operator for more information and to register. If you are not sure who your network operator is, you can use the [Energy Network Association](#) handy search tool.

The UK Government has announced a series of cost of living support payments, more information can be found at www.gov.uk/helpforhouseholds or a summary is available on our [Cost of Living and Discretionary Support](#) page.

As well as the Cost of Living Support, local authorities across England and Wales may have [discretionary support funds](#) available.

Make your home more energy efficient

Making your home as energy efficient as possible is the best way to reduce your costs and keep your home feeling warmer. There are some low-cost actions you can take yourself such as:

- Draught-proofing can be a cheap way of making your home warmer, products are available at your local DIY store.
- Radiator reflectors behind your radiators can help keep more of the heat coming into the room.
- Use thermal underlay beneath carpets and close curtains at dusk to keep more heat in.

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 authority](#) and ask about any energy efficiency schemes operating in your area.

For more information on what improvements might help the energy efficiency in your home take a look at www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency.

You can also see what grants might be available by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/find-energy-grants-for-you-home-help-to-heat>

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.

In Wales, the Welsh Government's Nest scheme also offers free, impartial advice and, if you are eligible, a package of free home energy efficiency improvements such as a new boiler, central heating or insulation. Call Nest on 0808 808 2244 or visit nest.gov.wales to find out more.

Changing the way you use energy

Making small changes to the way you think and use your energy can often have a big impact on bills but it is important that you use the energy you need to keep warm, safe and healthy at home.

If you have a combi boiler you may be able to save money simply by changing the flow temperature, take a look at the [Nesta Money Saving Boiler Challenge](#) for guidance on whether this might apply to you and how you might be able to make some savings.

Take a look at our leaflet '[Electricity Consumption in the Home](#)' to see how much appliances might be costing you and how you might be able to cut costs or visit [Energy Savings Trust](#) for more useful tips. [The Government's 'It All Adds Up'](#) campaign also includes helpful advice.

Other useful resources

Our [Additional Help](#) page has a range of other support organisations which may be able to help you. Please also take a look at our [advice leaflets](#) which are available in a range of languages.

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National Energy Action

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