



YOUR HOME ENERGY CHECKLIST

National Energy Action is the national fuel poverty charity helping everyone to have a warm, safe and healthy home. This leaflet will guide you through the financial help available and practical steps you can take to help keep your home feeling warmer and your energy more affordable.



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SPEAK TO YOUR ENERGY SUPPLIER

If you are struggling to keep on top of your energy bills, or you are starting to fall behind on payments and getting into debt, it is really important to speak to your supplier as soon as possible. They will be able to check whether you are on the best deal, talk to you about your energy use and let you know about any schemes or support they might have available to help.

If you are in debt with your energy supplier they can set you up with a payment plan that takes into consideration your individual circumstances and ability to pay. The sooner you contact them the quicker they can help you.

TAKE REGULAR METER READINGS

There are different types of meters, depending on how you pay for your electricity or gas. If you have a credit meter and receive a bill you will be asked to submit meter readings for electricity and gas.

If you receive a bill and it has an 'E' marked against the meter reading, this means it has been estimated by your supplier and may not be accurate. Estimated readings can lead to large, unexpected bills so you should regularly submit accurate readings.

Meters are read from left to right. Don't include any red numbers or numbers that are in a red box.

Top tip: take a photo of your meter to record an exact reading.



PRIORITY REGISTERS

Energy suppliers

All energy suppliers in Northern Ireland have a Customer Care Register. They offer various support services for vulnerable customers, including if you:

- are of pensionable age;
- are disabled or chronically sick;
- have a hearing or visual impairment or additional communication needs.

A wide range of support is available. Contact your energy supplier to register and find out what support they can provide.

District Network Operator

For anyone relying on electricity for healthcare needs, they can join Northern Ireland Electricity Networks (NIEN) Medical Customer Care Register to get extra support during a power cut.

If you have medical equipment in your home, such as a ventilator, specialised mattresses, feeding systems or lifting equipment, you can register to receive up-to-date information by phone during a power cut or a planned interruption to your supply. Visit

www.nienetworks.co.uk/help-advice/vulnerable-customers/customer-care-register.

STAY SAFE AT HOME

CARBON MONOXIDE IS A DEADLY GAS THAT CANNOT BE SEEN, SMELT, OR TASTED. THE COMMON SIGNS ARE:

- **Gas flames burning orange or yellow instead of blue**
- **Soot stains on or above the appliance**
- **Coal or wood fires that burn slowly or go out**

If you're a homeowner you may be eligible for a free annual gas safety inspection on gas heating and appliances. Check with your provider for eligibility. The safety check is not a substitute for having your gas appliances serviced regularly.

If you smell gas or you are worried about gas safety, phone the **24-hour Northern Ireland Gas Emergency Service on 0800 002 001**.

DON'T MISS OUT ON MONEY

Make sure you are claiming all the benefits you are entitled to. This is known as 'income maximisation'. Not only could it increase your income, it could unlock access to other benefits. It is a common myth that you must be out of work to be eligible – there are many in-work benefits too, so it is worth doing a check online. It only takes around 10 minutes to check www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators.

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). They're usually included in free call packages. See www.gov.uk/call-charges.

If you would like extra support with checking your entitlement or making a claim, the following organisations can help:

Advice NI

Advice helpline: 0800 915 4604
Email: advice@adviceni.net

Make the Call

The service makes sure you're getting all the benefits, services and supports you're entitled to.
Tel: 0800 232 1271
Email: makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk

NI – Finance Support Service

If you have a financial crisis you can apply for Discretionary Support or a Short-Term Benefit Advance. For further information on what this support can help with go to –

www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/finance-support.



ENERGY DISCOUNTS AND PAYMENTS

WINTER FUEL PAYMENT

In Northern Ireland, the **Winter Fuel Payment** provides a tax-free payment of between £100 and £300 to individuals who have reached State Pension age.

The payment is made automatically to everyone over State Pension age, but it is subject to an income cap. If your annual taxable income exceeds £35,000, HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) will fully recover the payment through the tax system.

Further information is available on www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment.

Phone: **0800 731 0160**

COLD WEATHER PAYMENT

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.



£25
per
qualifying
week

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The more efficiently you use energy, the less you need to use to keep warm, safe and healthy at home. Contact NEA NI for our leaflets, including energy saving tips. Email: northern.ireland@nea.org.uk.

You may be eligible for free or discounted insulation or heating measures. Contact NI Energy Advice. They offer free, independent and impartial energy advice to domestic householders in NI – including advice about energy grants and other sources of help.

Freephone: 0800 111 4455

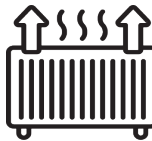
Email: nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk

Website: www.nihe.gov.uk/energy

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, quick-win actions you can take yourself such as:



Draught-proof doors and windows – get products at your local DIY store.



Radiator reflectors can help direct more of the heat into the room.



Close curtains at dusk to keep more heat in.

If you rent your home in Northern Ireland, landlords have specific responsibilities to ensure rented properties are safe, habitable and meet legal standards. This includes providing a Tenancy Information Notice, ensuring gas and electrical safety, and registering with the Landlord Registration Scheme.

If you're worried your home is not safe and the landlord hasn't dealt with your concerns, you can contact an environmental health officer in the local council: www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/local-councils-in-northern-ireland.

MOVING HOME AND YOUR ENERGY

MOVING IN

Who supplies my electricity?

Call NIE Networks on **03457 643 643**; you may need the MPRN (17-digit number) found on an electricity bill. To stay with the current supplier, contact them with a new meter reading to avoid being charged for previous usage.

Who supplies my gas?

Check a gas bill or top-up receipt. You can also contact your local network operator:

- **Greater Belfast/Larne:** Phoenix Energy – **03454 55 55 55**
- **Ten Towns area:** firmus energy – **0330 024 9000**
- **Gas to the West area:** SGN Natural Gas – **0800 975 7774**

Want to switch supplier? Visit www.consumercouncil.org.uk for the best deals.

MOVING OUT

Let your supplier know at least **two working days** before moving to avoid extra charges. Provide:

- **Your account number** (on your bill)
- **Your MPRN/GPRN** (17-digit number, also on your bill)
- **The date you're moving out**
- **Final meter reading** on the day you move – take a photo
- **Forwarding address** (for your final bill or any refund)

Let your landlord or new occupant know

- If you're renting or selling, inform your landlord or the new occupant that you've closed the account.
- They will need to register with their chosen supplier using the property's MPRN.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR ENERGY SUPPLIER GOES OUT OF BUSINESS

If your energy supplier goes out of business, the regulator Utility Regulator for Northern Ireland will automatically move you to a new supplier within a few weeks. Don't try to make any changes to your energy supply until your account is moved to a 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.

In the meantime:



Take regular meter readings and a photo of them if you can.



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 will write to tell you when your new account has been set up. 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 so speak to them to make sure it's their cheapest deal. You can switch without paying an exit fee if you're not happy with your new supplier or tariff.

For more information, visit:
Utility Regulator for Northern Ireland
Website: www.uregni.gov.uk

Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
Website: www.consumerCouncil.org.uk

USEFUL RESOURCES AND HELPLINES

Below you can find a list of the organisations mentioned throughout the leaflet and some other organisations that might be able to help you:

CONSUMER

CONSUMER COUNCIL NORTHERN IRELAND (CCNI) is the statutory consumer body for Northern Ireland. CCNI provides advice and information, investigate and resolve complaints, and advocate on your behalf. CCNI publishes up-to-date energy comparison tables and has a price comparison tool. Visit www.consumercouncil.org.uk.

Phone: **028 9025 1600**

Email: info@consumercouncil.org.uk

BENEFIT AND DEBT ADVICE

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 the following organisations:

ADVICE NI provides benefit and debt advice.

Advice helpline: **0800 915 4604**

Email: advice@adviceni.net

MAKE THE CALL SERVICE

makes sure you're getting all the benefits, services and supports you're entitled to.

Phone: **0800 232 1271**

Email: makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

NI ENERGY ADVICE

offers free impartial advice to domestic householders about insulation and heating schemes and other sources of help.

Freephone: **0800 111 4455**

Email: nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk

Website: www.nihe.gov.uk/energy

ENERGY SAVING

TRUST offers guidance on ways to save energy around the home. Visit their website www.energysavingtrust.org.uk.

LIGHTNING REACH

The secure Lightning Reach portal allows you to apply for support from multiple providers. Visit www.lightningreach.org.

EMERGENCY FOOD AND CRISIS SUPPORT

To access a local food bank you may need a referral from a local advice organisation, your doctor or health visitor, social services or your housing officer. They will give you a voucher that you can swap for food at the foodbank.

To find out where to get food vouchers and nearest food banks visit

www.trussell.org.uk/emergency-food/get-a-food-voucher.

Smart phones apps like **OLIO** and **TooGoodToGo** will let you know when food is being sold at low cost near to you.

HOME HEATING OIL

Oil differs from natural gas and electricity and is usually delivered in bulk. There are many payment methods, and a large number of suppliers provide flexible savings plans. Check with your supplier on what methods are available. You can get more information from the **Consumer Council** on weekly changes in the price of home heating oil:

www.consumercouncil.org.uk/home-heating/price-checker.

NIHE Oil Savings Network

Why not join the NI Housing Executive's (NIHE) Oil Savings Network?

You can enjoy member discounts if the NIHE Oil Savings Network has a registered supplier to cover your postcode. You can check with their team at nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk.



MORE USEFUL RESOURCES AND HELPLINES

SAFETY

IF YOU SMELL GAS, want to report a gas leak or require gas emergency services, there's a free, 24-hour Gas Emergency Helpline you can call **0800 002 001**.

If you have a power cut or a safety concern with a meter, cables or other equipment leading into the home, then contact Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) Networks on their emergency telephone number: **03457 643 643**.

IF YOU NEED FURTHER SUPPORT, THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS CAN HELP

NI Energy Advice

Freephone: 0800 111 4455
nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk

Advice NI

Freephone: 0800 915 4604
www.adviceni.net

Consumer Council Northern Ireland

Freephone: 0800 121 6022
www.consumercouncil.org.uk

National Energy Action Northern Ireland

Phone: 028 9023 9909
northern.ireland@nea.org.uk



Accessibility
& Language



You can translate National Energy Action's website and leaflets into over 160 languages – and get text-to-speech in over 100. You can also adapt text for neurodiversities, including ADHD and dyslexia, and visual impairments. Use our **Recite Me** button on www.nea.org.uk.

National Energy Action is the national fuel poverty charity,
helping everyone to have a warm, safe and healthy home. Go
to www.nea.org.uk.

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