



The SureServe Foundation

Creating warmer communities



Energy Efficiency
Advice and Guidance

The Sureserve Foundation supports individuals, families and communities achieve fuel efficiency and in turn, lessen the financial burden of high gas and electric bills.

We provide grants and funding to projects and organisations combating fuel poverty. For more information visit www.thesureservefoundation.org.



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Switching Energy and Gas supplier

Increases in wholesale energy costs have meant that, since September 2021, fewer deals have been available on price comparison sites. It's a good idea to assess all your options before you switch.

When switching is available, you can be with your new supplier within five working days (provided you opt to fast track your switch). There'll be no interruption to your service and everything is handled by your new provider. All you need to do is compare and go.

Using a price comparison website:

Takes five minutes

Using a price comparison website all you need to do is pop in your postcode and tell them about your energy usage using your most recent bill will give you the best results.

They'll search for tariffs

They'll search the market for deals and show you what you can get if you switch suppliers with them.

You're good to go

Once you've started your switch you won't need to do a thing – your new provider will take care of everything.

Ofgem's approved price comparison websites

- **Energylinx** www.energylinx.co.uk
- **The Energy Shop** www.theenergyshop.com
- **Money Supermarket** www.moneysupermarket.com
- **My Utility Genius** www.myutilitygenius.co.uk
- **Simply Switch** www.simplyswitch.com
- **Switch Gas and Electric** www.switchgasandelectric.com
- **Quotezone** www.quotezone.co.uk
- **Unravel It** www.unravelit.com
- **uSwitch** www.uswitch.com

Heating and billing

Take regular meter readings and submit them to your energy supplier as 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
- **Make sure you are using your boiler and heating controls correctly** and use the programmer to set up the system to match your needs. For example, setting your heating to come on half an hour before you get up in the morning. Use a room thermostat to control the temperature in your home. Ideally, this should be set between 18oC and 21oC but some people may need it higher
- **Remember not to leave electric hot water immersion heaters on** for longer than you need as this wastes energy and money
- **Some homes have night storage heaters.** These build up heat overnight when electricity is cheaper, which is then released throughout the next day. Homes with storage heaters should be on an Economy 7 or Economy 10 tariff. If you are not using your storage heaters correctly you could be faced with a large bill. For further information go to www.nea.org.uk/advice
- **NEA's WASH Advice Service** is a free support service providing advice to householders in England and Wales on their energy bills and keeping warm and safe in their home. They can also help with benefits advice and income maximisation. It offers advice workshops direct to householders and training to frontline staff. To contact them and make use of their advice service visit www.nea.org.uk/get-help/wash-advice/ for a list of ways to contact them.

Making your home more 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. Fitted out of sight behind your radiator, Radflek Radiator Reflectors prevent heat loss through walls by reflecting 95 per cent of wasted heat back into the home, helping to cut energy consumption and heating costs throughout the year. Visit www.radflek.com and GET 20% off with CODE: SSF20 making the most popular 5 sheet pack just £27.19 + P&P.
- 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 grants might be available visit www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk/grants

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.

Change 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. Here are some simple ideas to save you energy and money:

- Switch off standby
- Turn off lights
- **Careful with your washing.** Use your washing machine on a 30-degree cycle instead of higher temperatures.
- **Reduce your washing machine use by one run per week for a year**
- Avoid the tumble dryer
- Spend less time in the shower
- Swap your bath for a shower
- Fill your dishwasher

Fuel debt

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.

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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 at www.energynetworks.org/customers/find-my-network-operator. For your gas supplier you can use the **Find My Supplier** search tool at www.findmysupplier.energy.

You can also get advice on energy debt from Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 03454 040506 or your local Citizens Advice Bureau. TextRelay users should use 18001 03454 040506.

Income maximisation

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 could give you an extra £150 credit on your electricity bill.

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 at www.energynetworks.org/customers/find-my-network-operator.

Cost of Living Support package

Targeted support

- **Low-income Cost of Living Payment:** People on lowest incomes/means-tested benefits – 8 million households – will receive a one-off 'cost of living payment' of £650, to be paid in July and Autumn directly to bank accounts
- **Pensioner Cost of Living Payment:** Pensioners who are in receipt of Winter Fuel Payment will receive a one-off pensioner cost of living payment of £300
- **Disability payment** Disabled people in receipt of non-means-tested disability benefits will receive a one-off disability payment worth £150

Universal support

- The previously announced £200 'heat now, pay later' rebate will be doubled to £400 and has been changed to a grant, which means it does not need to be paid back. It is being paid monthly to direct debit customers. Prepayment meter customers should look out for letters from their supplier, which may contain vouchers
- Payments will be in stages over a six-monthly period from October to March. The exact time you will receive your payments will depend on how you pay your energy bills. You do not need to apply for this grant – if you pay by direct debit your account will be credited automatically, and if you have a pre-payment meter you will receive vouchers. You will need to ensure your supplier has the correct contact details for you to receive the vouchers. Please be aware of scams relating to the rebate scheme. As above you do not need to claim it and you should not enter your details on any third-party website

Other

- Household Support Fund will be extended by £500 million from October and there will be legislation to extend it to all devolved nations

Council Tax rebate and discretionary support

In England, if you pay Council Tax and your home is in Bands A-D you will receive a one off payment of £150 from your local authority for help with your energy costs (called a rebate). If you pay by direct debit, this will be automatically paid into your bank account in April. If you do not pay by direct debit your local authority will be in touch to organise payment so it may take longer to get the payment to you.

You can still receive the payment even if you receive **Council Tax Reduction**, including full Council Tax Reduction. If you receive the **Disabled Band Reduction** on your Council Tax then you will also receive the rebate if your home is in Band E.

If your home is not in Bands A-D but you are on a low income, you may still be able to apply to your local authority **Household Support Fund** for discretionary assistance.

Water saving tips

In the bathroom

- **Brushing your teeth:** Remember to turn off the tap while brushing your teeth – a running tap wastes approximately 6 litres per minute
- **Leak detection:** Leaky loos are one of the most common causes of unexpected high water use for consumers in the UK. When a toilet is leaking, water dribbles away down the back of the pan, which means a leaky loo often goes unnoticed. A leaking toilet most commonly refers to clean water running from the cistern into the pan
 - To detect a slow leak add a few drops of food colouring to your toilet cistern
 - Don't flush it for around an hour
 - If the food colouring is present after an hour, you have a leak
 - It's easy to fix though! First contact your water company who may well fix it for free. Or you could find a recommended plumber to call or if you fancy a bit of DIY take the parts to the hardware store and ask the staff to help replace them
 - Remember to check again for a leak once fixed
- **Short Shower:** A short shower with an efficient showerhead uses less water than a bath, which is usually 80 litres. But beware since many power showers may actually use more than a bath. Baths and showers are accountable for the highest usage of water consumption in the home at around 34%
 - To help keep track of time try using a shower timer
 - It is estimated that Britain 'showers away' more than 2,000,000,000 litres of water each day
 - If every home in the UK took one minute off their shower every day it would save £215 million on our collective energy bills every year

- **Switch Showerhead:** Aerated showerheads reduce the flow but don't compromise on pressure. They maintain the pressure by mixing in air with water to produce a steady, even spray
 - Low flow shower heads reduce the amount of water used, whilst still giving you the feel of a normal shower
- **Baths:** By running your bath just an inch shorter than usual, you can save on average 5 litres of water
 - You can minimise your water use by reusing your bathwater to water your houseplants or garden
- **Toilets:** About 30% of total water used in a home is used to flush the toilet. Remember, this water is the same high quality water that's in our taps
 - Update to a water efficient toilet: Dual flush toilets have a split flush button which gives the user the choice of how much water to use
 - Dual flush toilets typically use 4-6 litres of water opposed to the old style flush systems which use a massive 13 litres per flush
 - Cistern Displacement Device (CDD): A CDD is placed in the cistern to displace around 1 litre of water every time you flush. They are super easy to install
 - Installing a CDD can achieve savings of up to 5000 litres per year
 - They are available for FREE from most water companies
- **Blockages:** Try to avoid flushing away cotton wool balls or make up tissues, simply throwing them in a bin will cut down on the amount of water wasted with every flush and obviously protect our sewers
 - Remember the 3 P rule: only poo, pee and paper down the toilet

In the kitchen

- **The Dishes:** A dishwasher on an eco setting can be more efficient than washing dishes by hand, if the dishwasher is totally full. However, recent research has found that only half of people say they use the eco setting.
 - Try to buy a dishwasher with a capacity suitable for your household size so it's always full when you use it
 - Avoid pre-rinsing dishes, detergents are highly effective so all you need to do is scrape and place
 - Try adding a washing up bowl or plug into your sink – this can reduce water wastage by 50%
 - Adding a tap aerator can help reduce the flow
- **Laundry:** When buying a washing machine, check the label or specifications for water use, the best models will typically use less than 7.5 litres per kg
 - Read the manual to find out which cycles are the most water efficient
 - **Kettle:** Try to fill the kettle with only what's needed, this will save water and energy
 - **Lids:** Using the lid on saucepans reduces the amount of water lost through evaporation, it also helps veg cook quicker

Food

- **Meat:** high meat diet increases your carbon and water footprint. 70% of freshwater withdrawal is used by agriculture in the world and livestock use about 20% of freshwater for feed production. 15,415 litres of water is required to produce 1kg of beef; and 5988 litres to produce 1kg of pork. This may be lower if your meat is from the UK. For every litre of milk produced, a cow needs to drink at least 3 litres of water
- **Dairy:** A quarter of all global greenhouse gas emissions come from food. 58% of this comes from animal products

For more information on energy efficiency, fuel poverty and grants and funding available to organisations visit www.thesureservefoundation.org.



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