



The Sureserve Foundation

Creating warmer communities

**Energy Efficiency
Advice and Guidance**

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Switching Energy and Gas supplier

Changing tariff/supplier can result in savings of up to £300 a year. Here are a few simple steps you can take to find a better deal.

- Research shows that changing tariff/supplier can result in savings of up to £300 a year. In 2018, many companies have raised the cost of their gas and electricity so even if you've been with a supplier for years, it will be good to investigate your options to switch.
- To get the best deal for your utility bills, you will need to know about what type of tariff you are on with your supplier. Even if you're with a competitive supplier, they may have a cheaper deal which you can easily switch to.
- Instead of phoning each individual energy company (they are 70+ that operate throughout the UK), you can use a neutral price comparison website. There is a list of websites that are approved by the energy company regulator, Ofgem, on the next page.
- Your contract with your new supplier may take a little while to begin as you'll have a 14-day 'cooling-off period' where you can change your mind to move to this supplier. It can vary from company to company how long the switch will take.
- In most of cases, you won't see a huge difference to having a different company except for cost - as your change between tariffs/companies should be seamless. You don't need to take time off work or remove anything from your cupboards as the switch will be done remotely.
- The day before you are due to change to the new supplier/tariff, you should take a meter reading to tell your current provider how much you have used when closing your account.
- Make sure you keep a note of how long your contract is as at the end of your contract you may be moved to a more expensive tariff without much notice.

Ofgem's approved price comparison websites

- **Quotezone** www.quotezone.co.uk
- **The Energy Shop** www.theenergyshop.com
- **Runpath** www.runpathdigital.com/gas-electricity/
- **Simply Switch** www.simplyswitch.com
- **My Utility Genius** www.myutilitygenius.co.uk
- **Switch Gas and Electric** www.switchgasandelectric.com
- **Energylinx** www.energylinx.co.uk
- **Unravel It** www.unravelit.com/energy-switching
- **Money Supermarket** www.moneysupermarket.com
- **Energy Helpline** www.energyhelpline.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 offer face to face, telephone and online support for householders and case workers as well as engagement sessions, workshops and community events and training for frontline staff. To contact them and make use of their advice service visit www.nea.org.uk/advice/wash-advice and fill in a contact form. An advisor will be in touch to answer your questions.

Reducing heat loss

The main areas that heat can be lost are through the roof and windows. Blocking draughts can be a cheap way of making your home warmer and draught-proofing products are available at DIY stores, to see larger energy savings you may wish to invest in making your home more efficient (while some of these measures may have larger upfront costs than DIY measures, the ultimate saving will be larger). We have partnered with Radflek to offer savings on the purchase of their radiator reflectors using a special discount code. Please see below for more details.

Loft Insulation

This is a great way to make your home more energy efficient as around 25% of heat within a home is lost through the roof, loft insulation will, therefore, prevent excess heat loss and save you money. The cost of insulation generally varies depending on the depth of the insulation so if you can invest in thicker insulation then it will result in more savings overall. Even if you already have some former of insulation, you should find out how thick it is and consider whether it is worth updating it to be thicker.

If you currently live in an uninsulated property, you could reduce your energy bills by up to £225 a year by installing insulation. The recommended thickness for loft insulation is 270mm so it is best to check whether you have any loft insulation prior to speaking to an installer. The typical cost of insulation varies but can be around £300 (this varies of the size and condition of the property) which means that you should have paid off the cost in less than two years and you'll see the savings through your energy bills.

If you use your loft as a living space, you will have to consider getting the roof insulated although this can be more expensive.

Wall insulation

Up to 35% of heat loss is lost through walls. There are two main types of wall insulation based on the type of house you have. Therefore, if you are considering wall insulation, it is important to ensure that you know what type of walls you have before contacting an installer. Cavity walls have an even brick pattern while solid walls have an alternating pattern.

- **Cavity Wall insulation:** insulation put into cavity walls traps air in between fibres which prevents air leaving the house and therefore keeps the heat within the property. Cavity wall insulation costs between £330 and £720 depending on the size of your home – and you should save that within four years of installation.
- **Solid Wall insulation:** solid wall insulation can be significantly more expensive but has high energy savings especially if the property is quite old. There are two types of solid wall insulation, internal and external. Internal wall insulation can cost around £7,400 and external wall insulation is around £13,000. The energy saving is higher than cavity wall insulation but it may take around 8- 15 years to repay depending on the size of your property.

Windows

Up to 35% of heat loss in the home is lost through windows. Here are a few things you can think about to minimise this loss.

- **Getting double or triple glazing.** Having thicker windows allows light and heat to get into your house but cuts the amount of heat that can escape. Double glazing works by having two sheets of glass with a gap in between which means that it's harder for cold air to get through. Triple glazing works in a similar way but with a third sheet of glass. Windows, however, are expensive and the payback period is quite high so these are generally only suggested to be changed if you need new windows. Getting thicker windows may also reduce outside noise in your property.
- **Investing in different curtains.** The most energy efficient curtains should be floor-length to reduce heat loss through windows and thicker curtains will prevent more loss through the windows. If you have blinds instead of curtains, ensure that they fit snugly in the window frame otherwise they will not conserve much heat from the room.

- **Closing curtains at dusk to keep the heat in.** This will prevent the cold air from inside coming into the house as the curtain will block it and keep some of the warm air from sunrays escaping the property. Another way to do reduce heat from windows is to close windows during cold weather.
- **Closing doors is an effective way to keep heat in a particular room** so if you're heating a room where you are spending time in, it will stop the heat seeping into rooms that you spend little time in, ie: hallways.
- **Checking for air-leaks.** You can do this on a cold day with the heat on inside your home by placing your hand around the edges of all exterior doors and windows. It is not advised to seal up bathroom and kitchen air vents and fans as these are used to prevent condensation in the home. While utilising an extractor fan in kitchens and bathrooms will use energy, it will mean that you don't need to open windows as often which will keep some of the heat within the home.

Floors

Using thermal underlay on any flooring. This will reduce some heat loss going through wood floors. You can also reduce heat loss by putting rugs and mats through any small holes in the floor.

Radiators

Using radiator reflectors in your home. You could be losing half the heat that you are paying for through the wall behind your radiator. 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.

Fuel debt

If you are in debt to your energy supplier and struggling to get on top of it, then speak to your supplier as soon as possible. If they know there is a problem they can work with you to find a solution. Ask to set up a payment plan and be realistic about what you can afford to repay. You don't want to leave yourself short for other essential bills.

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. Take advice from **Citizens Advice** on **03454 040506** or visit www.gov.uk/browse/benefits.

Other discounts and payments

Ask your energy supplier if you are entitled to a **Warm Home Discount**. This is a discount of £140 on electricity bills for the winter period 2019-20. Those who receive the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit are eligible, as are some other low-income and vulnerable households.

If you were born on or before 5 October 1954 you should be eligible for the **Winter Fuel Payment**. This is an annual payment of between £100 and £300. You will be paid automatically between November and December if you have claimed before or are in receipt of State Pension or some other benefits. Others will need to apply for it. Call the **Winter Fuel Payment Helpline** on **03459 15 15 15**.

The Cold Weather Payment of £25 per week will be paid automatically to those on certain benefits when very cold weather occurs or has been forecast.

Priority Services Register

You can sign up to the Priority Services Register (through your energy supplier) to receive extra help from your energy supplier as well as from your distribution network operator (the company that operates and maintains your electricity supply). More info here.

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

Each energy supplier and network operator maintains its own register.

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. Details of your distribution network operator can be found on your electricity bill.

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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