



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.



Content

Switching Energy and Gas supplier	1
Ofgem's approved price comparison websites	2
Heating and billing	3
Making your home more efficient	4
Fuel debt	5
Income maximisation	6
Priority services register	6
Cost of Living Support Package	7
Water saving tips	9
Energy saving tips in the kitchen	11
Food	11

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.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency

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.

5

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 0808 223 1133 or your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

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.

If you were born before 25 September 1957 you could get between £250 and £600 to help you pay your heating bills. This is known as a **Winter Fuel Payment**.

The amount you get includes a **Pensioner Cost of Living Payment**. This is between £150 and £300. You'll get this extra amount in winter 2023 to 2024. This is in addition to any other **Cost of Living Payments** you get with your benefit or tax credits. Most people get the **Winter Fuel Payment** automatically if they're eligible.

If you're eligible, you'll get a letter in October or November saying how much you'll get. If you do not get a letter but you think you're eligible, check if you need to make a claim by visiting www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment/how-to-claim. Call the **Winter Fuel Payment Centre** on **0800 731 0160** or contact Relay UK on **18001** then **0800 731 0160** to claim by phone. The deadline for you to make a claim for winter 2023 to 2024 is 31 March 2024.

Most eligible people are paid in November or December.

The Cold Weather Payment is paid to eligible households on means tested benefits in areas where 'exceptionally cold weather' is forecast or has occurred. You'll get £25 for each 7 day period of very cold weather between 1 November 2023 and 31 March 2024.

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: You may be entitled to up to 3 Cost of Living Payments of £301, £300 and £299 if you receive benefits or tax credits on certain dates, to be paid between April 2023 and spring 2024 directly to bank accounts
- Pensioner Cost of Living Payment: If you're entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2023 to 2024, you will get an extra £150 or £300 paid with your normal payment from November 2023
- Disability payment: Disabled people in receipt of non-means-tested disability benefits will receive a one-off disability payment worth £150

To check your eligibility for these payments visit www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment.

Other

- You may be able to get help with essential costs from your local council. This is sometimes known as the **Household Support Fund**. Funding is aimed at anyone who's vulnerable or cannot pay for essentials. You do not have to be getting benefits to get help from your local council. Check with your local council to find out what support is available. You can find out who your local council is by visiting www.gov.uk/find-local-council.

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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