

# Warm homes

Your guide to  
staying warm at  
home this winter

Call: 0116 305 2524 or visit  
[www.leicestershire.gov.uk/home-energy-grants](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/home-energy-grants)

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**It is important to be warm and comfortable in your home.**  
**Low temperatures can make existing health issues worse.**  
**The colder your home is, the greater the risk of you becoming ill.**  
**To stay safe and well, your home should be heated to at least 18°C/64°F. Living areas should be warmer, at around 21°C/70°F.**

## Keeping your home warm

You can make some simple changes to your home that will ensure you are warmer and more comfortable and your energy bills are lower.

Most homes rented or purchased since 2008, have an Energy Performance Certificate. The certificate lets you know how energy efficient your home is and suggests improvements that could reduce your heating costs.

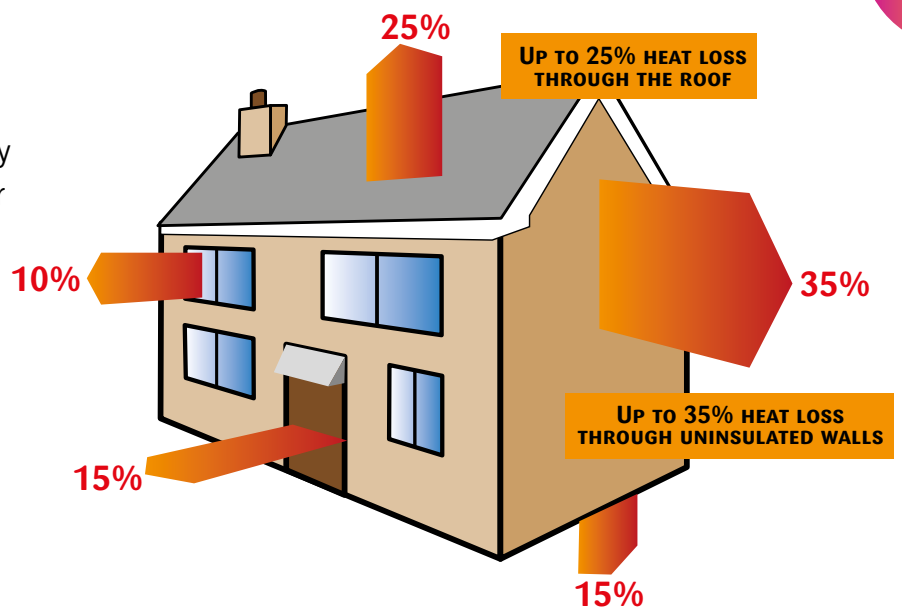
Access existing reports online or find a qualified energy assessor to produce one for your home:

➔ [www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate](http://www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate)

### Insulate

Insulation prevents heat being lost from your home. Insulating your home well, means it will stay warmer for longer in cold weather and be cheaper to heat.

For advice on suitable insulation for your home, speak to a local registered installer.



Find a contractor via the National Insulation Association or TrustMark register:

☎ 0333 555 1234 ➔ [www.trustmark.org.uk](http://www.trustmark.org.uk)  
➔ [www.nia-uk.org](http://www.nia-uk.org)

There are different types of insulation available to you depending on how your home has been built:



### Loft insulation

Most homes can benefit from loft insulation. The recommended depth for traditional loft insulation is 270mm/10.5 inches. If you have a loft conversion, attic or roof room insulation is available which insulates at the rafters instead.



### Wall insulation

Walls are your biggest source of heat loss. Different types of insulation are available depending on whether you have cavity or solid walls.

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### Pipe lagging

Insulating your pipes can help you to avoid burst pipes and leaks. This is especially important for pipes in the loft, as insulated lofts are colder because the heat is kept where it is needed, in the home below.



### Underfloor insulation

Older properties may have some rooms with suspended timber floors. They are often draughty underneath and insulating can avoid heat being lost below.



## Reduce draughts


Reducing draughts can really help to maintain the temperature in your home.

- Close your curtains at dusk.
- Keep windows closed at night.
- Use draught excluders.
- Fit draught-proofing strips around door and window frames, letterboxes and keyholes.
- Use a chimney balloon to reduce draughts via your chimney if you have open fireplaces.

If you are 50 or over, the Age UK handyerson service can provide help with small jobs like draught proofing or loft clearance as a paid for service for as little as one hour. A business directory is also maintained of vetted companies across a range of services.

### Age UK handyerson service

 0116 299 2266  Handyman@ageukleics.org.uk

 [www.ageuk.org.uk/leics](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/leics)

## Grants and funding

Schemes come and go, to find out about the latest grants supporting energy efficiency improvements visit

➔ [www.leicestershire.gov.uk/home-energy-grants](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/home-energy-grants)

### 'ECO' funding

You may be eligible for a grant to fund energy efficiency improvements such as insulation and heating upgrades through a government backed scheme called Energy Company Obligation or 'ECO' funding.

Find out more by contacting your energy supplier or speaking to an installer from the TrustMark register, a Government endorsed competent person register.

➔ [www.trustmark.org.uk](http://www.trustmark.org.uk)

### Flexible eligibility

Your local authority may also decide you are eligible for a grant based on criteria such as household income, property type or long-term health conditions.

The Warm Homes service can tell you if you qualify for help under a local grants scheme.

**Warm Homes service** ☎ **0116 305 2524**



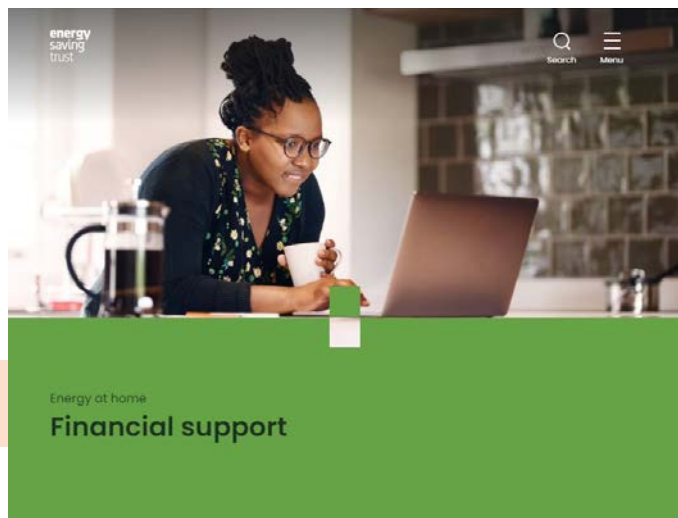
Alternatively, there is a handy online tool to check entitlement:

➔ <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/energy-at-home/financial-support>

If you're not eligible for a grant there are means to spread the cost, typically larger installers or energy companies offer interest free payment plans.

Households can also spread the cost of energy efficiency improvements through a Green Deal loan attached to their property.

➔ [www.gov.uk/green-deal](http://www.gov.uk/green-deal)



**There is a wide range of financial assistance available to help make your home more energy efficient, as well as benefit from using renewable technologies.**

Whether you need some help to pay your energy bills, would like some support to make energy saving changes to your home, or are interested in incentives for using renewable energy, there is a wide range of financial assistance available.

# Heating your home

## Using your heating controls

Getting to know your heating controls can really help you get the most from your heating system and avoid wasted energy.

- Use the timer to ensure your home is warm when you get up in the morning.
- If you only have a single room thermostat for the whole house, for every degree you increase the temperature, it will increase the heating bill by about 10%.
- Radiators can be controlled individually so you only pay to heat the rooms you are using.
- Check if your boiler has an 'eco' setting for the flow temperature of hot water and heating. If your hot water runs excessively hot and needs mixing with cold water, you could be wasting energy.
- If you have an immersion heater with a thermostat, it should be set to 60 degrees Celsius.



## Maintaining your heating system

Your central heating system should be kept in good working order. This will ensure it keeps you warm, operates safely and heats your home efficiently so you don't waste money. It is recommended that you have your central heating serviced annually. If you live in rented accommodation, your landlord must make sure heating appliances are serviced by law. Always use a fully qualified heating engineer or accredited electrician.

**These organisations can help you find someone qualified locally:**

### Gas appliances

Gas Safe ☎ 0800 408 5500 ➔ [www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk)

### Oil appliances

OFTEC ☎ 01473 626 298 ➔ [www.oftec.org](http://www.oftec.org)

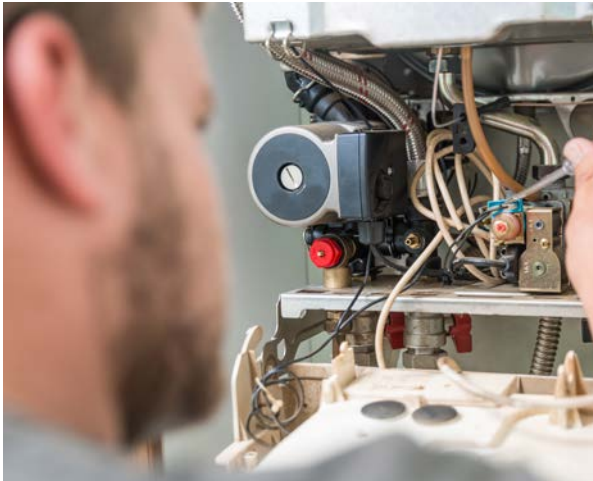
### Solid fuel appliances

HETAS ☎ 01684 278 170 ➔ [www.hetas.co.uk](http://www.hetas.co.uk)

### Electrical appliances

NICEIC ☎ 0333 015 6625 ➔ [www.niceic.com](http://www.niceic.com)

➔ [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk)



## Did you know?

**In a standard three bedroom, semi-detached house, an A-grade energy efficient boiler will cost £380 a year less to run, than an older G-grade boiler according to the Energy Saving Trust.**

## Upgrading your boiler

Older boilers (such as those over 20 years old or that have a permanent pilot light) are often less efficient than more modern 'condensing' boilers which recover more useful heat. This means they use more gas to maintain the same temperature and are more costly to run. As boilers get older, they can also be more difficult to maintain and replacement parts may be harder to find.

If you want to upgrade your boiler, make sure you use a registered engineer. Find one using the contact details on the previous page.

Central government is phasing out support for replacement fossil fueled heating and recently launched the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) supporting residents to access grants toward the cost of heat-pumps and biomass boilers as renewable alternatives.

➔ [www.gov.uk/apply-boiler-upgrade-scheme](https://www.gov.uk/apply-boiler-upgrade-scheme)

## Avoid freezing pipes

In extremely cold weather pipes can freeze. This can affect your central heating system, cause leaks and even stop it working.

Modern boilers have a condensate pipe (often a white plastic pipe) which drains water from your boiler. This can freeze at the point where it meets the drain outside.

Large or insulated pipes are less likely to freeze in cold weather. It also helps to ensure your drains do not become blocked with snow or ice.

If your pipes do freeze, pour warm (not hot) water over the pipes and allow time for the ice to melt before attempting to reset your boiler. Ask your gas engineer about avoiding this problem when having your appliances serviced.



# Money matters

## Maximise your income

A benefit entitlement check will help you find out if you're getting all the benefits you should. Some benefits may entitle you to discounts on your energy bills or help with home energy efficiency improvements.

Certain benefits relate to your health or care needs and will not look at your income or savings, so it is always worth checking to ensure you don't miss out.

The GOV.UK portal provides approved calculators to check your benefit entitlement online:

➔ [www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators](https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators)

Citizens Advice offer general consumer and money management advice and have local offices across Leicestershire which offer face to face appointments.

☎ **0808 2787 854** ➔ [www.citizensadviceleicestershire.org](https://www.citizensadviceleicestershire.org)

Age UK Leicestershire & Rutland provides a free Benefits Advice Service for the over 50's.

☎ **0116 299 2266** ➔ [www.ageuk.org.uk/leics](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/leics)

Clockwise Credit Union is local responsible lender that can support with money management accounts, responsible loans and more.

1 St Nicholas Place, Leicester, LE1 5LB

☎ **03301 755 792** ➔ [www.clockwise.coop](https://www.clockwise.coop)



## Price cap and energy price guarantee

In recent times energy prices have spiked because of global factors such as the conflict in Ukraine. The Energy Price Guarantee was introduced in October 2022 to set a cap on the unit rates charged for gas and electricity resulting in the average household usage energy bill reaching £2,500 a year. This prevented households paying even higher bills since the Government have effectively subsidised the maximum amount energy suppliers could charge under the price cap set by regulator Ofgem.

As energy prices have fallen during 2023 so has the price cap set by Ofgem with it now reaching a level below the Energy Price Guarantee. As the lower of the two the Ofgem price cap now dictates the prices households can be charged.

The price cap is now reviewed every 3 months and whilst it is difficult to predict with certainty due to global factors in the long-term, the latest price cap applicable from October to December 2023 will see a further reduction to £1,834 per year. This is based on Ofgem's new typical household usage figures which reflect that the average household now uses less energy. Actual bills will vary based on usage and payment method

## Gas and electricity meters

It is important to provide your supplier with meter readings to keep your energy bills accurate.

If you don't, your energy supplier will have to estimate your energy usage. Over long periods of time this can lead to jumps in your energy bills, if you have used more energy than predicted. Following significant energy price rises and volatility in the market it is important to review if your payments are covering your usage. It may be wise to discuss adjusting your payments sooner than waiting for your supplier to review as this typically only happens every six months.

Smart meters are free to install and can help you keep track of your spending. They also make sure you are paying for the energy you use so you won't rack up costly back payments, or overpay.



If you don't have a smart meter already, you can contact your energy supplier to ask whether they can upgrade you.

National Grid, the Electricity System Operator, is working with energy suppliers to introduce the **Demand Flexibility Service**. This will allow residents who have smart meters the option to receive financial compensation by opting to reduce energy usage during identified hours of peak usage.

### Find out more:

➔ [www.smartenergygb.org](http://www.smartenergygb.org) ➔ [www.nationalgrideso.com](http://www.nationalgrideso.com)

## Switch energy supplier

The domestic energy market has experienced turbulence with significant price rises of oil and gas leading to government intervention to cap and review energy prices more frequently. The ability to identify cheaper alternative offers has been limited with many suppliers charging the maximum rates within the energy price cap. The market could change at short notice and there is uncertainty due to external factors such as the conflict in Ukraine and further national policy announcements. It is advisable to periodically check with your energy supplier and comparison services to see if a better energy deal is available.

Switching energy supplier may save you money. Energy suppliers are allowed to offer discounts to those who:

- Pay by direct debit.
- Have both gas and electricity via the same provider (dual fuel).
- Use online account management (paperless billing).

Your existing supplier may be able to offer you exclusive tariff options not available to new customers so it is worth checking before choosing to switch to another supplier.

Switching supplier is easier than you think, and there are plenty of free, impartial services who can arrange the whole process for you. Ideally you need your most recent energy statement to hand. It is recommended that you ask for a full market comparison of offers including those you may need to contact directly to switch to as this may include cheaper deals.

Energy regulator Ofgem maintains a list of accredited comparison sites. Visit:

➔ [www.ofgem.gov.uk/switch-supplier-or-energy-tariff](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/switch-supplier-or-energy-tariff)

**Be aware of any exit fees applicable to your current tariff should you leave part way through a fixed term contract.**

Many suppliers are starting to offer 'time of use' tariffs for those with smart meters offering better rates at certain times of the day when it is cheaper to produce energy. These are typically designed to be tailored to specific circumstances such as electric vehicle charging or households with solar panels or battery storage. Speak to your energy supplier to understand if this is right for you.

### Collective switching

A number of local authorities run schemes that residents can sign-up to with the aim of getting a better deal on energy prices through the bargaining power of a larger group of households. To find out about the latest scheme check your local authority webpages or visit:

➔ [www.bigcommunityswitch.co.uk](https://www.bigcommunityswitch.co.uk)

It can be difficult to know the reputation of companies you are unfamiliar with. To help you decide on a supplier switching services, consumer group Which? and charity Citizens Advice compile customer feedback ratings for energy suppliers, so you can feel confident in your choice:

- ➔ [www.which.co.uk](http://www.which.co.uk) and search for 'energy survey results'
- ➔ [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply)

## Energy benefits

There are a number of energy benefits you may receive automatically if on certain means tested benefits:

- Warm Home Discount
- Winter Fuel Payment
- Cold Weather Payment

The Warm Home Discount scheme which provides a credit toward electricity bills is open to people on certain benefits or with a low-income. For more information, or to find out if you are eligible, contact your energy supplier or visit the below webpage.

**For more information about each of the above schemes visit:**

- ➔ [www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/low-income](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/low-income)

If you are a park home resident and responsible for paying energy charges you should check eligibility for Park Homes Warm Home Discount. Eligibility is not automatic, you must apply or pre-register.

- ➔ [www.parkhomeswhd.com](http://www.parkhomeswhd.com)

## Problems paying bills

There are a range of options energy suppliers can offer if you are struggling to pay or in debt:

- A full payment plan review
- Affordable debt repayment plans
- Payment breaks
- Payment reductions
- More time to pay
- Access to hardship funds to clear arrears

If you get into difficulty with your bills you should speak to your supplier and continue to pay what you can afford. Stopping payments to your supplier altogether can negatively impact your credit rating and ultimately lead to debt collection proceedings or disconnection from supply.

## Hardship funds

Check if your energy supplier has a hardship fund, if not anyone regardless of their energy supplier can apply to the British Gas Energy Trust (online only):

➔ [www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk](http://www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk)

You will typically need to demonstrate that you are making efforts to reduce your debt such as making regular top-ups or having a repayment plan agreed with your supplier. A hardship fund scheme will also require that debt advice has been sought prior to application. It is recommended to seek support to apply to energy trust funds via a trusted third party such as:

### Citizens Advice Leicestershire Debt Advice Line

☎ 0116 464 7239 ➔ [www.citizensadviceleicestershire.org](http://www.citizensadviceleicestershire.org)

☎ 0345 404 0506 - use this number for general consumer advice

### National DebtLine

National Debtline is a charity providing free and independent debt advice over the phone and online.

☎ 0808 808 4000 ➔ [www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)

### StepChange

StepChange are a national debt charity. They provide help with debt management plans and can even access support to freeze or write off multiple debts to help you keep on top of your finances.

☎ 0800 138 1111 ➔ [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)

### Zinthiya Trust

The Zinthiya Trust provides Leicester based support via it's Money, Debt, Benefits and Energy Service in partnership with British Gas Energy Trust.

Local charity based at 12 Bishop Street, Leicester, LE1 6AF.

☎ 0116 254 5168 ○ [zinthiya.trust@gmail.com](mailto:zinthiya.trust@gmail.com)

➔ [www.zinthyatrust.org](http://www.zinthyatrust.org)

## Cost of living payments

The £400 discount which all households in England, Wales and Scotland received during 2022-23 has finished. With energy prices decreasing this blanket support is being discontinued.

Instead, groups across the UK who may struggle to pay bills are receiving additional help through cost-of-living and other payments during 2023-2024:

- £900 to households on means-tested benefits - paid in three instalments between Spring 2023, and Spring 2024.
- £300 for pensioner households in the Winter.
- £150 to people on certain disability benefits, being paid in Autumn 2023.
- Vulnerable families can also claim help through the Household Support Fund (see page 26).
- From October 2023 some eligible households will receive the Warm Home Discount scheme via their energy supplier.

Due to the changing nature of energy policy, it is advisable to check online for the latest information at:

➔ <https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk>

## Heating Oil and LPG (Liquified Petroleum Gas)

The following organisations provide advice on a variety of topics including servicing, buying guides, fuel theft and security and also have supplier search tools. Save money by comparing quotations.

**UK and Ireland Fuel Distributors Association**

➔ [www.ukifda.org/consumers](http://www.ukifda.org/consumers)

**Liquid Gas UK** ➔ [www.liquidgasuk.org](http://www.liquidgasuk.org)

A number of suppliers offer monthly payment plans to avoid large upfront payments for fuel deliveries.



## Free or discounted mains gas connections

Cadent is the primary mains gas distribution network company in Leicestershire. Lower income households living in an area with mains gas can apply for free or discounted connections to support access to what is generally still one of the cheapest forms of energy for home heating. Cadent is partnered with YES Energy Solutions to assist applications.

☎ **03301 359 110**

➔ [www.cadentgas.com/services/household-customer/free-or-discounted-connection](http://www.cadentgas.com/services/household-customer/free-or-discounted-connection)

## Further support

### National Concessionary Fuel Scheme

If you are an ex-employee or a widow or widower of an ex-employee of the National Coal Board or British Coal Corporation you may be able to claim free solid fuel or cash allowance via the National Concessionary Fuel Scheme. Support may also be offered for one-off fuel grants to support with rising energy costs.

The Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) provides support to ex-miners and their families.

 **01623 625 767**  **mail@ciswo.org.uk**  **www.ciswo.org.uk**

### Royal British Legion – Cost of Living Grant

Supporting ex-service personnel with various items such as: kitchen appliances, clothes, and energy costs.

 **0808 802 8080**  **www.britishlegion.org.uk**

### Macmillan Grant

Grant support for those with a current cancer diagnosis on a low income toward energy bills and other costs.

 **0808 808 0000**  
 **www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/get-help**

### Severn Trent Water

Severn Trent Water operates several schemes to help people struggling to pay their water bills including:

- Big Difference scheme which can reduce annual bills for low income households and support those with excessive arrears.
- WaterSure which reduces bills for those with greater water needs due to health grounds or those on a low income with 3 or more children.

Severn Trent also operate a Priority Service Register to provide additional support and protections to vulnerable households.

 **03457 500 500**  **www.stwater.co.uk**

## Staying safe



### Carbon monoxide alarms

Carbon monoxide is a dangerous gas that you cannot see or smell. Breathing it in can quickly make you unwell and even cause death. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include nausea, dizziness, tiredness, headaches and loss of consciousness.

It is recommended that you install a carbon monoxide detector in every room with a gas, oil or solid fuel heating appliance. They can be purchased at most DIY stores. If you live in rented accommodation, your landlord must supply these where there is solid fuel heating.

If your carbon monoxide alarm sounds, switch off any appliances, open doors and windows, leave the property and call the gas emergency number

### Gas emergency

If you smell gas, or suspect a gas leak, ensure there is ventilation and leave the property immediately. Do not touch any electrical appliances including light switches.

Seek assistance straight away by calling the gas emergency number.

**Gas emergency number ☎ 0800 111 999**

### Locking cooker valves

If you care for someone suffering with dementia or autism and are concerned about gas safety, contact your local gas network operator Cadent to enquire about free locking cooker valves.



**☎ 0345 835 111 ➔ [www.cadentgas.com](http://www.cadentgas.com)**

### Housing complaints

The Housing Ombudsman Service can advise tenants and landlords on property complaints procedure and where to escalate depending on the type of accommodation. Private tenants can seek support via their local authority private sector housing team who can mediate and take enforcement action where necessary.

**☎ 0300 111 3000 ● [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)  
➔ [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)**



## Priority Services Register

A number of utilities have free Priority Services Registers offering protections and support to vulnerable residents on the grounds of health, isolation, age, communication needs and more. When it comes to your energy supply if you sign up via your energy supplier or network operator (Cadent for mains gas, National Grid, formerly Western Power Distribution for electricity), with consent they will notify each other so you only need do this once. You will need to apply separately for other utilities such as Water or Telephone.

Registration can offer a range of benefits:

- Protections from disconnection if struggling with arrears or reliant on medical equipment or mobility adaptations such as hoists or stair lifts that utilise mains electricity, or where medication such as insulin must be kept refrigerated.
- Courtesy calls to check on wellbeing in periods of extended outages.
- Advance notice of planned disruption to supply.
- Free annual gas safety checks are offered by some energy suppliers.
- Password schemes at the door to protect against rogue traders.
- Nominated contacts to speak to on someone's behalf.
- Support through trusted charities such as British Red Cross in the event of adverse weather and power disruptions.

**Join the free priority service register by telephoning National Grid on 105 or complete an online form at:**

**☎ 0800 389 8000 ➔ [www.thePSR.co.uk](http://www.thePSR.co.uk)**

## Heating crisis

If you experience a heating crisis and need help to heat your home safely, you can contact our Warm Homes team who can identify any support available and refer you to access a temporary heater locally if needed. If you are a social housing tenant you should speak to your housing provider in the first instance.

**Warm Homes ☎ 0116 305 2524**  
**Mon-Thurs 8:30am-5pm, Fri 8:30am-4:30pm**

However, if you have an urgent issue, such as a burst pipe, you should contact the relevant register for your appliance as stated on page 7 to find a heating engineer. Your home insurer may be able to arrange this if you need to claim for any damage repairs or emergency assistance depending on your cover.

## Damp, mould and condensation

Damp and mould in the home have been linked to a range of health issues, so it is important to try to avoid it wherever possible.

Condensation is the most common cause of damp problems. There are things you can do to reduce condensation in your home:

- **Keep the temperature inside your home above 15°C**

Under-heating or not insulating your home leads to cold surfaces where condensation settles.

- **Remove excess moisture from your home**

You can do this by making sure there is adequate ventilation so that air can circulate freely. Opening window vents, wiping wet windows and using extractor fans in bathrooms and kitchens and dehumidifying tablets in other rooms can all help to remove moisture.

- **Avoid excess moisture**

Do this by keeping lids on pans, closing internal doors when cooking or showering and only boiling as much water as you need.

If possible, try not to dry your washing in the house. If you do, use an airer instead of drying your clothes on a radiator. Avoid pushing furniture directly up against walls to allow airflow and avoid direct contact with cold surfaces.

If you start to notice mould spores growing consider using a purpose made mould spray or a mild watered down bleach solution to clean the surface which are effective at killing the spores. This may not remove tough stains. These products should be used with caution in a ventilated space and always check the instructions for use and the type of surfaces they are intended for as bleach based products can damage or stain certain materials. Ensuring walls are clean of dirt or dust that may build up over time can also help prevent mould growth.

If damp is caused by a problem with the building you live in, for example, rising damp, or a suspected leak, get advice from a professional contractor registered with the Property Care Association:

 **01480 400 000**  **[www.property-care.org](http://www.property-care.org)**

The Centre for Sustainable Energy has further information and advice on home damp and mould issues:

 **[www.cse.org.uk/advice-leaflets](http://www.cse.org.uk/advice-leaflets)**

## Be 'Energy Savvy'

### Practical tips and advice to maintain affordable warmth

Energy prices have spiked in recent years. The Warm Homes team has assembled practical top tips to support households to maintain affordable warmth.

### Paying for energy

Budget for increasing energy prices to avoid shock jumps in bills during the Winter. Energy suppliers are actively encouraging households to adjust their direct debits or other regular payments now rather than wait for the supplier to make adjustments.

Energy suppliers can offer discounts to those who pay by direct debit, receive both gas and electricity via the same company (dual fuel) and manage their account online (paperless billing).

Prepayment customers may consider building up a credit through small increases in regular payments made during the summer months to reduce the need for significantly larger top ups during colder months when energy usage is considerably higher.



## Economy 7

Economy 7, where your electricity bill is charged at different rates with a period of cheaper rates overnight, was primarily designed for all-electric households such as those using night storage heaters and an immersion heater for hot water which charge up overnight. You typically need to use more than half of your electricity at night for Economy 7 to work out cheaper, this is because the rate you pay during the day is higher than if you were on a single rate anytime of the day.

If you have gas central heating and make use of Economy 7 charging you are probably paying more than you need to. Setting the washing machine or dishwasher to come on overnight isn't enough for Economy 7 to save you money. Most suppliers can charge a single rate with an Economy 7 meter without having to change the meter.

If you have solar panels or battery storage it may be worth speaking to your supplier to understand if Economy 7 would work out cheaper.

## Zero cost quick wins that could boost household finances











- Benefit entitlement checks – A list of free tools and support services is available here ➔ [www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators](https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators)
- Many banks offer financial incentives typically between £100-£200 to change your main current account.
- Shop around to get a better deal on renewals of insurance and other utilities such as telephone and broadband packages.
- If you are in receipt of income related benefits you could access discounted 'social tariffs' offered by some broadband companies.
- Severn Trent Water offer discounts to those on low income or requiring increased water consumption on medical grounds via their Big Difference scheme and Water Sure.
- Severn Trent Water offers free water saving devices as well as discounts on larger items such as water butts.
- Water meters – find out if one could cut your water bill. Severn Trent Water allow you to trial one for up to 2 years and revert back to unmetered billing if you find it doesn't save you money.

## Day-to-day top tips to reduce energy bills

- Cooking in a microwave is cheaper than an oven as it uses less power and takes less time to cook.
- Consider if a cold wash could be as effective to freshen your clothes versus washing at 30 degrees. This is often an 'eco' setting.
- If possible dry clothes outside or on a clothes horse in a ventilated room instead of using a tumble dryer.
- Avoid excessive use of supplementary electric heating. Try to use your main heating system and consider a heated seat cover, electric blanket, microwave wheat bag or hot water bottle as less expensive options to keep warm.
- Try batch cooking to make the most of the energy you're using and reheat in a microwave rather than on the hob or in the oven.
- Reducing your shower time by a small amount will add up over time.
- Immersion heaters should only be switched on at the times when you need hot water and switched off when no longer in use.
- Understanding your heating controls can help you use your system more efficiently. If you have electric storage heaters, ensure you know how to adjust them. The Centre for Sustainable Energy has an excellent easy-read guide on this. [www.cse.org.uk/resources](http://www.cse.org.uk/resources)
- Put draught excluders or draughtproofing strips around draughty doors and windows. Draughtproof keyholes and letterboxes.
- Unplug or switch off devices at the wall around the home, and only charge phones for as long as is necessary.
- Chose higher energy efficient rated appliances when shopping to replace.
- If you have a Combi boiler, its efficiency can be improved by adjusting down the central heating 'flow temperature' to 60 degrees.



# How much do electrical appliances cost to use?

Appliance (Ordered from most expensive to least cost to run)	Rating (watts)	Typical day usage	Typical usage cost (pence)
Tumble Drier (full load) 	1,500 - 2,500	One cycle	119 - 155
Immersion Heater (single rate use) 	3,000	1 - 2 hours	81 - 162
Supplementary Heating e.g. Fan Heater 	1,000 - 3,000	2 hours	53 - 162
Grill / Oven 	2,000 - 2,400	1 hour	54 - 65
Slow Cooker 	150 - 300	5 hours	20 - 41
Electric Shower 	7,000 - 10,500	7 minutes	22 - 33
Washing machine (full load) 	1,000 - 2,400	One cycle	13 - 27
Fridge-Freezer 	100 - 300	24 hours	11 - 21*
Iron 	1,000 - 3,000	20 minutes	9 - 27
Hob (per ring) 	1,000 - 2,000	20 minutes	9 - 18

\* Actual cost is adjusted since a refrigerator typically cycles and uses less energy when the desired temperature is reached. Therefore, the daily cost of running a refrigerator is not 24 times the hourly cost.

Appliance (Ordered from most expensive to least cost to run)		Rating (watts)	Typical day usage	Typical usage cost (pence)
<b>Kettle</b>		2,500 - 3,000	10 minutes	11 - 14
<b>Traditional Incandescent GLS Lightbulb</b>		40 - 100	6 hours	6 - 16
<b>Games Console</b>		100 - 200	2 hours	5 - 11
<b>Broadband Router</b>		5 - 15	24 hours	4 - 10
<b>LCD TV</b>		25 - 175	2 hours	4 - 10
<b>Vacuum Cleaner</b>		600 - 900	15 minutes	4 - 6
<b>Microwave</b>		700 - 1,400	10 minutes	3 - 6
<b>Extractor Fan</b>		5 - 10	1 hour	0.2 - 2.7
<b>Modern LED GLS Lightbulb</b>		6 - 10	6 hours	0.9 - 1.4
<b>Phone / Tablet (charging)</b>		2 - 15	1 hour	0.08 - 0.4

The above table uses data from Energy Saving Trust adapted to the regulator (Ofgem) energy price cap from October to December 2023 for direct debit electricity charges, rounded to the nearest whole penny for larger appliances. We have used an average rate of 27p per kWh as rates vary by region. These figures are estimates and actual usage will vary.

The power rating for electrical appliances is measured in watts (W) or kilowatts (kW). A kilowatt is one thousand watts.

If a 1 kW appliance runs for 1 hour, it will consume 1 kWh (kilowatt hour) of electricity. Units of electricity are measured in kWh and the price for a unit of electricity is shown in pence per kWh.

The amount it costs to run appliances depends on three things:

- The rating (watts)
- The price you are charged per unit of energy (your energy tariff)
- How long the appliance is running for

Appliance running cost (p/hr) = Power rating (W) x Electricity unit rate (p/kWh) ÷ 1000

Keeping it simple, let's say you have a 2,000W (2 kW) oven and you run it for 3 hours. It will use 6 kWh of electricity.

Using the above calculation, based on an electricity price of £0.27p/kWh, the total cost to run the oven for 3 hours would be up to £1.62.

$2,000 \times 27p \div 1000 = 54$  pence per hour.

Price to run for 3 hours =  $54p \times 3 = £1.62$

Consider how small adjustments to the way you use appliances in your home could support lower bills. This could be methods of cooking or reheating food, putting timers on appliances to switch off overnight, using low energy or 'eco' settings and swapping out older higher consumption items for low-cost alternatives such as replacing halogen spotlights with LED ones.

### Example: Cooking a Jacket Potato\* - Oven versus Microwave:

**Oven 2,000W = 54p (oven on for an hour)**

**Microwave: 700W = 3p (microwave on for 10 minutes)**

**It is therefore up to 51p cheaper to cook the jacket potato in the microwave.**

\* This is an estimated example; actual running costs will vary by appliance.

Based on typical usage for a home with mains gas central heating, the average combined gas and electricity bill under the regulator price cap between October and December 2023 is £1,834 annually.

If this sounds lower than you were expecting, it's because not only have prices decreased but regulator Ofgem has recently revised down typical usage figures for an average household to 11,500 kWh of gas over a year and, 2,700 kWh of electricity over a year.

Households that are all electric for heating and hot water typically have higher average energy bills due to the higher cost of electricity over gas. .



# Complaints

When things go wrong with your energy supply or bills you should always engage with your energy supplier to allow them opportunity to resolve.

If you're having a problem call or use webchat to contact your supplier straight away. You can get their contact details from their website or any letters they may have sent you.

Tell them what's happening, and what you want them to do about it. They might be able to sort it out then and there.

You should note down the:

- Date and time you get in touch
- Person you speak to
- Problem you talk about

If your supplier doesn't solve your problem while you're on the phone or webchat, send them an email or letter repeating what you said. This means you'll have a record of your conversation with your supplier.

When you write to your supplier include your account number and any case reference numbers you have. This makes it quicker and easier to sort out your problem.

Citizens Advice has a comprehensive guide on how to complain to your energy supplier and when to approach the energy Ombudsman if matters are not resolved:

➔ [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)  
 Search 'Contacting your energy supplier about a problem'

If you need to take your complaint further:

You can complain to the energy ombudsman after complaining to your supplier if you:

- Have a letter of deadlock and aren't happy with the decision.
- Didn't get a decision letter or letter of deadlock within 8 weeks.

The ombudsman is impartial - they'll look into both sides of the case and make a decision. If they think your complaint was dealt with unfairly, the ombudsman can make your supplier change their decision.

☎ **0330 440 1624** • [enquiry@energyombudsman.org](mailto:enquiry@energyombudsman.org)  
 ➔ [www.energyombudsman.org](http://www.energyombudsman.org)

## More top tips for keeping your home warm

Use heat reflective panels behind your radiators and bleed off trapped air.

Radiator keys and reflective panels can be purchased at most DIY stores.



### Ensure the heating is only switched on when required

This is more cost effective than leaving your heating on low all day when you are not at home.

### Swap to energy efficient lightbulbs

LED (light-emitting-diode) lightbulbs won't keep you warm, but they will reduce your electricity bills. Ask at your local DIY store, if you are not sure what type of bulb you need.

### Consult the manual

If your boiler won't start, check the manual for what could be easy trouble shooting solutions before paying for an engineer to visit. An example might be checking the pressure hasn't dropped over time due to lack of use, a sudden cold spell of weather or after bleeding radiators. Modern boilers typically have a pressure loop or key to manually top up the system. Your energy supplier or boiler manufacturer likely has an online guide on how to do this.

## Useful resources

To view our Warm Homes advice pages and for information on the latest offers sign up to the Warm Homes newsletter for occasional updates here:

- ➔ [www.leicestershire.gov.uk/home-energy-grants](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/home-energy-grants)
  - ➔ [www.firstcontactplus.org.uk/our-services/your-home/warm-homes](http://www.firstcontactplus.org.uk/our-services/your-home/warm-homes)
- Speak to our Warm Homes service on ☎ 0116 305 2524

First Contact Plus is an online tool which helps adults in Leicestershire find information about a range of services all in one place.

- ➔ [www.firstcontactplus.org.uk](http://www.firstcontactplus.org.uk)



Information about national and local cost of living support:

➔ [www.helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk](http://www.helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk)

Local support is available via the Household Support Fund to help energy and food costs:

➔ [www.leicestershire.gov.uk/cost-of-living](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/cost-of-living)

**Identify suitable home improvements.** A new government tool can identify measures suitable to improve the energy rating of your home.

➔ [www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency](http://www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency)

**Centre for Sustainable Energy.** An excellent array of guides including easy-read and multiple language formats, from understanding energy bills to how to set night storage heater controls:

➔ [www.cse.org.uk](http://www.cse.org.uk)

**Energy Saving Trust.** Promotes energy efficiency advice and administers funding to other organisations:

➔ [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

**Money Saving Expert.** A for-profit service with a wealth of information to support value for money across a vast range of household expenses. Part of Moneysupermarket Group. Other comparison services are available:

➔ [www.moneysavingexpert.com](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com)

Citizens Advice has a range of home energy consumer guides:

➔ [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy)

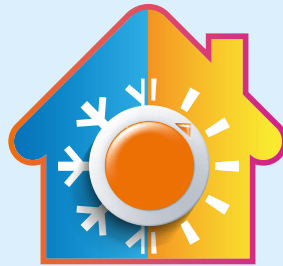
Leicestershire County Council is committed to addressing climate change through becoming a net zero council by 2030 and working with Leicestershire people and organisations to become a net zero county by 2045 or before.



For more information and ideas on how you can make changes to support net zero goals visit:

➔ [www.leicestershire.gov.uk/netzero](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/netzero)

# Warm homes



## Need more help?

The Warm Homes service provides free, impartial advice and support on how you can improve your home and health. This can include:

- Understanding your living conditions to help you save money on energy.
- Looking at your energy suppliers and tariffs to make sure you are getting the best deals.
- Making sure you are getting any grants and benefits you are entitled to.
- Identify measures to improve the energy efficiency of your home.



To speak to the Warm Homes team

Call: ☎ **0116 305 2524**

Visit: ➡ [www.leicestershire.gov.uk/home-energy-grants](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/home-energy-grants)

or ➡ [www.firstcontactplus.org.uk/our-services/your-home/warm-homes](http://www.firstcontactplus.org.uk/our-services/your-home/warm-homes)