



# Helping others to be safe, warm and well this winter

Kate Urwin

12<sup>th</sup> December 2023

## Fuel poverty

### Commonly used definition

- Spending 10% or more of household income on energy bills
- General indication of affordability of energy

### Facts and figures

- Estimated 6.3 million households are currently in fuel poverty (NEA)
- 40.3% of fuel poor homes include children
- 25% of households where the oldest person is 25 or under are in fuel poverty (more than any other age group)
- NHS spends an estimated £1.4 billion per year treating illnesses associated with living in cold or damp housing
- Nearly 5,000 people died from living in a cold home in 2022/23



## Areas of advice around being safe, warm and well



Managing energy bills



Awareness of schemes to help with bills



Energy efficiency



Priority Services Register



Carbon monoxide awareness



## How much are energy prices this winter?

Energy price cap – maximum price energy companies can charge based on average consumption

### Jan 2019 – Sept 2023

- Electric = 2,900kWh
- Gas = 12,000kWh

### Oct 2023 onwards

- Electric = 2,700kWh
- Gas = 11,500kWh

### 'Energy Price Guarantee'

= government subsidising bills

1<sup>st</sup> Oct 22 – 30<sup>th</sup> Jun 23 = **£2,500**

1<sup>st</sup> July – 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2023 = **£2,074**

Reverted to price cap rates (always pay whatever is lower)

### NOW

1<sup>st</sup> Oct – 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2023 = **£1,834** (7% drop)

### NEXT CHANGE

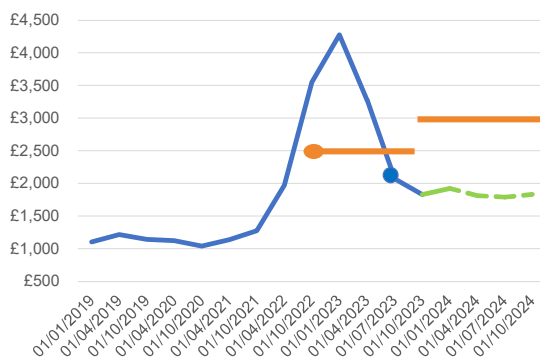
1<sup>st</sup> Jan – 31<sup>st</sup> Mar 2024 = **£1,928** (5% increase)

### PREDICTED

1<sup>st</sup> Apr – 30<sup>th</sup> June 23 = **£1,816** (6% drop)

*NB New (lower) average consumption figures used so annual costs are no longer comparable with pre-Oct*

Changes to price cap



# Standing charges

## Electricity

- 53.37p/day = £195 / year

## Gas

- 29.62p/day = £108/year



Consultation on standing charges is currently open

Encouraging households, businesses, charities to respond by Fri 19<sup>th</sup> January

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/launch-review-standing-charges-energy-bills>

# How to best manage energy bills?

1. **Be proactive in managing bills and give regular meter readings (monthly)**
2. At a minimum, prioritise giving meter readings around each price change - next on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan '24
3. If you have a smart meter, check the meter readings are being submitted and that the bills aren't estimated
4. Review direct debit payments: <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/lower-energy-direct-debits>
5. Keep an eye out for new fixed tariffs (worth considering if around 1% more than the price cap) <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/-are-there-any-cheap-fixed-energy-deals-currently-worth-it-/>
6. Be aware that switching supplier will not generate significant financial savings at the current time but may still be worth it for better customer service or ability to manage account <https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/energy-companies/article/best-and-worst-energy-companies/>
7. If paying a standing order or when the bill comes, switch to a fixed or variable direct debit (average £130 per year cheaper)
8. Switch from prepayment meter if not suitable - some suppliers will switch to credit meters free of charge (if pass credit check)
9. If on Economy 7 meter/tariff – check if this is still appropriate
10. If in debt, speak to energy supplier as early as possible

# What to do if you can't afford energy bills?

5.5 million people are behind on their energy bills – up by 2.1 million compared to March 2022

## Credit meter

- Speak to energy supplier as early as possible
- Have to help identify an affordable payment plan
- Ask to spread any arrears over as long a time as possible.
- If more than 12 months, may have to speak to a debt advice charity first (some repayment plans can then go up to 5 years)
- If can't afford it, may force a prepayment meter (but harder to do now with new code of practice for vulnerable customers)
- Think about applying for Breathing Space scheme with e.g. with Citizens Advice to get 60 day hold on debt collection activity

## Prepayment meters

- Speak to energy supplier re temporary credit
- Access emergency vouchers, e.g. Citizens Advice
- Review any debt repayments through meter

## Both:

- Make sure energy supplier is aware of vulnerability in the home (Priority Services Register)



# Are there any schemes to help with debt on energy bills?

Many of the energy suppliers have hardship grants that can help to clear household debts on energy accounts

	<p><b>British Gas Energy Trust</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help for British Gas customers with debt (£250-£1,500) AND</li> <li>• Customers of other suppliers (which don't have their own scheme), up to £1,500 of arrears</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://britishgasenergytrust.org.uk/">https://britishgasenergytrust.org.uk/</a></p>		<p><b>Helping Hand Fund</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credit customers</li> <li>• Have to agree to switch to a prepay meter</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://www.utilitagiving.org/helping-hand-fund">https://www.utilitagiving.org/helping-hand-fund</a></p>
	<p><b>Hardship Fund</b></p> <p><a href="https://support.sigmacoconnected.com/scottish-power-hardship-fund">https://support.sigmacoconnected.com/scottish-power-hardship-fund</a> (includes UC recipients)</p>		<p><b>Octo-Assist Fund</b></p> <p><a href="https://octopus.energy/blog/octo-assist/">https://octopus.energy/blog/octo-assist/</a></p>
	<p><b>Energy Funds</b></p> <p><a href="https://forms.lets-talk.online/Login">https://forms.lets-talk.online/Login</a></p>		<p><b>Customer Support Package</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.ovoenery.com/support-energy-payments">https://www.ovoenery.com/support-energy-payments</a></p>
	<p><b>Hardship Fund</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have to call 0333 777 3215</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://help.uw.co.uk/article/energy/Payment-help/uw-hardship-fund">https://help.uw.co.uk/article/energy/Payment-help/uw-hardship-fund</a></p>		<p><b>Helpfund</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.shellenergy.co.uk/blog/post/could-the-shell-energy-support-package-help-you">https://www.shellenergy.co.uk/blog/post/could-the-shell-energy-support-package-help-you</a></p>

# Government cost of living help 2023/24

## All households

2022 - £400 paid in instalments (£66/£67 per month). How it was paid depended on how you pay for energy.

2023 - There are no plans for this to be repeated winter 23/24

## Households off mains gas who heat with oil, LPG, coal or biomass - £200

2022/23 - £200 to be paid via electricity suppliers (or had to apply – applications closed on 31<sup>st</sup> May 23)

2023/24: There are no plans for this to be repeated over winter 2023/24

## Anyone who receives means-tested benefits

2022 - £650 split into 2 chunks, paid into bank accounts

2023/24 - The payment **will** be paid again and will increase to £900 split into 3 chunks: £301 (paid 25<sup>th</sup> April to 17<sup>th</sup> May '23), £300 (31<sup>st</sup> Oct to 19<sup>th</sup> Nov 23), £299 (Spring '24)

## Pensioners

• 2022 - £300 payment into bank accounts as a top-up to Winter Fuel Payment

• 2023 - The £300 top-up **will** be repeated winter 23/24, paid November / December

## Recipients of non-means tested disability benefits

2022 - £150 paid into bank accounts

2023 - This **has** been repeated in 2023, was paid between 20th June and 4th July 2023

Report missing Cost of Living payments (£301 or £150 Disability payment) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment>



# Household Support Fund

- Government financial support administered by local Councils
- Round 4 currently being delivered, primarily to be used for food, energy and water (or related essentials e.g. blankets, white goods)
- Local authorities have flexibility to develop own eligibility criteria for identifying vulnerable households
- Redcar and Cleveland BC info <https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/benefits-and-support/household-support-fund>
- Some payments will be made automatically but are opportunities to apply for discretionary payment if household has not received a set rate payment



## Other possible sources of financial help: Occupational benevolent & other charitable funds



**Turn2Us** <https://grants-search.turn2us.org.uk/> (search on postcode, occupation, health condition, religion)



## Other options



- Cost of Living Grants Programme for those who are serving, or have served, in the Armed Forces
- Everyday essentials eg energy, clothes, kitchen appliances
- <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-support/financial-and-employment-support/finance/grants/cost-of-living-grants>



- £400 grants for people of pension age and on a low income
- Digital connection, home repairs, financial support
- <https://www.fote.org.uk/our-charity-work/grants/>



- Family Action Welfare Grants
- Essential personal and household needs (not debt or utility bills)
- Grant areas: older people, mental health, domestic violence
- <https://www.family-action.org.uk/what-we-do/grants/welfare-grants>



- Essential Living Fund
- Household items and essential clothing (not bills, debt etc)
- <https://www.glasspool.org.uk/grants/essential-living-fund#faq-4>



- Help for families to meet additional support needs of a disabled child
- Frequent items: Washing machine, family breaks, furniture, bedding
- <https://www.familyfund.org.uk/grants-england>



## Maximise income – benefits check

- Estimated that £15 billion of benefits go unclaimed, including £2.2 billion amongst pensioners for things like Pension Credit and housing benefit
- Do own initial check through an online site such as Turn2Us: <https://benefits-calculator-2.turn2us.org.uk/>
- Seek advice from e.g. your local Citizens Advice or Age UK

turn  
2US

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### THE TURN2US BENEFITS CALCULATOR

Millions of people are missing out on thousands of pounds.  
Check what you are entitled to now.

**Check your benefit entitlement?**  
Use our free and confidential Benefits Calculator to find out what benefits you are entitled to claim for.

**Return to a calculation**  
Please enter your calculation reference and postcode used for the calculation to return to your results.

**The A-Z of Benefits**  
Find welfare benefits information that is relevant to you or use our A-Z of benefits guide to learn more.

## Reducing costs – water and broadband

### Water

- Support with debt
- Social tariffs that can cap bills at a lower level for low income households
- Consider a water meter if have more bedrooms than people in the home
- Yorkshire Water <https://www.yorkshirewater.com/bill-account/help-paying-your-bill/>
- Northumbrian Water <https://www.nwl.co.uk/bill-help>

### Broadband

- Discounted tariffs on broadband and line rental for people on UC (and some also Pension Credit, JSA, ESA or Income Support)
- Check broadband speed being offered
- <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/costs-and-billing/social-tariffs>



Reducing energy use and improving the energy efficiency of a home

## Smart meters



Smart meter

- Make sure bills are accurate
- Ideal for people who can't read their own meter
- Minimise the risk of shock bills/energy debt



In-house display

- Understand energy use
- Identify ways to reduce energy use
- Top up a prepayment meter without needing to go out
- Can request an accessible display if visually impaired



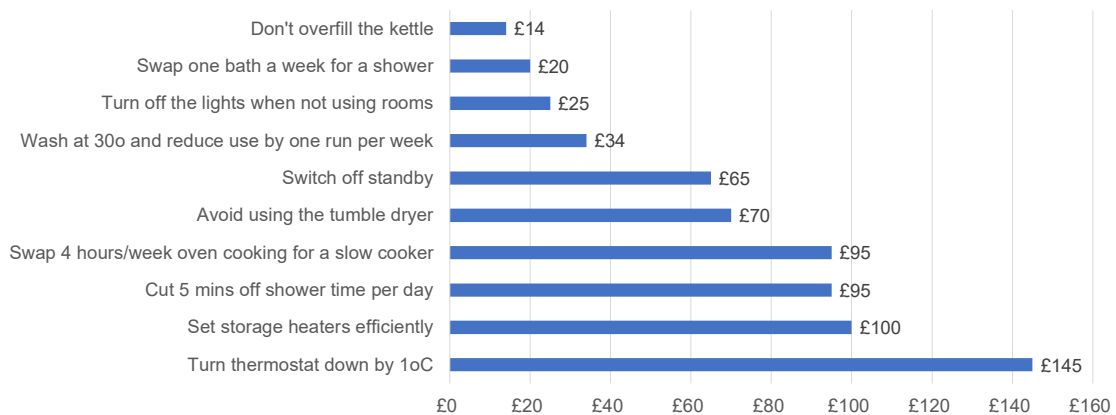
What appliances use the most energy in the home?

Appliance	Cost per hour	Cost per 10 mins	Appliance	Cost per hour	Cost per 10 mins
Electric shower (9000w)	£2.43	42p	Towel rail (450w)	12p	-
Immersion heater (3000w)	81p	-	Plasma TV (350w)	9p	2p
Kettle (3000w)	-	14p	Fridge/freezer (300w)	8p	-
Tumble dryer (2500w)	68p	12p	Heated airer (300w)	8p	-
Electric heater (2500w)	68p	12p	Slow cooker (200w)	5p	-
Oven (2100w)	57p	-	Freezer (150w)	4p	-
Washing machine (2100w)	57p	-	Electric blanket (150w)	4p	1p
Hairdryer (2000w)	-	9p	Fridge (150w)	4p	-
Oil-filled radiator (2000w)	54p	9p	Desktop computer (140w)	4p	1p
Grill (1500w)	41p	7p	LCD TV (120w)	3p	1p
Iron (1500w)	41p	7p	Games console (120w)	3p	1p
Air fryer (1300w)	35p	-	Laptop (50w)	1p	-
Dishwasher (1200w)	32p	5p	TV box (40w)	1p	-
Toaster (1000w)	-	5p	Extractor fan (20w)	0.5p	-
Microwave (1000w)	27p	5p	LED lightbulb (10w)	0.3p	-
Vacuum cleaner (900w)	24p	4p	Broadband router (10w)	0.3p	-
Dehumidifier (500w)	14p	-	Smart phone, charging (5w)	0.14p	-



What actions will save the most energy in the home?

Average annual savings



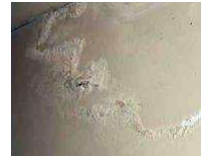
# How to deal with damp caused by condensation?

- Keep lids on saucepans
- Dry clothes outside
- Avoid bottled gas heaters

Excessive moisture production

Inadequate ventilation

- Use extractor fans
- Open bathroom window when showering
- Keep doors to bathroom & kitchen shut when cooking or washing
- Leave a gap between furniture & walls



- Low income households (under £31k) – HEET (Home Energy Efficiency Tees Valley)
- Also – Great British Insulation Scheme & Connected for Warmth (based on Council Tax band & EPC rating)

Lack of insulation

Inadequate heating

- Air unused rooms and/or keep radiator valves to 1 rather than turning radiators off completely
- Investigate heating grants if system inefficient or broken (speak to Council)



COMMUNITY ENERGY AMBASSADORS

## Checklist of energy saving tips



### Laundry

- Wash your clothes at a lower temperature. A 30°C wash will use 38% less energy than a 40°C wash
- Only run your washing machine when it is full and try to do one less wash per week
- Avoid using a tumble dryer and dry your clothes outside or on an airer – this could save £60 per year



### Kitchen

- Put lids on saucepans
- Use a slow cooker – this will use less energy than an oven, even though it is on for much longer
- Batch cook food so you are creating more than one meal in one go
- Don't fill the kettle – only putting the water in that you need could save £10 per year
- Wash up in a bowl rather than under a running tap
- If you have a dishwasher, make sure it is full before running it. Reducing the use by one run per week could save £14 per year



### Cooling

- Keep your freezer defrosted
- Freezers work more efficiently when full so if yours has unused spaces you could fill them with screwed up newspaper or bottles of water
- When buying a new fridge or freezer, get the most energy efficient one and buy one that is the right size for your household
- Make sure any leftover food has cooled down before putting it in the fridge or freezer



### Appliances and Lighting

- Don't leave anything on standby, this could save up to £55 per year
- Turn lights off in rooms you're not using to save £20 per year
- Replace older style lightbulbs with LED bulbs



### Bathroom

- Cut your shower time to 4 minutes – this could save a family £70 per year
- Save £12 per year by swapping one bath a week for a shower
- Order a free water saving kit from your water company



### Heating

- Turn your thermostat down by 1°C (it should be set between 18-21°C unless there are specific health needs in your home)
- Turn down the radiators in rooms you're not using
- Set the timer so your heating goes off 30 minutes before you leave the house and also half an hour before you go to bed
- Don't leave your hot water tank on all the time – set it to come on just for a couple of hours a day
- If you have electric storage heaters, try to use them rather than plug-in electric heaters



### Managing Bills

- Give meter readings every month or get a smart meter
- Get a water meter if you have more bedrooms than people in your home
- If you're in debt with your energy or water bills, check if your supplier has hardship grants you could apply to for help
- If you're on a low income, check whether you can get a social tariff for your water or broadband



[f](#) [@yorkshireenergydoctorcic](#)

# How to let an energy supplier know there is vulnerability in the home?

- State Pension age
- Disabled or chronically sick
- Mental health needs
- Hearing or visual impairment or additional communication needs
- In a vulnerable situation
- Households with children under 5

- **Signup to the Priority Services Register** - Extra help and support from energy suppliers and distribution network operators to vulnerable households
- **Support:**
  - Advance warning if power or gas supply will be disrupted
  - Alternative heating/cooking facilities
  - Priority reconnection if electricity or gas supply is interrupted
  - Accessible information
  - Meter readings / meter moves
  - Protection from force fitting of prepayment meters
  - Annual gas safety checks
  - Password security scheme for people needing to enter property

You can apply in 2 ways:

- 1) Via Northern Gas Networks/Northern Powergrid: <https://www.northerngasnetworks.co.uk/network-supply/priority-customers/> (enter code 006)
- 2) Call the energy supplier



## Application form

(Northern Gas Networks, will be shared automatically with Northern Powergrid/ Electricity Northwest)

### Priority Services Register Form

By signing up to the Priority Services Register, you will receive extra support to keep you warm and safe if you ever lose your gas or electricity supply at home. This support can be for you, or someone else in your household. NGN can apply for you. All you need to do is fill out and submit the form below.

On your behalf, we will then share your personal details with either Northern Powergrid, or Electricity Northwest, depending on where you live and who supplies your electricity. We do this because these two companies manage the Priority Services Register. They will then sign you up to the register. Both these companies have regulations around how they will use and store your personal details. For more information on how Northern Powergrid and Electricity Northwest will handle your personal details, please click [here](#).

There are other ways that you can apply to be on the Priority Services Register if you prefer not to fill out this form. You can apply directly with either of following:

- [Electricity North West](#)
- [Northern Powergrid](#)

#### Contact Details

First name(s)\*  
First Name(s)

Surname\*  
Surname

Contact telephone number\*  
e.g. 01234 567890

#### Address Details

Property number/name\*  
House no. or name

Street\*  
Street

Address line 2

City\*  
City

Postcode\*  
POSTCODE



#### Eligibility

Please select all relevant options if you qualify and would like to be registered for the Priority Services Register:

##### Medically Dependent

- Nebuliser and apnoea monitor
- Heart, lung and ventilator
- Dialysis, feeding pump & automated meds
- Oxygen concentrator
- Stair hoist, electric bed
- Medically dependant showering / bathing
- Careline / Telecare system
- Medicine refrigeration

##### Mental Health Care

- Chronic / serious illness
- Dementia / Cognitive impairment
- Mental health

##### Poor Mobility

- Physical impairment
- Unable to answer door
- Restricted hand movement

##### Alternative Communication

- Blind
- Partially sighted
- Unable to communicate in English
- Hearing Impairment (inc deaf)
- Speech impairment

##### Safety

- Oxygen use
- Poor sense of smell / taste
- Additional presence preferred
- Water dependant

##### Age Related

- Pensionable age
- Children under five
- Developmental condition

##### Temporary Support

- Temporary life changes
- Temporary post hospital recovery
- Temporary young adult household (<18) \*

#### Partner Code (optional)

If our partners have provided you with a 3-digit partner code, please enter it below.

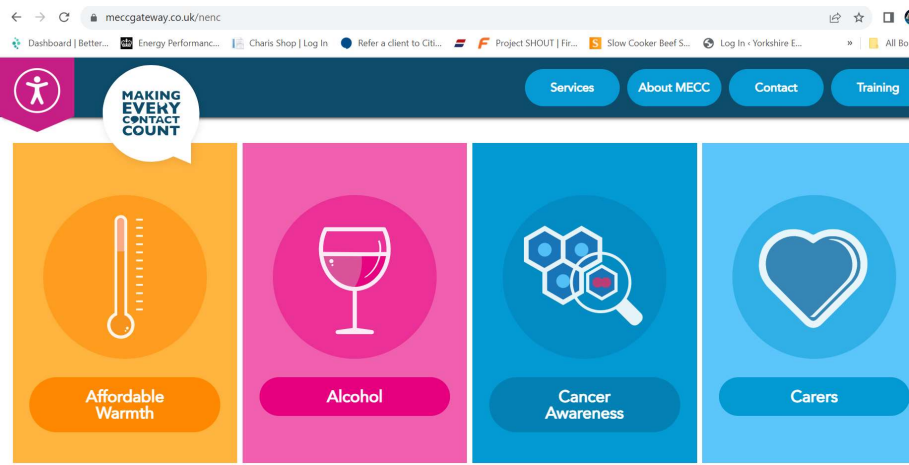
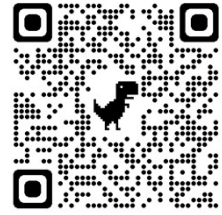
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#### Privacy Agreement

I agree for Northern Gas Networks to share my personal data, (including sensitive personal data) with my electricity supplier so that they can include me on their Priority Services Register. I agree that they can contact me, but only for the purposes of the Priority Services register, and to otherwise process my personal data for the purposes of operating this Priority Service Register.

Further information on the Northern Gas Networks GDPR and privacy policy can be found [here](#).

# 1-2-1 support - Making Every Contact Count



## LOCAL SUPPORT

- Middleborough Environment City
- Redcar & Cleveland BC Affordable Warmth Team
- Age UK Warm Homes project
- Fire Service Stay Safe and Warm
- Warm Spaces

## Would you like to learn more?



Free online training to equip you to support others

3 sessions, 1.5 hours per week

- Session 1 – Fuel poverty facts and figures, impact of cold homes on health, energy prices, understanding energy bills
- Session 2 – understanding your energy costs, energy saving advice, costs of appliances, making homes more energy efficient, carbon monoxide awareness
- Session 3 – schemes to help households with utility bills

<https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/energy-ambassadors-141409>

# Thanks!

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