

Energy Advice 2022

As Energy bills have increased over the past year, with another increase expected in October 2022, here is a basic guide on advice and things that are available for account holders with their energy suppliers. This includes information, and details of where you can get further support.

Understanding Energy Bills

The following information should be included on all energy bills:

- How much is owed for this period
- What the time period the bill covers is
- Whether this is estimated or accurate
- The tariff they are on
- Information about the tariff and cheaper options
- How much the charges are per kWh

If this information is not displayed clearly, or you are having trouble understanding your energy bills, this is something you should be able to raise with your energy supplier. It is usually their responsibility to explain bills, as well as information about your tariff and what you are being charged per unit of energy you use. If your supplier is reluctant to provide this information, or you are struggling to get through to them, you can also contact your [Local Citizens Advice](#) for further support.

Monitoring Usage

One way to keep on top of the energy you use, is to monitor your usage. One of the best ways to do this is by submitting regular monthly meter readings. It is usually the consumers responsibility to submit regular meter readings. Suppliers only have to take a meter reading once every 2 years (except British Gas, who only have to do it once every 3 years).

If regular meter readings are not being given, this can lead to large catch-up bills when a supplier does take a meter reading. If this happens, there is a chance you would be liable to pay this bill.

If you struggle to read your meter, then this is something you should speak to your supplier about. However, we do have a guide on how to read meters on our [website](#).

Smart Meters

Smart Meters are a new kind of gas and electricity meter gradually being introduced across Britain as part of a government scheme. They automatically send meter readings to a supplier, meaning you would no longer have to give them regular meter readings. This should also mean that you would no longer receive estimated bills from your supplier.

There is no cost to have a smart meter installed, and they would come with a separate In-Home Display unit that you can use to monitor your energy usage.

If you are interested in having a Smart Meter, you should speak to your supplier and see if they can book a date for installation. If you would like further information on them, you can visit our [website](#) or the Smart Energy GB [website](#).

Fuel Debt

If you have fallen into fuel debt with your supplier, then the advice may vary, depending on the circumstances surrounding it. Before agreeing to a repayment plan with a supplier, you can always seek advice from your [Local Citizens Advice](#), or our national [Consumer Service](#).

While you would be liable to pay for any energy used, a repayment plan is something that should always be negotiated between a consumer and a supplier. Sometimes a supplier may require you to prove how much you can afford to pay, by completing an income and expenditure form with an approved debt charity. This can include, but is not limited to the following:

- [StepChange](#)
- [National Debtline](#)
- [Local Citizens Advice](#)

Sometimes, if a payment plan has not been kept to then a supplier will look to take the money back by other means. This can include passing it to a Debt Collection Agency. If this happens, you should be able to speak to the charities listed above for further advice on what your next steps would be.

Something else suppliers look to do is replace a credit meter, where you pay monthly or quarterly bills, with a prepayment meter, which you would need to top up. This can lead to energy suppliers applying for a warrant to complete this.

However, if you have a Smart Meter, these can be changed remotely, but it is not something an energy supplier should do without informing you of this first.

If you have been given a court date by your supplier, or your meter is due to be changed to a prepayment meter, you should contact the [Citizens Advice Consumer Service](#). They have an Extra Help Unit, who may be able to help you and the supplier to see if something can be worked out.

The Citizens Advice Consumer Service can be contacted [online](#), or by calling 0808 223 11 33 and selecting option 1 for the energy team.

They can also help if you have a prepayment meter with £2 or less in the emergency. Again, they would be able to pass this onto their Extra Help Unit to see if they can negotiate with the supplier for more emergency credit, or see if there is anything else then can do.

Priority Services Register

The Priority Services register is a register people can sign up for with their supplier, to get extra support from them. Every supplier has to have a Priority Services Register. This support can include, but is not limited to:

- Nominee Scheme where they can Ask the supplier to send communications (such as account statements or bills) to someone you have nominated.
- The supplier coming to take meter readings at appropriate intervals
- Moving a prepayment meter for safer access.
- Accessible account information in large print, audio or braille
- Free Gas Safety checks for homeowners, if eligible.

The reasons that you could be eligible to go on this register:

- You are of a pensionable age
- You are Disabled, or chronically sick
- You are Pregnant
- You have a child aged 5 or under
- You have a long-term medical condition
- English is not your first language.
- You are in a vulnerable situation.

If you are not sure if you are eligible to be placed on the Priority Services Register with your energy supplier, you should contact them and ask. There is more information on our [website](#), as well as the Ofgem [page](#).

The Warm Home Discount

The Warm Home Discount is a payment of £150 that will be made by eligible suppliers between 1st October and 31st March. It used to be that people would have to apply for the Warm Home Discount, but now it is something people should receive automatically if they meet the relevant criteria. Not all suppliers offer the Warm Homer Discount, but there is a list of suppliers that do on the Government [website](#).

There are two categories of eligibility for the Warm Home Discount:

Core Group 1 is for People in receipt of the Guarantee Credit element of pension credit.

The eligibility for **Core Group 2** is for people on low income households that are more likely to have high energy costs. This will be for households in receipt of certain means tested benefits and income-capped Tax Credits that are deemed to be on a low income. These benefits can include:

- Income related ESA or JSA
- Income Support
- Universal Credit
- Child Tax Credits and Working Tax Credits
- Pension Credit Savings Credit (PCSC).

There is more information about the Warm Home Discount on the Ofgem [website](#), but consumers should also be able to speak to their suppliers about eligibility.

Making Homes Energy Efficient

One way to see how energy efficient your home is, is to check the properties Energy Performance Certificate. Not only would this give you a grade of how efficient the property is, it would also contain a list of improvements for the property.

You can also look into the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) Scheme to see if there are any grants available that can help with making a property more energy efficient. There is some information about this scheme on the Ofgem [website](#).

However, a better way to check the grants available for this work would be for people to speak to Simple Energy Advice. They have some information on their [website](#), their number is 0808 444 202.

Being More Energy Efficient

Here are some simple tips on how to be more energy efficient in the home:

- Keep home heated between 18-21°C (The Adequate Level of Warmth)
- Use LED / Energy Efficient Bulbs
- Dry clothes outside if possible, or on a clothes stand next to a radiator.
- Open windows when drying clothes
- Run washing machines at 30 °C or less
- Do not leave items on standby
- Turn off plug sockets when not in use
- Open curtains at sunrise and close them at dusk

There is some information on the Energy Savings Trust [website](#) about how much you could potentially save.

In the North East, there is also a group called the Green Doctor. They can give people more detailed advice about energy efficiency and ways to make a property more efficient at storing heat. In some cases, they may be able to come out to a property and have a look at what needs to be done. They can be contacted on their [website](#).