

## **Cost of Living Crisis - Energy**

### **What support is available to help me keep my house warm and the lights on?**

If you're falling behind with your energy bills, and finding yourself struggling to pay, the first thing to do is contact your supplier as soon as possible. Under rules from regulator Ofgem, your supplier has to help you – usually by negotiating a payment plan that you can afford.

The range of options they can help you with include:

- Emergency Credit
- Additional emergency credit if your household has vulnerabilities
- Access to hardship funds
- Check if you are eligible for Warm Homes Discount
- A full payment plan review
- Affordable debt repayment plans
- Payment breaks and payment reductions

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households>

Breaking News:

- Struggling British Gas customers on pre-payment meters to receive £250 – this will be automatically issued to those customers who are struggling and have either contacted British Gas for support or British Gas can have identified they are struggling through SMART meter data. If in doubt, call to let them know are struggling.

## **Household Support Fund**

The government has provided each Local Authority with millions of pounds to help those in need with payments towards the rising cost of food, energy and water bills. Each Local Authority will decide on its scheme eligibility. **Contact your local authority to see what support they can provide.**

## **Cost of Living Payments 2023-2024**

To support households with the costs of running a home, the government will provide grants between April 2023 to March 2024 to those on means-tested benefits and in receipt of certain disability benefits.

Eligible households will receive:

- **£301 – First Cost of Living Payment – during Spring 2023**

- **£150 – Disability Payment – during Summer 2023**
- **£300 – Second Cost of Living Payment – during Autumn 2023**
- **£300 – Pensioner Payment – during Winter 2023/4**
- **£299 – Third Cost of Living Payment – during Spring 2024**

**Eligible households will be on one of the following benefits:** Universal Credit, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Pension Credit.

**Important** - £Millions of benefit go unclaimed each year, encourage and support individuals to complete a benefit check, as they could be eligible and further benefit from Cost of Living payments.

**Use the below sites to check for missing entitlement:**

<https://www.entitledto.co.uk/>

<https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk/>

If in doubt, access advice from a free advice agency or contact whg's money advice team.

### **Money Advice**

If you are still struggling after speaking to your energy supplier, there are a number of organisations and charities that can provide one-on-one support and advice. We've focused on the main nationwide charities and organisations that offer support, but there could be more local support offered by regional charities and your local authority.

- **National Energy Action (NEA)**. The NEA is a national fuel poverty and energy efficiency charity that offers a free support service known as WASH (Warm and Safe Homes). It provides energy advice to households in England and Wales. You can contact it on 0800 304 7159, or fill in an [online form](#).
- **Citizens Advice**. If you're in England or Wales, you can speak to a trained adviser on 0808 223 1133 or fill in [online form](#) and they'll respond by email. If you're in Scotland, you'll need to speak to your local [Citizens Advice Bureau](#).
- **StepChange**. A debt charity that provides free debt advice to people in England, Scotland and Wales. You can contact it on 0800 138 1111 or get [online debt advice](#).

- [MoneyHelper](#). Sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions, it provides free, impartial and confidential money guidance to anyone in the UK. You can [contact it](#) on 0800 138 7777, or via webchat, email or WhatsApp.
- <https://www.nationaldebtline.org/> . A debt charity that gives free independent advice to people in England, Scotland and Wales. You can talk to via webchat or by calling 0808 808 4000.

### **Other ways to manage money during cost of living**

Do a Money Makeover – it could help offset the energy hikes

Check your bills NOW as you could save £100s on broadband, mobiles, fuel, food and more by systematically working through your finances to ensure you've the best deal on everything.

This could really help mitigate the pain of the energy price hikes, with many people saving £1,000s over the year. We've full help in the [Money makeover](#) guide.

### **Review your daily spend to see where you can make savings.**

Use whg's Budgeting booklet to see where you are spending money, then review where you can make savings. Prioritise spending important to you like your rent and bills and reduce your non-essential expenditure where possible.

### **whg support**

whg has a Hardship Fund, which whg customers can apply to request financial support at a time of crisis. The eligibility criteria for the scheme is detailed in the 'terms of reference' provided. The hardship fund is means-tested and can be accessed for support with:

- Pre-payment meter top-ups, where there is a risk of self-disconnection
- Food vouchers, that are redeemable at major supermarkets
- Wider essentials to support households during winter i.e. clothing to keep warm i.e. electric blankets, coats, winter duvets
- Essential furniture and white goods i.e. beds and bedding, cooking appliances, fridge freezers and washing machines.

To access support, please contact any whg colleague, call us on 0300 555 6666 or via our webpage. We will assess your need and support you if we can.

For further details please review whg Hardship Fund – Terms of reference

## What else can I do?

It can be difficult to manage households costs that continue to rise, particularly if you are on a fixed income.

Here are some other ways you can try to improve your finances:

- Prepare a budget to see where you may reduce/stop non-essential expenditure. A budget is a weekly or monthly snapshot of your regular income and expenditure
- Check your benefit entitlement – every year **millions of pounds** go unclaimed. You can check by using an online benefit checker like <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/> or by contacting whg's Money Advice Team or your Local Citizen Advice <https://citizensadvicesandwell-walsall.org/>
- Check you have received all Cost of Living Payments you are eligible for
- Get help to deal with any debts you may have, as this could free up money you need for household expenses. whg Money Advice, Citizen Advice.
- Invest in energy/water saving devices, check with your supplier for details
- **Follow energy saving advice and reduce your energy costs. Create an energy reducing plan and see how much you can save.**
- Contact whg, if you have been unable to access support elsewhere

## Top tips for managing your energy usage

### Stop those draughts

Walk round your home spotting window and door draughts. You can even make your own [sausage dog draught excluder](#). Decent draughtproofing can cut 2.5% off energy bills, so about £60 a year on average for a typical home. This applies to chimneys too, where you can get a 3.5%-ish further reduction. Again, this is subject to an initial outlay, but you will make it back over time.

Some also say that putting clingfilm on your windows can help trap the heat in to stop it escaping. And the Energy Saving Trust told us [putting clingfilm on windows actually works](#). It says adding a second layer, as long as it's transparent and airtight, will make a difference. But some may just want to keep their clingfilm for their sandwiches.

**If you rent your home, speak to your landlord about draughty door and windows.**

## **Keeping Warm**

Heating and hot water needs are normally the main cost for households over winter. Everyone's bill will be slightly different, and each appliance uses different amounts of power. That means it's can be difficult to know exactly what's costing you the most.

Below are details of the main types of heating found in homes, or additional sources of heating that households can sometimes use.

### **Electrical heater/radiator**

**1kw fan heater/electrical radiator = £0.34p per hour - £3.40 per 10hr use - £103.41 per month.**

**2kw fan heater/electrical radiator = £0.68p per hour - £6.80 per 10hr use - £206.83 per month**

### **Storage Heaters**

Make sure you are using the lower electricity tariff with Economy 7/10, overnight to store the heat in your storage heater. Reducing the pre-set temperature on storage heaters, from 21 degrees to 19 degrees could save a further 21% on your heating bill.

These forms of heating are the most expensive to use to heat your whole home, due to the high power rating (KW). If you do not have an alternative central heating source, then reduce the output temperature, whilst layering up and use a localised heat source to keep warm e.g. electric blanket, hot water bottle, fan heater/radiator.

**A 24KW gas central heating system on average costs around £2.40 per hour, or £24.00 per 10 hour use, £730 per month (Ofgem).**

**There are steps you can take to reduce your gas central heating costs:**

- Lower the flow temperature set using the controls on your boiler to 55 degrees Celsius. Do this for both your heating and hot water. This can save you around 8% a year. <https://moneysavingboilerchallenge.com/walkthrough/>
- Use the thermostatic radiator valves (TRV's) correctly in each room. Turn off the TRV's or set to 1, in each room you do not occupy and only turning them up an hour before you are going to use that room. This could cut your heating bill by 40-50%.
- Use the timers for central heating to turn off 30 mins before you are ready to go to bed as heat will continue to rise into rooms above.
- Reduce your thermostat by a degree, whilst layering up to find a temperature setting that suits you. A single degree reduction can save you around 10% of your annual gas bill.
- Place kitchen foil or radiator foil behind radiators, to reflect heat back into the room.

- Move items of furniture that are blocking radiators
- Bleed your radiators to remove cold spots
- Avoid heat loss by closing curtains and fixing any draughts you have
- Wear insulated clothes where possible and invest in a winter duvet with a higher tog rating
- Place a hot water bottle in your bed 30 mins before you sleep. An average kettle will cost £0.10p to boil.
- Use an electric blanket for localised use, which only costs around 2 pence an hour for a 60w electric blanket. If used for 8hrs a day it would cost around £1.20 per week.

This is ideal for those that need localised heat and cannot afford to heat the whole home temporarily **(not advisable for long periods as not adequately heating your home during cold weather, will risk the growth of damp & mould)**

### **What to avoid**

For health and safety and risk of fire, do not use:

- **Paraffin or gas portable heaters.** Using gas heaters carries the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning and paraffin/kerosene are highly flammable liquids
- **Burning of wood or other combustible materials,** unless you have modern approved wood burning stove. Fires and wood burning release particulate pollution, which is linked to lung and heart disease.

### **Cooking**

Gas ovens are cheaper to run than electric ovens. The data shows that on average, a gas cooker amounts to just 16p an hour. An electric cooker will set you back 73p every hour you use it.

**Cheaper still are:**

- **Microwaves, using a 900w microwave to cook for 15minutes food costs around £0.07p**
- **Air Fryer, using a 1000w air fryer to cook for 20 minutes costs around £0.11p**
- **Slow cookers, uses around 120watts on a low setting per hour, for a 6 hour slow cooked meal it would cost around £0.25**

These are useful for smaller households and when cooking singular meals. You may still prefer to use an oven when cooking for a large family or cooking in bulk.

## **Tips to save money when cooking**

- Invest in smaller electrical appliances to cook your food and reduce the time you use your oven
- Batch cook where possible
- Use the right saucepan size with a lid, to avoid heat loss.
- Buy in bulk if you can afford to
- Look out for supermarkets deals and ignore the 'Best Before Date'
- Use a steamer rather than a pot. E.g. try boiling rice at the bottom with steamed vegetables or fish on top; this is a whole meal cooked on one hob ring.
- Defrost naturally by placing the frozen food in the fridge overnight or first thing in the morning. This reduces the cooking time and the need to use the microwave to defrost it.
- There are hundreds of recipes for Air fryers, microwaves and slow cookers, which can help you cook budget meals, which are healthy and nutritious.

## **Cheap family meals**

- <https://www.netmums.com/life/meals-under-5> - 35 family meals for under £5.00
- <https://groceries.asda.com/aisle/just-essentials/just-essentials/all-this-all-in-under-20/1215686354495-1215686354496-1215686355171?cmpid=ahc--ghs--asdacom--hp--card-1--just-essentials>
- <https://recipes.lidl.co.uk/collections/5-meals-for-20-collection-sept-2022/5-meals-for-20-collection-september-2022>
- <https://www.sainsburys.co.uk/gol-ui/recipes/scrapbooks/feed-your-family-for-a-fiver> - Variety of meal recipe's under £5.00
- <https://www.goodto.com/food/recipe-collections/cheap-family-meals-33813> - Cheap family meals: Budget recipes under £1 per head
- <https://www.rainbowtrust.org.uk/cost-of-living/create-family-meals-for-under-5-pounds>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CACk6CRRDIQ> – example of many Youtube videos giving step by step guides to cook example of budget family meals. Particular recommended for those who need help with cooking skills.
- <https://www.tiktok.com/@mealsbymitch?lang=en> UK tikTok sensation, huge selection of meals for every palate, with step by step video instructions.

## Washing and Bathing

Whether its washing your clothes, using a dishwasher, bathing or showering, there are savings you can make, particularly if you have a large household or on low income.

### Showering/bathing

A 7KW electric shower will cost around £1.00 each 25 minute shower

A 10KW electric shower will cost around £1.50p for 25 minute shower

If you have a household of 4 individuals, who shower daily, this will cost on average £28.00 a week (7KW).

What can you do?

- Try showering for 10 minutes or less, this could save you around £16.52 per week or more. Set a timer when you shower.
- If you have bath in your home, see if you can fit a shower mixer attachment to your taps. As gas costs less per KW, it would generate further savings when using this to shower instead of an electric shower, so long as you shower for around 10 minutes. Prices start from around £10.00.
- If you have a membership at a gym or a local leisure centre, then use their facilities
- If you do not have a shower or a shower mixer attachment on your bath, then avoid filling completely. Fill to a shallower level to generate savings

To save money, take shorter showers, fit a mixer shower attachment or use shallower baths.

### Washing clothes

Based on the 2022 energy costs and average UK washing machine energy usage we calculated above, your annual electricity costs would be £36.50 if you always wash at 30°C, meaning you would save £22.82 a year compared to the £59.32 you'd spend washing at 40°C. Some savings can be made by:

- Washing at a lower temperature, modern appliances and detergents do not generally require a 'hot wash', unless really soiled. Use an 'Eco' wash setting as uses considerably less energy and water or select a colder wash (30 degrees or lower).
- Wash clothes at night using Economy 7/10 if you have a dual tariff but check you're not causing a nuisance to neighbours.
- Avoid half loads or use the quick wash function, if you have a few clothes to wash
- Running an extra washing machine spin reduces drying time



Where ever possible avoid using a tumble dryer, this is a high energy use appliance. If you use a dryer 5 times a week, it could cost you around £60.00 per month. Try to air dry outside or use clothes airer internally, whilst your heating is on and the room is ventilated.

### How much do other appliances around the home costs?

To save energy, it can help to know just how much each appliance is costing. The below is a list of standard appliances that can be found in a home and the approximate costs per hour.

To save energy, it can help to know just how much each appliance is costing. We've crunched some numbers for you, using standard appliances and rates under the energy price guarantee for electricity (34p per kilowatt hour, or kWh). These are ballpark figures as different models use different amounts of power, but it should give you a rough idea.

Appliance	kWh (1)	Cost per hour (2)
Tumble dryer (3,000 watts)	3	£1.02
Oven (2,000W)	2	68p
Kettle (1,800W)	1.8	61p
Electric hob (1,700W)	1.7	58p
Vacuum cleaner (1,400W)	1.4	48p
Dishwasher (1,200W)	1.2	41p

Microwave (1,200W)	1.2	41p
Toaster (1,200W)	1.2	41p
Iron (1,100W)	1.1	37p
Air fryer (1,000W)	1	34p
Washer (700W)	0.7	24p
Electric clothes airer (250W)	0.25	8.5p
Slow cooker (225W)	0.225	8p
PlayStation 5 (201W)	0.201	7p
Electric blanket (100W)	0.1	3.4p
Sky Q box (45W)	0.045	1.5p
TV (30W)	0.03	1.02p

Fridge (28W)	0.028	0.95p
BT Hub (12W)	0.012	0.41p
Light bulb (10W)	0.01	0.34p
Sky Q box (standby) (9W)	0.009	0.31p
Microwave (standby) (7W)	0.007	0.24p
Phone charger (5W)	0.005	0.17p
PlayStation 5 (standby) (0.36W)	0.00036	0.01p

(1) kWh (kilowatt hours) are the units used to measure how much power is used by an appliance. It works out as the watt power of an appliance divided by 1,000 (when used for one hour). (2) Prices based on 1 October 2022 price guarantee rate of 34p/kWh.

### **How much does my appliance cost to run?**

To calculate what your appliance costs to run, simply follow the following steps:

1. Identify the power rating of the appliance e.g. if the appliance states its power rating is 1000w, then this is 1KW(Kilowatt)
2. Times this by how long you will use it for e.g. 1KW appliance run for 1 hour = 1KWH
3. Times this by the electricity rate of 52.00 pence per kWh e.g. 1KWH x £0.52 = £0.52p. If run for 3 hours it will be 3KWH x £0.52 = £1.56 (October Price Cap 2022)

4. Do this for all or the main appliances you use to obtain your average electric usage and costs per week, to see which appliances cost you the most.
5. You can look to see how these can be reduced.
6. Generally, the lower the wattage of the appliance the less it costs to use. However, if used for prolonged periods it will add up e.g. Games console used for 1 hour will cost around £0.21p, but if used for 8 hours it will cost £1.68.

There are many online tools that can calculate an average appliance cost for you.

<https://www.sust-it.net/energy-calculator.php?tariff=73> – can help you calculate the energy cost for each appliance in your home. This can help you become more energy efficient and reduce your energy costs.