

You can get lots of advice from:

- ▶ Your Local Authority, Housing Association or Council
- ▶ www.uswitch.com
- ▶ www.moneysupermarket.com
- ▶ www.conserve-energy-future.com
- ▶ National Energy Action (NEA)
0191 261 5611
- ▶ Energy Savings Trust (EST)
0300 123 1234
- ▶ www.citizensadvice.org.uk
0344 111 444
- ▶ The National Gas Emergency Hotline can be contacted on **0800 111 999**.

Anyone with a solid fuel, oil or wood burning appliance should use the following numbers:

- ▶ HETAS (solid fuel and biomass)
0845 601 4406
- ▶ OFTEC (oil) **0845 658 5080**
- ▶ Association of Professional and Independent Chimney Sweeps (APICS)
0845 604 4327

For advice on chimneys contact:

- ▶ NACs (National Association of Chimney Sweeps) **01785 811732**
- ▶ Age UK helpline on **0800 055 6112**

MEARS®

Partners for purpose

Keep well, keep warm



An introduction to a healthy home

We've put together this simple guide to give hints and tips to help you *keep warm, keep well* and *keep you safe in your home* whilst being mindful of keeping costs down during the winter months.



FAIR FOR ALL

Reducing prejudice, improving understanding of differences, and supporting social inclusion



CHAMPIONING LOCAL

Improving the well-being of people and the communities we serve



CREATING CHANCES

Providing career, skills and employment opportunities



HEALTHY PLANET

Making a positive contribution to our planet

At the heart of Mears lies a strong sense of responsibility towards improving people's lives. We are committed to achieving this by ensuring that everyone we work with creates greater value and wider benefits from an integrated Social Value approach.

'Fuel poverty' explained

Fuel poverty is an increasingly serious situation where a family or household on a low income live in a home that can't be kept warm at a reasonable cost.

A household is said to be in fuel poverty if:

They have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level) and were they to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

The key factors that can contribute to fuel poverty are:

- ▶ The cost of energy
- ▶ The energy efficiency of the property (and therefore, the energy required to heat and power the home)
- ▶ Household income



Ideas to save money and energy

For most households, one of the most expensive necessities is energy. However there are many ways you can do to save heat and fuel, which will not only save you money but also make your home cosier and sustainable to run.

Get financial support

There are grants, benefits and sources of advice available to make your home more energy efficient, improve your heating or help with bills. Supplier websites and Comparison sites can show best tariffs and how to switch. [Citizens Advice Service](#) can offer further information at 0344 111 444

According to OFGEM 60% of energy customers don't recall switching energy providers. If you've been with your provider a while chances are you are on a higher rate. If you are paying anything like £1,000 then getting a quick quote is recommended.

Pay with the right method

Data suggests using a direct debit rather than prepayment or standard credit could save you £70 on gas and £50 of electric. These estimates are based on an 'average house' so if you use less energy the saving will be smaller, more energy and it will be greater.

Traditionally direct debit has always been the cheapest way to go, but in recent times some of the best savings can be made by managing everything online. Current OFGEM rules limit suppliers to cash bonuses for direct debit and online payment. So ideally you want to be using one of them.

Contact your water and power supplier as soon as possible if you are experiencing financial difficulty.

Ask if you are eligible to be on the *Priority Services Register*.



Heating

- ▶ Heat your home to at least 18°C / 65°F. You may prefer your main living room to be slightly warmer.
- ▶ Keep your bedroom window closed on a winter's night. Breathing in cold air can increase the risk of chest infections.
- ▶ Don't put heaters under windows or cover them with curtains.
- ▶ Avoid opening doors and windows to cool a room if it's too hot. Turn the heating down instead.
- ▶ You can save even more money by heating your home for an hour less each day. Take care not to turn the heating down too much: do not risk the health of sick, young or elderly people.
- ▶ Fit reflective foil behind your radiators (with the shiny side facing the radiator). This helps keep the heat indoors.
- ▶ Put on a jumper

Water heater

- ▶ Don't set the thermostat too high on your water heater. 60°C / 140°F is usually enough.
- ▶ Use a shower if you have one and you'll save time, money and water. Power showers may use more water than other types of shower.

Water

- ▶ Dripping tap? Make sure it's repaired quickly. If it's not, in just one week you could have lost enough water to fill a paddling pool.

Dishwashers

- ▶ Use the *low temperature* or *economy* setting unless you have very dirty dishes.
- ▶ If you can, wait until you have a full load before using your dishwasher.

Curtains

- ▶ Draw curtains at dusk to keep heat in.
- ▶ Open curtains in the daytime. Draping curtains over heaters or radiators will funnel heat straight out of the windows.

Computers

- ▶ Screen savers only protect the life of the monitor. Unless the screen saver switches off the monitor, it won't save energy. Switch it off when not in use.

Cooking

- ▶ Use a toaster rather than the grill to make toast.
- ▶ Use the right size pan and hob ring for the food you are cooking.
- ▶ Keep saucepan lids on and turn down the heat.
- ▶ Use a kettle to boil water for cooking.
- ▶ Don't overfill and only boil as much water as you need but remember to cover the element when you're using an electric kettle.

Insulation

- ▶ Fit an insulating jacket to your hot water tank and insulate your hot water pipes to reduce heat loss and save energy.
- ▶ Use insulation tape around the inside of the windows to stop any drafts that you might have.

Fridges and freezers

- ▶ Defrost fridges and freezers regularly to keep them running efficiently.
- ▶ Try to keep your fridge or freezer away from cookers or heaters.

Laundry

- ▶ Wait until you have a full load before using your washing machine.
- ▶ Alternatively, use the half load or economy / cooler setting if your machine has one.
- ▶ Where possible, dry clothes on a line or airer instead of using the tumble dryer.
- ▶ Plan your ironing so that clothes which need lower temperatures are ironed first.

Lights

- ▶ Turn all the lights off when you leave a room.
- ▶ Use LED or energy saving light bulbs. They can last up to ten times longer than ordinary bulbs, and using one can reduce your energy use if you're replacing a high wattage incandescent bulb, or one used for more than a few hours a day.

Bathing

- ▶ Have a shower instead of a bath
- ▶ Take shorter showers

Media appliances

- ▶ Don't leave the TV or other appliances on standby or on charge.

Keeping yourself and others well

Look after yourself

- ▶ Get your free flu jab if you are aged 65 or over, live in a residential or nursing home, are the main carer or an older or disabled person or have a chronic disease eligible for a flu vaccine. The NHS website provides information about flu. Visit www.nhs.uk/conditions/flu/ to learn more.
- ▶ Don't delay in getting treatment for minor winter ailments like colds or sore throats. Visit your local pharmacist for advice on treatment before it gets worse so you can recover quicker.
- ▶ Layer your clothing whether you are indoors or outside. Wrap a scarf around your mouth to protect your lungs from the cold air.
- ▶ Wear shoes with a good grip if you need to go outside.
- ▶ When you're indoors, try not to sit still for more than an hour or so. Get up, stretch your legs and make yourself a warm drink.

- ▶ Have your heating and cooking appliances checked by a *Gas Safe* registered engineer to make sure they are operating safely.

Check on others

Check on older neighbours or relatives to make sure they're safe and well.

- ▶ Make sure they're warm enough, especially at night, and have stocks of food and medicines so they don't need to go out during very cold weather.
- ▶ If you're worried about an older person, contact a family member, the local council or ring the Age UK helpline on 0800 055 6112.



Fire safety advice

Candles

- ▶ Leaning over a candle could set your hair or clothes on fire.
- ▶ Tealights can become extremely hot - they can melt through plastic surfaces such as the top of a television, hi fi or around the side of a bath.
- ▶ Avoid placing lit candles on the window sill - a draught could cause curtains or blinds to come into contact with the naked flame.
- ▶ Keep candles away from all furnishings.
- ▶ Never leave candles unattended and always position out of reach of children and pets.
- ▶ All candles should be extinguished when you leave the room or before going to bed.
- ▶ All candles should only ever be used with a suitable candle holder.
- ▶ Never use outdoor candles, indoors.

Matches and lighters

- ▶ Extinguish all matches properly.
- ▶ Keep all matches and lighters out of sight and reach of children.
- ▶ Refill lighters away from naked flames and in a well ventilated area.
- ▶ In the event of a power cut, don't use matches or lighters as alternative light or heat source, use a torch.

Gas/open fires and electric heaters

- ▶ Don't place heaters near curtains or furnishing.
- ▶ Never use them for drying clothes.
- ▶ Do not sit too close to fires or heaters.
- ▶ Always use a fire guard with open fires, preferably in a fixed position.
- ▶ Portable gas heaters should be checked for leaks.
- ▶ Ensure heaters cannot be knocked over.
- ▶ Choose electric heaters that have automatic safety switches.
- ▶ Check the power lead before plugging in the electric heater is intact and in good condition.
- ▶ Never use an extension lead with a portable heater.



Carbon monoxide gas (CO) poisoning

- ▶ Heating and cooking appliances fuelled by coal, smokeless fuels, wood, oil and gas can cause CO poisoning if they are poorly installed, incorrectly used or if they are not properly and regularly maintained.
- ▶ If you are in rented property it is your landlord's responsibility to have your boiler checked annually. This should be serviced by an engineer on the *Gas Safety Register*.
- ▶ Early symptoms of CO poisoning include tiredness, drowsiness, dizziness, chest pains, nausea and flu like symptoms. If you experience these symptoms go to fresh air immediately, turn off any heating and/or cooking appliances and seek medical attention.



Carbon monoxide can kill!

Do you have a carbon monoxide detector?

This should bear the Kitemark and European Standard number BS EN 0291. Smoke alarms

Cooking

Being careless in the kitchen can cost lives. On average 17 people a day are killed or injured in a kitchen fire.

Keep yourself and your family safe with the following advice;

- ▶ Keep electrical leads, tea towels, kitchen rolls, paper bags and cloths away from your cooker.
- ▶ Keep your oven, hob and grill clean. A build up of fat and grease can easily catch fire.
- ▶ Don't put anything metallic such as cutlery or tin cans inside the microwave.
- ▶ Never put a sponge or dishcloth in the microwave to sterilise it - it could catch fire.
- ▶ Take care if you are wearing loose clothing - these can easily catch fire.
- ▶ Contact your local fire brigade to see if it offers a *Home Fire Risk Check*; they can give you further advice on fire safety in your home.

Electric Blankets

- ▶ Electric blankets must have UK safety standard mark - this symbol means the blanket has been independently tested and meets the latest UK and European safety standards.

Before you use your blanket make sure that it (or its cord) does not show any of the following danger signs:

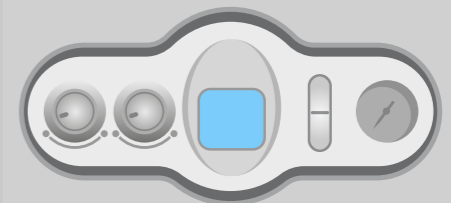
- ▶ Fraying fabric
- ▶ Scorch marks
- ▶ Exposed elements
- ▶ Creasing or folding
- ▶ Soiling
- ▶ Damp patches
- ▶ Tie tapes damaged or missing
- ▶ Worn flex

Smoke alarm

- ▶ Ensure you have a smoke alarm in good working order.

If you have a gas boiler regularly check that the pilot light is burning. If you find it has gone out, there should be instructions on the boiler for how to relight it. If you cannot relight it yourself, call a heating engineer out.

If you are a tenant of a council or housing association make contact with them immediately, likewise if you have a private landlord.



General safety advice

Around the home

- ▶ Keep floors clear of trailing flexes by coiling or taping cords and wires next to the wall so you cannot trip over them.
- ▶ Organise things so your appliances are close to a socket.
- ▶ Rearrange furniture so that you move around your home more easily.
- ▶ For appliances that use a lot of power, such as heaters, irons and kettles, never fit more than one plug in each socket.
- ▶ Mobile or cordless phones are useful to call for help if you fall or feel unsafe.
- ▶ When opening the door to a caller, do you lock, stop, chain and check?
- ▶ Overloaded sockets can be a fire hazard. If you don't have enough sockets, use a bar adaptor on a lead rather than a block adaptor.
- ▶ Prevent falls by checking carpets are not tucked-up or fraying.
- ▶ Create an easy-to-read list of emergency phone numbers to put by each phone listing details of your gas, electricity, water and telephone suppliers, doctor, local police, local council, carer, close friends and relatives and anyone else you think may be useful. This can save valuable time in an emergency. If you are suspicious or worried, dial 999 and ask for the police.
- ▶ Worn-out or badly fitting slippers can increase your risk of falling. Be careful when wearing any long, loose-fitting clothing (dressing gown or ankle-length dress, too) it is easy to catch your foot in them and fall.
- ▶ Make sure you lock any other external doors before going to the front door; stop to think about whether you are expecting anyone; put the chain on and look through the window or spyhole; check who the caller is and ask for ID. If in doubt, keep them out.

Kitchen

- ▶ Allow a clear space near the cooker to allow you to put hot pans down safely.
 - ▶ Rearrange your shelves and cupboards so the things you use most often can be reached easily.
 - ▶ Turn pan handles turned away from the front of the cooker to avoid pans getting knocked over.
 - ▶ Make sure tea-towels, kitchen roll, oven gloves and paper bags are kept away from the cooker.
 - ▶ Make sure the handles aren't over another ring either, as this will make them too hot to lift.
 - ▶ Always set a timer so you don't forget food cooking on the hob and leave the pan to boil dry.
 - ▶ Never leave hot oil unattended.
 - ▶ Clean up any spills straight away.
 - ▶ Non-slip matting near the sink and washing machine may reduce the risk of slipping.
 - ▶ Keep your kitchen equipment as clean as possible. A build-up of crumbs or grease, for instance, could be a fire risk.
- If a pan catches fire:**
- ▶ Don't move the pan or throw water on it.
 - ▶ Turn off the heat if it is safe to do so.
 - ▶ Leave the kitchen, close the door and shout to everyone else in the house to leave.
 - ▶ Call 999.



Stairs

- ▶ Avoid storing things on the stairs, even temporarily.
- ▶ Always check them as you walk up and down.
- ▶ Good lighting is particularly important on the stairs, where it can help you avoid tripping.
- ▶ Handrails are important even on small flights of stairs preferably on both sides.
- ▶ A two-way switch at the top and bottom of the stairs means you can turn the lights on when at the top and at the bottom.
- ▶ Marking the edge of each step with paint or a strip of non-slip masking tape will make them more visible. If you use tape, make sure it stays in good condition and doesn't become a trip hazard.
- ▶ Plug-in night lights turn on automatically at night-time and provide a low light that can help you see your way to the bathroom if you get up at night. They also help you see where the stairs are so you don't fall down them.
- ▶ Emergency power-failure lights plug into power sockets and remain lit if there is a power failure. This means that if the mains power fails after dark, you will still be able to find your way around.

Bedroom

- ▶ Tuck out of the way trailing sheets and bed covers when you first get out of bed to avoid tripping.
- ▶ Keep a Torch by the bed incase you need to get up in the night, or if there is a power failure.

Bathroom

- ▶ Consider installing a hand rail, non-slip bath mat and bath seat to help you keep your balance when getting in and out of the bath.
- ▶ Make sure your bath mat doesn't slide on the floor when you walk on it as it could slip from under you.
- ▶ Are your medicines stored in the bottle they came in, out of reach of children and pets, and locked away?
- ▶ Keep any mains-powered electrical appliances out of the bathroom
- ▶ Appliances such as hairdryers, heaters and electric radios should never be used in the bathroom.

Windows

- ▶ Always supervise children and keep their play area away from windows.
- ▶ Keep windows closed and locked when children are present.
- ▶ If windows are open, make sure children can't reach them.
- ▶ For a double-hung window on an upper floor, open the top sash for ventilation and keep the bottom sash closed.
- ▶ Screens keep bugs out, but they do not keep children in.
- ▶ Keep furniture away from windows as they could tempt a curious child to climb and potentially fall.
- ▶ If there are young children in the home, install ASTM-approved limited-opening hardware, which only allows a window to open a few inches.
- ▶ Window Cords can Cause Strangulation (keep these out of the way of children).

Garden

- ▶ Keeping your garden tidy and free of obstacles will make it a lot safer.
- ▶ Keep paving stones free from moss and algae. Moss and algae become very slippery when wet.
- ▶ Spread salt or salty sand on your steps if you need to go outside in icy weather.
- ▶ Never use a ladder when you are on your own; it is far safer to have someone with you who can hold the ladder steady.
- ▶ Always use tools carefully and place them in a safe position when you put them down and lock away when not in use.
- ▶ An RCD will shut off the power if an electrical fault develops or if you accidentally cut through the flex when using power tools.

