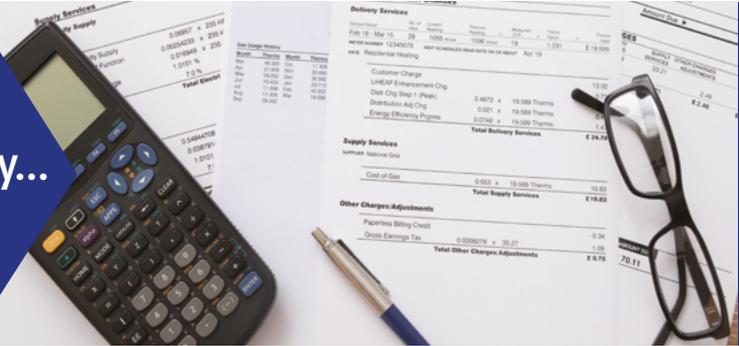


# Private Tenants Fuel Handbook

Save money...



Stay warm...



Keep healthy...



# ...and do your bit for the environment



This booklet has been designed specifically for renters, and will help you save money and keep your household safe and warm:

- How to compare the cost of heating a home before choosing where to rent
- How to ask your landlord for energy efficiency and safety improvements to your home in the safe knowledge of your rights and your landlord's obligations
- How to adopt behaviours that save energy and save you money
- How to troubleshoot problems with your heating and hot water system

This booklet has been funded by **UK Power Networks** and created by **HEET** working in partnership with **SHINE**.

## Why Energy in the Home Matters



**Money**

If you are living on a low income, it is likely that 10% or more of your disposable income is spent on fuel. Saving money on fuel will mean you have more left over for other essentials, like food.



**Health**

Living in a cold home can have a serious impact on your health. Diseases linked to the cold range from common colds, heart attacks and strokes, respiratory illnesses like asthma and pneumonia.



**Environment**

Our use of fossil fuels is contributing to global climate change and air pollution. Approximately 35% of all UK CO2 emissions comes from energy consumption in our homes.

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## Navigating this booklet

This **Contents Page** will direct you to the appropriate section for any specific questions, concerns or details

**Key Contacts** listed throughout the booklet are all summarized on the **back page** of this booklet

A **Bitesized Overview** of the booklet can be found on **page 4**

**Landlords Responsibilities vs Tenant Responsibilities** are broken down in **section 8**



## 3 Top Tips for you to save energy:

- 1. Find out if you are eligible for support** from any of the organisations listed on the back page of this booklet. Their advice and practical support could save you hundreds of pounds each year on your energy bills.
- 2. Use heating appliance thermostats** to prevent overheating your home. Turning your thermostat down by 1°C can save as much as 10% on your heating bill. 18°C is warm enough for rooms you sleep in. You might want your living room as warm as 21°C.
- 3. Consider switching your energy supplier or tariff.** Find out the Ofgem Approved Energy Comparison Companies that can help you with this on page 18.



## 3 Key Recommendations for you if you are a private renter:

- 1. Contact your energy supplier(s)** when you move into your new home. Provide meter readings to ensure you don't get charged for debts left by the previous tenant. If you have a prepayment meter get any debts removed from it before you put any money on the meter.
- 2. Get a smart meter fitted.** This will mean an end to estimated bills and will open up opportunities for time-of-use tariffs that offer cheaper electricity at times of low demand. It is polite to ask your landlord before getting one fitted but they cannot unreasonably refuse if you are named on the bills.
- 3. Ventilate your home** to prevent moisture building up which can lead to condensation and black mould growth. Most heat in your home is stored in solid objects such as walls and furniture. Ventilating your home will not lead to excessive heat loss but it can help prevent mould growth.

# 1

## Moving home

### Choosing your new home – What you need to know:



**How Energy Efficient is it?** You can find out how energy efficient your home is from the **Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)**. An EPC allows you to compare the energy efficiency of different properties easily.



**Energy Performance Certificates?** An EPC tells you how energy efficient a building is and gives it a rating from A (very efficient) to G (inefficient). Landlords must get an up-to-date EPC at the start of each new tenancy and provide you with a copy. You can also search for an EPC online <https://www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate>



**Landlords Responsibilities.** Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES)  
There is a legal requirement for private rented homes to meet the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES).



**Moving out of your old home.** Finalise your bills. Give your energy supplier/s at least 48 hours' notice and take meter readings on the day you move out and give them to your supplier/s.



**Moving into your new home.** It is always useful to know how to switch your gas and electricity supply on and off, in case of emergency. Ask your landlord/agent to point these out to you when you move in.



**Identifying and contacting your supplier.** It's important to contact the current supplier at your new property to let them know that you have moved in. See '**Support is Never Far Away**' box on the back page.



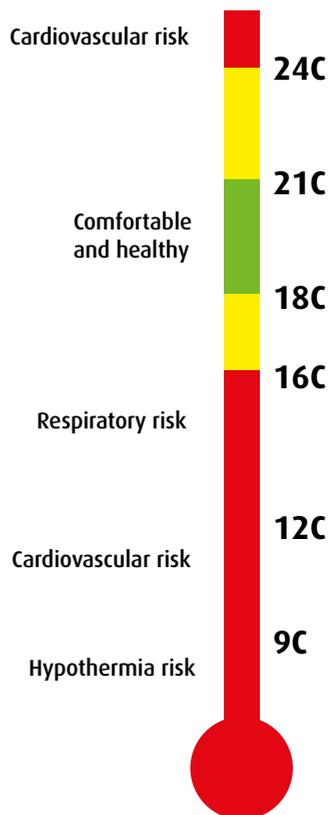
**Meter readings and pre-payment meters.** Read your meters on the day you move in and give the readings to the current supplier. You are responsible for the bills from the day you take over ownership for the property.

# 2 Living in your home

## Healthy Room Temperatures

Living in a cold home can have a serious impact on your health – in particular your respiratory and heart health.

- To maintain good health, the NHS recommends 18°C for the whole home (Individual people's needs will be different).
- There are no health implications in putting the temperature up to 23°C, but this will obviously cost you more.
- If you are on a low income, heating your home to what is right for you can be a balance between what you can afford and what you need to stay healthy.
- Wearing multiple thin layers, having regular hot meals and drinks, and making sure the home is well insulated are other ways of keeping warm.



## Cold Homes are not the only problem:

Overheating your home can be costly. The generally accepted rule is that for every degree you turn up your central heating thermostat, you will be paying an extra £80 a year. If you have electric heating then costs could be even higher. Home temperatures at 24°C have also been linked to cardiovascular problems.



## Making your home energy efficient

### What improvements should be made?

Your Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) has a heading '**How to Improve this Property's Energy Performance**'. This lists the most effective measures that could be installed in your home and indicates how much money, and CO<sup>2</sup> they will save you.

If you are not sure about what measures are right for your household, seek energy advice (see **back page** of this booklet).

### Grants to make energy efficiency improvements

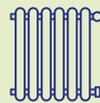
There are a range of national, regional and local schemes to help you make your home more energy efficient. Private tenants are eligible for most of them but you will need to get your landlord's consent before work can go ahead. By law, the landlord cannot 'unreasonably' refuse permission. Most grants have an eligibility criteria so that support is targeted to people in vulnerable circumstances and/or low-income households. Sometimes grants can be combined to provide a package of support so it is worth talking to an energy advice agency in order to maximise the help you get.

**There are two main ways in which your home can be made more energy efficient:**



#### **Insulation**

This slows down the rate at which heat is lost from your home and keeps the warmth inside where you want it.



#### **Heating Improvements**

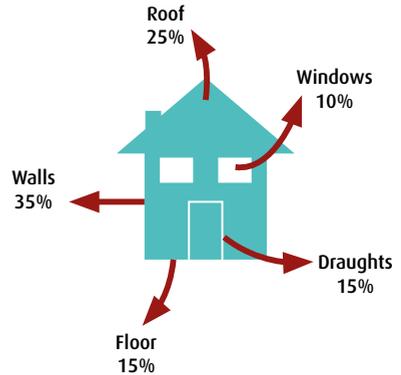
The efficiency of your heating appliance(s) will have a big impact on the cost of heating your home.

## 2. Living in your home

### Insulating your home efficiently

Buildings lose heat - it leaks out through roofs, floors, doors, windows and walls at different rates. Heat is lost quicker if the inside temperature is significantly hotter than the outside temperature.

But there is a lot that can be done to reduce heat loss. With better insulation and draught proofing, you could have a warmer, more comfortable home that is cheaper to heat.



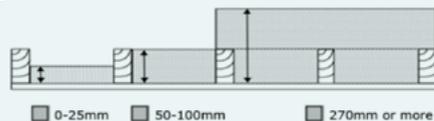
### An overview of different types of insulation measures

Your local energy advice provider will be able to tell you if they are appropriate to your home and whether there is any grant support to cover them.

The main insulation measures are highlighted in the boxes below. Your local energy advice provider will be able to tell you if they are appropriate to your home and whether there is any grant support to cover them.

#### 1: Loft Insulation

If you have a loft, insulating it is the most cost-effective way to reduce your heating bills. It is recommended that you have **270mm** of loft insulation or more. If you can see the joists on the floor of your loft you would benefit from having it topped-up.



#### 2: Cylinder tank insulation

Fitting a **tank jacket** to your hot water tank (immersion cylinder) if you have one, will keep the water in it hot for longer.





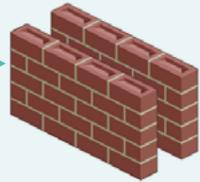
### 3: Wall insulation

Most heat loss occurs through the walls (about one third). Homes built after the 1930's are likely to have cavity walls that are easy and cheap to insulate. Homes built before this, with solid walls, can be insulated either internally or externally, but this is expensive and can be disruptive.



**Solid wall**  
Alternating pattern of long and short bricks

**Cavity wall**  
Even brick pattern



### 4: Draught proofing

Gaps around doors and windows can be sealed with draught strips that reduce heat loss and make your home more comfortable.



### 5: Windows

Replacing single glazed windows with double or triple glazing will make your home more comfortable. It is expensive though and there are not many grant schemes that will pay for window replacement. Fitting secondary glazing is a cheaper alternative.



### 6: Floor insulation

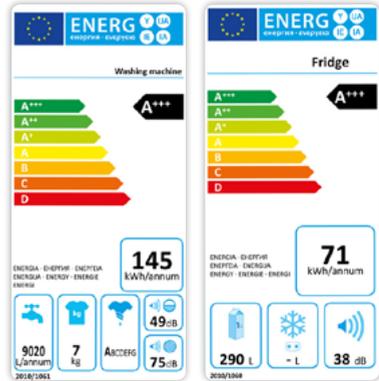
Homes with suspended timber floors can be insulated quite cheaply. Solid (concrete) floors are more difficult to insulate.



## 2. Living in your home

### Heating improvements

The efficiency of your heating and hot water system will have a big impact on your fuel bills. All appliances that use energy are now required to come with an energy rating label. (see **Appliance labels page 16**) These rate appliances on a scale of A to G in a similar way to an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). Replacing a D rated gas boiler with an A rated one could save you around £200 per year.



### Did you know?

A unit (Kwh) of Electricity costs almost three times as much as the same unit of Gas.

If you have gas central heating this will almost certainly be cheaper to run than an electric system.



### Gas Central Heating:

#### Indirect systems

A gas boiler heats the water, but hot water is stored in a hot water cylinder/tank.

#### Combination (Combi) boilers

A gas boiler both heats water instantly, and runs the central heating. Combination boilers are generally considered more efficient and cheaper to run.



## Heating controls

Effective heating controls allow you to effortlessly regulate the temperature of your home keeping your home cosy, and your energy bills low. There are two main types of heating control: **thermostats and timer/programmers**.

### 1) Thermostats

Thermostats are devices for controlling temperature. They save you money by turning an appliance off when the desired temperature, set by you, is reached. This prevents you from overheating your home or hot water. **Setting a thermostat at a high temperature will not make an appliance heat up any quicker** and will waste money because the appliance will not switch off when it reaches the desired temperature.

**A good central heating system will have four types of thermostat:**

#### Room Thermostat:

A room thermostat measures how warm your home is and adjusts the boiler to keep the temperature at a level set by you (ideally **between 18°C – 21°C**). Room thermostats should be positioned to accurately identify the temperature in your home – away from draughts, sources of heat and other thermostats.



#### Boiler thermostat:

A boiler thermostat controls the temperature of the water as it goes around the radiators. In winter the boiler thermostat will need to be set quite high in order to keep the house warm.



Boiler thermostat

Hot water temperature control

#### Thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs):

These allow you to adjust the temperature of individual Radiators and/or turn them off completely.



#### Hot water cylinder thermostat:

If you have an indirect heating system with a hot water cylinder you will need to control the temperature of the hot water that is stored. 60°C is an ideal temperature.



## 2. Living in your home

### 2) Timer Programmers

Timer Programmers control when the boiler or hot water cylinder comes on. Used correctly a timer/programmer will prevent you from accidentally leaving the heating or hot water on when you do not need it. Timer programmers also provide convenience, enabling you, for example, to set the heating to come on before you get up in the morning so that your home is a comfortable when you do get up.



There are a number of different types of timer programmers. Generally speaking, digital programmers offer greater flexibility than old-fashioned mechanical timers. Digital programmers, for example, usually allow you to set a different heating regime for weekends compared to weekdays. Used correctly this can save you energy and money.

### Setting and using central heating controls

Modern heating controls can be confusing. You can generally find manuals on-line and the [Centre for Sustainable Energy website](#) provides some very good videos to help you get the best out of your heating controls. Your local energy advice agency can also help explain how to set and use your heating controls.

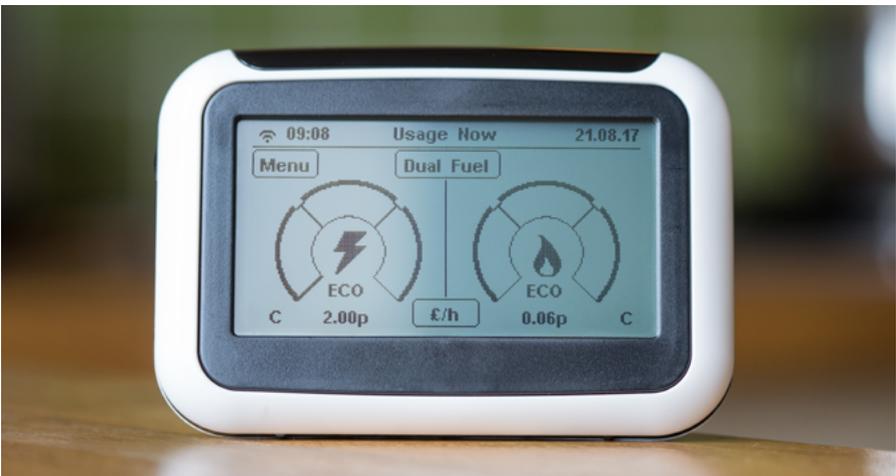


## Electric heating

Increasingly homes are built without a gas supply, and electricity is used for heating. Electric heating is usually more expensive than gas, although in properties with a high EPC rating, it can be a cheaper option. Electricity, however, can be generated from renewable sources and is increasingly seen as environmentally friendly. Time-of-use tariffs can bring the cost of electric heating down.

### Time-of-use tariffs:

In order to encourage people to use electricity at times of low-demand, such as at night time, electricity suppliers sometimes offer two charging rates. The most common of these is Economy 7 which offers a cheaper rate for electricity for 7 hours at night (usually between 12.00 at night and 7.00am). Be careful though because the 'peak' day-time rate will be more expensive and, if you do not have storage heaters (see next page) you could end up paying more for your heating. As a general rule of thumb, if you use 50% or more of your electricity during the 'off-peak' period you will save money. With the introduction of smart meters (see [page 20](#)), and changes in the way that electricity is generated, we are likely to see more of these 'time of use tariffs' introduced.



## 2. Living in your home

### Storage heaters.

These are designed to charge up over-night using cheaper 'Economy 7' electricity; the heat is stored in bricks, and can be used the next day. This is generally cheaper than simply plugging in an electric heater during the daytime.

One problem with storage heaters is that when the heat is used up, you have to wait until the next off-peak charging period before you can get more heat. Some storage heaters also have a convector heater 'boost' to give you heat if the overnight charge has been exhausted, but you pay a lot to use the heater this way.

Another issue is that the controls are hard to understand and do not give the householder much flexibility. Older storage heaters have no timer or thermostat; though newer models can have these and are therefore cheaper to run.

Your local energy advice service will be able to advise of storage heaters and the [Centre for Sustainable Energy](#) website has useful videos and leaflets.





## Peak rate heaters:

If you do not have an Economy 7 meter, electric heating tends to take the form of plug-in heaters, such as convector heaters, fan heaters, oil-filled radiators. These are expensive to run. If you are forced to use electric heaters of this sort, make sure the appliance has a **thermostat** and a **timer**, to allow you to control when you use it and reduce the cost.



If you are using this type of heater make sure you are **not** on an Economy 7 tariff as you are likely to be using them only during peak times. Either get storage heaters fitted or ask your energy supplier to switch you to a single rate tariff.



## Other electric appliances:

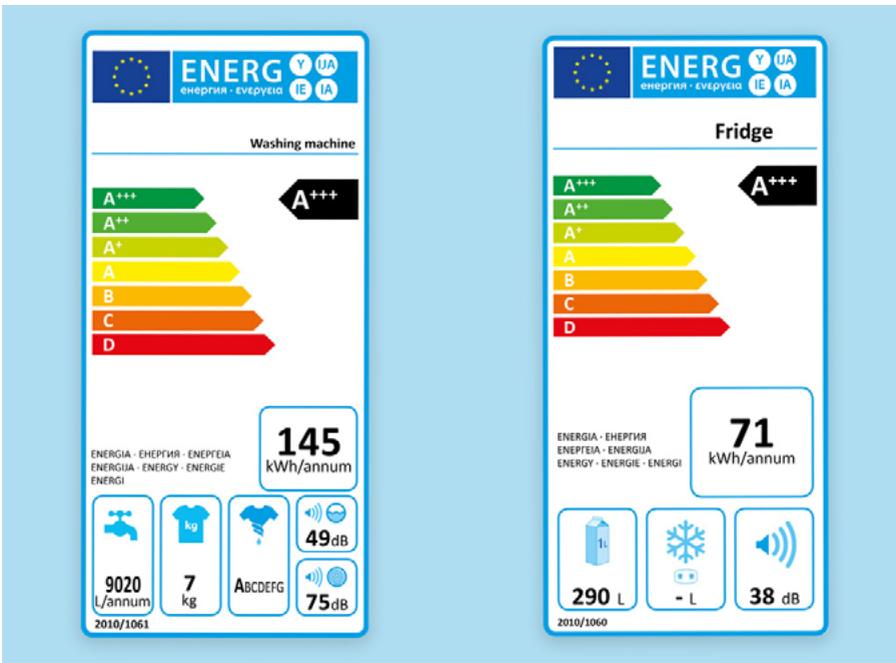
**Choosing the right appliance to fit your needs is possibly more important than the efficiency of the appliance.** A small A rated freezer, for example, is likely to be cheaper to run than a larger A++ model, that is only ever half filled. Special features, like water dispensers, will add to the running cost.

## 2. Living in your home



### Energy Labels

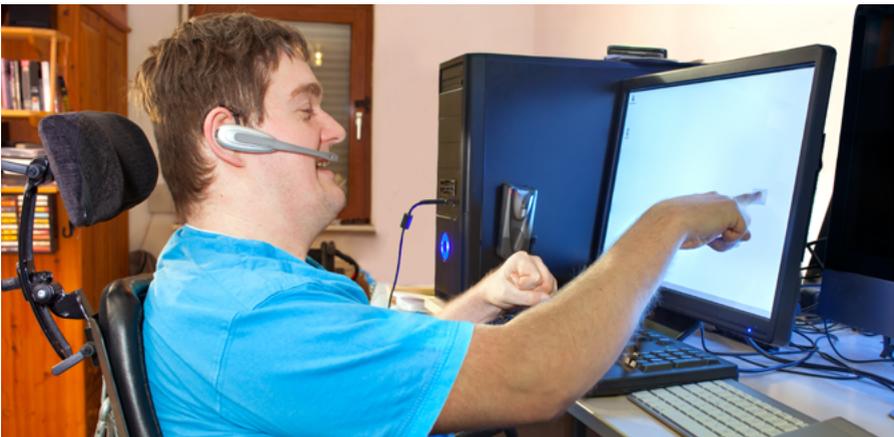
All electric appliances should have an Energy Label that helps you compare the efficiency of appliances. The label will give the appliance an energy rating, normally on a scale of G – A or G – A+++ , where A+++ is the most efficient. By understanding the energy labels, you can see how much money you might be spending/saving before you buy the appliance.



# 3 Reducing how much you pay for fuel

## Warm Home Discount

The Warm Home Discount is a rebate on electricity bills paid out by some suppliers during the winter months. Customers on low incomes and in receipt of means tested benefits are likely to be eligible for the scheme. For more information and to check your eligibility, speak to an energy advice provider or to your electricity supplier directly.



### 3. Reducing how much you pay for fuel

#### Switching suppliers and tariffs

Your energy supplier(s) are whoever you buy gas and electricity from; your tariff is the deal you have with them. **Different tariffs can make a big difference** to how much you pay.

If you pay the energy bills, you usually have the right to change to a cheaper supplier or tariff unless your landlord specifically bans you from doing this (check your tenancy agreement).

##### Types of tariff:

1. **Standard variable tariffs** have no end date and the price you pay for a unit of energy can go up or down.
2. **Fixed Term tariffs** are a contract for a particular length of time during which the cost per unit of energy is fixed.

Fixed term tariffs are normally cheaper but, due to the current volatility in the energy markets (2022), standard tariffs are cheaper.

##### Comparing tariffs:

A lot of the hard work comparing tariffs can be removed by using a comparison website. We suggest that you only use companies that carry the **Ofgem Confidence Code** symbol.



#### Ofgem Approved Energy Comparison Companies

Ofgem approved website	Telephone	Website
Energy Helpline	0800 074 0745	<a href="http://www.energyhelpline.com">www.energyhelpline.com</a>
Energylinx	0800 849 7077	<a href="http://www.energylinx.co.uk">www.energylinx.co.uk</a>
My Utility Genius	020 3468 0461	<a href="http://www.myutilitygenius.co.uk">www.myutilitygenius.co.uk</a>
Simply Switch	0800 011 1395	<a href="http://www.simplyswitch.com">www.simplyswitch.com</a>
Switch Gas and Electric	03333 700 600	<a href="http://www.switchgasandelectric.com">www.switchgasandelectric.com</a>
Uswitch	0800 049 9722	<a href="http://www.uswitch.com">www.uswitch.com</a>

Month	Therms	Cost
46,305	Oct	11,308
21,609	Nov	22,682
09,252	Dec	32,992
15,420	Jan	23,713
11,308	Feb	43,302
11,308	Mar	19,589
09,252		

Item	Quantity	Unit Price	Total
Customer Charge			13.00
LIHEAP Enhancement Chg			0.73
Distr Chg Step 1 (Peak)	0.4672 x	19,589 Therms	0.4
Distribution Adj Chg	0.021 x	19,589 Therms	1.4
Energy Efficiency Prgrms	0.0748 x	19,589 Therms	
<b>Total Delivery Services</b>			<b>£ 24.78</b>

Category	Amount
SERVICES	33.21
OTHER CHARGES/ADJUSTMENTS	2.46
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 2.46</b>

Citizens Advice also have a comparison tool which includes a customer service star rating: <https://energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk>

Your local energy advice agency can usually help you carry out a tariff comparison if you need help.

## Information you will need to do a comparison

When comparing prices or switching you will need certain bits of information. You can find all of this information on your fuel bills (usually on page 2 – **About Your Tariff**):



- Your postcode,
- The name of your current supplier
- The name of your current tariff
- Your current annual energy consumption or usage; you can find this as a figure in Kilowatt hours (Kwh/h) of energy used, or as an annual projection in money terms – how much you spend on energy a year. If you have both gas and electricity you will need separate figures, and if you have Economy 7 electricity you will need figures for both day (peak) and night (off-peak) usage.

If you access bills online you can find the information on your online account. You can also phone your supplier and ask them for this information.

**The switching process:** Once you have agreed on a tariff with a new energy supplier, or switched online, the switching process will then start. The new supplier will contact your existing supplier, so you don't have to. The process usually takes around 21 days.

### 3. Reducing how much you pay for fuel



#### How you pay will affect:

Fixed rate, paperless, Direct Debit tariffs are usually the cheapest. Paying by cash or cheque on receipt of a bill is usually the most expensive.

#### The switching process:

Once you have agreed on a tariff with a new energy supplier, or switched online, the switching process will then start.

#### Switching from prepayment to credit:

This can be complicated because they use different types of meter. In most cases you will have to ask your supplier to physically change the meter.

#### Smart meters:

All gas and electricity meters measure the amount of fuel you use so that you are charged correctly. Smart meters do exactly the same job, but they do it more efficiently.

#### Getting a smart meter fitted:

You can contact your energy supplier if you want a smart meter fitted. There is no charge and you do not have to have one fitted if you do not want one.

#### The PSR:

The Priority Services Register is a free support service provided by energy suppliers, network operators and water companies to people who need extra help. Contact your energy and water suppliers to find out if you are eligible.

# 4 Addressing fuel debt



## Your energy supplier is obliged...

If you are struggling to afford your gas and/or electricity bills, get in touch with your provider to discuss ways for you to pay what you owe them. Your supplier has to help you come to a solution, and take into account your financial situation. If you don't negotiate with your supplier, they may threaten to disconnect your supply. Make sure they know about the things that could make it more difficult for you to pay. For example, tell them if you:

- Are disabled
- Have a long-term illness
- Are over state pension age
- Have young children living with you
- Have financial problems - for example if you are behind on rent

Also ask whether you can be put on your supplier's **Priority Services Register**.

## Always check that

- That the debt is yours – proving that a debt is not yours if you did not inform them of the meter readings when you moved in, is really difficult to do.
- The correct meter is being read - make sure the serial number on your bill is the same as that on your meter. If you live in a flat and there are several meters next to each other it is easy for the wrong meter to be read.
- Your bills are based on meter readings not estimates.
- You are on the cheapest tariff your supplier can offer you.

## If you have a credit meter

**Agree a payment plan with your supplier.**

Tell your supplier that you want a payment plan that will enable you to pay your debts in instalments. You'll need to pay fixed amounts (that you agree that you can afford) over a set period of time. The payment plan will cover what you owe plus an amount for your current use.

## 4. Addressing fuel debt

Your supplier must take into account:

- How much you can afford to pay - give them details about your income, outgoings and other debts
- Personal circumstances – ages of children, disability, vulnerability, etc.

They will estimate your future energy use based on your past usage, but if you give them regular meter readings it will make this more accurate.

**If you can't afford an agreed payment plan**, speak to your supplier again if you consider that they are charging you too much or you are struggling to afford the payments. Try to negotiate a better deal. If you don't keep up with payments, your supplier might try to make you have a prepayment meter installed.

### Pay off your debt through your benefits

You may be able have your debt repaid directly from your benefits through the **Fuel Direct Scheme**. A fixed amount will automatically be deducted from your benefits to pay your supplier what you owe, plus an extra amount for your current use. It can be cheaper and more convenient (you won't risk running out of gas or electricity) than having a prepayment meter fitted, which a supplier might try to install if you can't agree a payment plan. But it could leave you short for other necessities so think about this option carefully. They may deduct more than you can really afford.

**To be eligible, you must be getting one of the following benefits:**

- Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Support
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Universal Credit (but only if you're not working)

To access this option, contact the Jobcentre and let them know you want to set up Fuel Direct. They will contact your supplier and tell them you want to pay off your debt this way - your supplier has to agree to this. Your supplier will set up the repayments and let you know how much you will be paying.



## If your energy supplier wants you to have a pre-payment meter

Energy suppliers like pre-payment meters because it reduces the risk of someone running up a big debt. Under the Ofgem code of practice, however, energy companies are required to look at all other options before fitting a pre-payment meter. A pre-payment meter cannot be forced on you if you have a disability or illness that makes it:

- **Hard for you to use, read or put money on your meter – for instance of you struggle to get to a shop to top up, or can't reach the meter due to its location or your age, health problems, or disability**
- **Bad for your health if your electricity or gas is cut off**

Sometimes a pre-payment meter is the best option if you struggle to budget for fuel. If you are being pressurised and you really feel that pre-payment is not the right option for you contact your local energy advice agency and/or Citizens Advice.

## If you have a pre-payment meter

**There are four ways that you might end up with a debt on your pre-payment meter**

- 1:** The debt belongs to a previous tenant – when you take over a tenancy make sure that your energy supplier removes any of the previous tenant's debts.
- 2:** You had a debt on your credit meter that you were unable to pay off so your supplier has fitted a pre-payment meter and transferred your debt to this.
- 3:** You have used the emergency credit function on the meter. This typically gives you £5 credit per fuel that will be repaid next time you top-up.
- 4:** You have asked for, and been given, temporary credit by your supplier – in an emergency you can ask your supplier to add some credit to your meter. This needs to be paid back

## 4. Addressing fuel debt



### Repaying debt on a pre-payment meter

- Unless you make an arrangement with your supplier the debt will automatically be repaid every time you top-up.
- If you have a debt of £30 and you top-up by £35, you will only be left with £5 credit for gas or electricity. If you consider that you are running out of credit too quickly, this extra debt could be the problem.
- Try to top up with more money than usual after running out of credit. If you are struggling to pay off this debt, ask your supplier to let you pay it off weekly rather than in one go. This will stop your credit from running out too quickly because of the extra debt.

### Trust and Grants - Help to pay off fuel debt

In some circumstances, you might be able to get a grant from a charitable trust to help pay off your debts. **Charis grants** has more information on available grants and how to apply. It is best to get support from an accredited financial advice agency if you are going to make an application. They will take into account particular reasons why you got into debt and may pay off all or part of the debt. You will need to be able to set out all your expenses and income, explain how the debt arose, and show that you can pay off what you use in future. If you are not paying your bills at all they are unlikely to help.

If you're **disabled, elderly** or you get **benefits**, check whether you can get help paying your energy bills by visiting [Citizens Advice website](#) and searching "Get help paying my bills".

You could also contact the [Citizens Advice website](#) for more **help and advice**.

And you could use this [tool](#) to work out which debts to pay first.

# 5 Staying Safe



## Gas safety

Your landlord has a legal duty under the Gas Safety Regulations to arrange maintenance by a **Gas Safe registered engineer** for all pipe work, appliances and flues, which they own and have provided for your use. Your landlord must also arrange for an annual gas safety check to be carried out by a Gas Safe engineer. They must keep a record of the safety check for 2 years and issue a copy to each existing tenant within 28 days of the check being completed and issue a copy to any new tenants before they move in.



If a gas appliance has been switched off by a Gas Safe registered engineer, it is because it was unsafe and **should not be used**. If a heating appliance has been disconnected, then your landlord must provide you with emergency heating whilst arranging for appropriate remedial work by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

## Bottle gas (also known as LPG):

Landlord duties for LPG appliances are the same as for natural gas. In addition to maintenance, there are some further safety precautions to take with LPG heaters:

- Be aware that cabinet heaters need a good supply of fresh air to burn properly, so the room must be well ventilated.
- Ensure any heaters have an atmospheric sensing device - this will shut the appliance off if there is not enough ventilation.
- Ensure that the correct size and type of gas bottle is being used and,
- Be aware that outdoor heaters are not designed for use indoors.

## 5. Staying safe

### Fire and Carbon Monoxide safety

Under the 'smoke and carbon monoxide alarms regulation (2015)' landlords are required to install appropriate smoke alarms in your home. If you haven't got smoke alarms, ask your landlord to fit them. You should have at least one alarm on every floor of your home. If your landlord fails to fit smoke alarms, they could be fined £500. Speak to your Local Authority environmental health team as they can take action to make the landlord fulfil this duty.



Having a smoke alarm is one of the most important ways to protect your home from the risk of fire. It will alert you to a fire before it gets out of control – providing time to get out and call the fire service. If you have been provided with a working smoke alarm it is your responsibility to:

- **Test the smoke alarms at least monthly: this can be done by pressing a 'test' button on the alarm.**
- **Inform your landlord if the smoke alarm is not working or faulty.**
- **Never disconnect or take the batteries out of your smoke alarm - even if your toaster keeps setting it off.**

### Carbon Monoxide

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas that can be produced by burning any fossil fuel such as coal, wood or natural gas, without adequate ventilation. It is colourless, odourless, tasteless and potentially lethal. Appliances in the home that could emit CO include gas boilers, gas fires or heaters, wood or coal fires, gas cookers. If these appliances are poorly installed, or not working properly, they could cause carbon Monoxide poisoning. This is one reason why your annual gas safety check is so important.

The regulations require landlords to install carbon monoxide alarms in any rooms used as living accommodation where solid fuel is used. It is a landlord's responsibility to ensure that carbon monoxide alarms are installed on the first day of the tenancy, even if the tenant isn't moving in on this day. Landlords that fail to comply with the regulations could face a fine of up to £500.



# 6 Damp, condensation and mould



**3% of English homes have a damp and mould problem.** This rises to 15% in the private rented sector. Mould and damp are bad for health, and in particular respiratory health. It can be difficult to know what is causing the damp and tenants often find themselves being blamed for causing the problem through lifestyle choices and a failure to ventilate. This is seldom the whole story. A London Assembly Report (Keeping Out the Chill, February 2019) found that the biggest factor contributing to mould and damp was low energy efficiency performance.

It is useful to understand the **different types of damp** that can affect a home:

## Penetrating damp:

Penetrating damp occurs when water gets into your home from outside. Some of the main causes include:

- Damage to guttering and drainpipes, including blockages, by leaves and moss
- Damaged outside walls or windows

## Leaks:

Leaks from plumbing can cause damp and other problems. Leaks can result from:

- Damage to overflows and waste pipes under sinks, baths and toilets
- Leaks from boilers and central heating pipes

## Rising damp:

Rising damp is when moisture is absorbed into your home from the ground. This will affect ground floors – a ‘tide mark’ can usually be seen up to 1 metre from the floor.



## Condensation

### What is condensation?

Condensation is caused when moist air is cooled by contact with a cold surface and turns into water droplets. Everyday activities like breathing, cooking and washing put additional amounts of moisture into the air.

### Reducing condensation:

- **Heat your home adequately**
- **Insulate your home properly**
- **Ventilate to remove moisture**
- **Put less moisture into the air by drying clothes outside. If this is not possible, dry clothes in a well-ventilated room.**

## 6. Damp, condensation and mould

### Ventilate to remove moisture

**Myth Busting – Ventilation lets out all the heat.**

Most (five-sixths) of the heat in homes is stored in the solid objects, such as the walls and the furniture. If you removed all the warm air and replaced it with cold air, only one-sixth of the heat in your home would be lost.

### Removing moisture from your home is essential to control condensation.

- If the windows have trickle vents make sure they are left open.
- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms while in use and for a period afterwards by opening the windows to clear the moisture to the outside.
- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed when cooking/washing and ventilating. This will stop moisture spreading to other parts of the home and stop heat loss from other rooms.
- Use extractor fans as an alternative to opening windows. Ask your landlord to fit humidistat-controlled fans that come on automatically when moisture levels are high.
- Allow air to circulate behind furniture like beds, desks and wardrobes. If possible position these items of furniture against warmer internal walls.



## Heat your home adequately

Warm homes are much less likely to suffer from condensation. Sadly, if you are living on a low-income and struggle to afford to keep your home as warm as you would like, you are more likely to have a condensation problem. It is therefore important to read other parts of this booklet to help you reduce the cost of keeping warm.



## Insulate your home

Insulation will help you to keep the house warm without wasting loads of money. The internal surface of an insulated wall will be significantly warmer than an uninsulated one, so condensation is less likely to occur. Loft insulation will reduce the chances of condensation on ceilings.



## Removing mould

Mould is likely to reappear unless the condensation problem is dealt with. To kill and remove mould on walls and window frames, wipe them with a fungicidal wash which has a Health & Safety Executive approval number. Follow the instructions precisely. These are strong, and potentially harmful, chemicals but they will penetrate into the affected surface and kill the mould.



## Getting damp repairs sorted

It is in your landlord's interest to deal with all forms of damp as quickly as possible because they can quickly escalate and cause further damage to their property. Inform your landlord as soon as you notice any signs of damp. If your landlord fails to do anything about a damp problem, and it is affecting your health and wellbeing, your local authority environmental health department can use enforcement action or licencing rules to make your landlord carry out repairs/improvements. Prevent getting the blame for condensation by following the above advice on ventilation and reducing the amount of moisture you put into the air.



# 7 Troubleshooting Central Heating



## Radiator/s not heating up

Most of the time, issues with radiators are caused by a simple problem that can be easily resolved. If none of the radiators are working, it is more likely to be a problem with the boiler or heating controls than the radiators themselves.

**Step 1: Check for Trapped Air.** Use a radiator key to unscrew the bleed screw a little, just until you hear a hissing sound. Once the hissing dies away and water starts coming from your radiator, be ready to close the bleed screw.



**Step 2: Check the Radiator Valves.** If your entire radiator is cold, make sure the valves on the left and right of the radiator are open. If you have a valve that allows you to set the temperature and adjusts it automatically, make sure it is turned on.



## Heating not coming on

If your boiler is not working, there are a few things you could try before calling for help. **These simple steps may be able to get it working again.**

**Step 1:** If you have a **prepayment meter**, make sure that you have enough credit. Then test whether your other gas appliances, such as your cooker hob, are working correctly, or whether the switches in your fuse box have tripped.

**Step 2: Programme/timer** are the timer settings correct? Is the time and date correct? If you have had a power cut, for example, your boiler's timer might have reset and you might need to reset the time.

**Step 3: Wireless thermostats** have a battery. If this runs down, the thermostat will stop communicating with boiler and fail to turn it on. A battery symbol should appear on the thermostat screen but this is often very small.

**Step 4: Boiler/pressure gauge.** If your boiler's pressure gauge is reading one bar or less, this could be the reason why it's not working. Topping up the pressure is usually straightforward, you can do this yourself by following the steps in your boiler's manual.

# 8 General Repairs and Responsibilities



## Understanding Tenant's and Landlord's Responsibilities

Do you know your...

Tenant Responsibilities	Landlord's Responsibilities
Pay your rent on time	The structure and exterior of the building, including the walls, stairs and bannisters, roof, external doors and windows.
Report any repairs needed to the landlord. If you damage the landlord's property, even by accident, you will have to pay for the repair.	Sinks, baths, toilets and other sanitary fittings, including pipes and drains  Electrical wiring
Pay utility bills and sometimes Council and water rates. Check your tenancy agreement as some or all of these may be included in the rent.	Provide you with a reliable source of heating and hot water for bedrooms and living rooms.  It is illegal to make tenants responsible for the heating and hot water systems.
<b>IF YOU PAY THE FUEL BILLS</b>  You can choose your energy supplier and your method of payment.	<b>IF FUEL IS INCLUDED IN YOUR RENT</b>  Landlord's must be able to demonstrate how they have calculated your fuel bill and cannot charge more than the maximum resale price.
Allow the landlord, and their trades-people, to carry out periodic checks to inspect the property, as long as these are at a reasonable time and you are given 24 hours' notice.	Keep appliances for heating and hot water safe and in good repair - including an annual safety check on gas appliances.
Ask permission if you want to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take in a lodger</li> <li>• Run a business from the property</li> <li>• Keep a pet at the property</li> <li>• Make improvements to the property</li> </ul> The landlord often has the right to refuse. Check your tenancy agreement.	Putting right any damage to internal decorations caused by repair problems or while repairs were carried out.  You will need to put right damages you caused.
End your tenancy properly. Your tenancy agreement will tell you how this should be done. You might be liable for rent if you do not end the tenancy correctly.	Let you enjoy your home. Landlords must not harass you or make it difficult for you to live in your home.  They cannot let themselves into your home without your permission.

## 8. General Repairs and Responsibilities



### Overcrowding

You can apply to the Council as homeless if your home is legally overcrowded or so overcrowded that it's not reasonable for you to continue living there. The council will look at your situation, but **even if you are legally overcrowded, you might not be entitled to help**. Do not leave an overcrowded home before the council makes a decision on your homeless application. You may be refused help if the council decides you are intentionally homeless.

Under housing law, there are two ways to calculate if your home is overcrowded.

- One way is by the number of rooms for people to sleep in. This is called the room standard.
- The other way is by the amount of space in the home and the number of people living in it. This is called the space standard.

Statutory overcrowding is when there are too many people living in your home using either of the calculations.

To find out more, and to calculate if you are statutory overcrowded visit the Shelter website:

[https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/repairs/overcrowding](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/repairs/overcrowding)

The screenshot shows the Shelter website's page for overcrowding. The header includes the Shelter logo, navigation links for 'Housing advice', 'Get help', 'Support us', 'Shop', 'What we do', 'Professionals', and 'Donate'. A search bar is also present. The main content area is titled 'Help if your home is overcrowded' and 'When you count as overcrowded'. It explains that government guidance recommends councils use an overcrowding measure called the 'bedroom standard'. It lists criteria for being counted as overcrowded under this standard: a couple, a single person aged 21 or over, a pair of children under 10 regardless of sex, and a pair of adolescents aged 10-20 of the same sex. It also notes that some councils use a different legal measure of overcrowding, called statutory overcrowding. At the bottom, it says 'Apply for a council or housing association home' and 'You can apply to the council for housing if your home is overcrowded.'

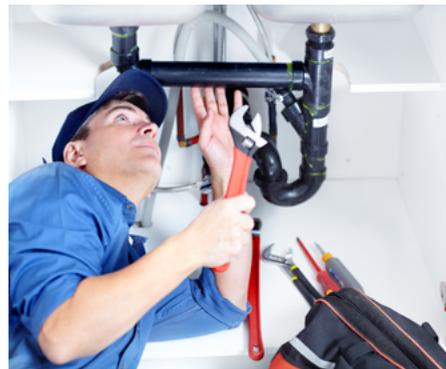


## Getting Repairs Done

### First Step - Report Repairs to Landlord:

Reporting a repair to the landlord should always be the first step. Landlords are usually only responsible for carrying out repairs that they have been told about. Any enforcement agency will want to know that the landlord has been given the chance to carry out repairs before they take any action.

- **Always make your report in writing or by email so that you have proof that you have reported the problem.** It is worth checking with the landlord that they have received this letter or email.
- **Keep copies of letters/emails and records, including dates of visits or phone calls.**
- **You can report repairs to your letting agent but it is best to write direct to the landlord.**
- **Tenants have the right to know the name and contact details of their landlord.** If you request this in writing from the letting agent they have 21 days to provide this or they can be fined up to £2,500.
- **Send a reminder letter if your landlord doesn't respond.** Shelter have a template reminder letter on their website suggesting you demand that the landlord gets back to you within 48 hours and, if the repair is not carried out in 14 days you will contact the Council's Environmental Health department.



## 8. General Repairs and Responsibilities

### What to do if your landlord won't do repairs:

#### 1) If a letting agent manages repairs on behalf of your landlord

- You can use their complaints procedure to try and prompt them to arrange the repairs.
- If this doesn't work you can make a complaint to the Letting Agent Redress Scheme. Letting Agents must join one of the three government approved redress schemes. If they are found not to have joined a scheme they are liable for a fixed penalty of £5,000.
- Letting agent redress schemes provide a free, independent service for resolving disputes between letting agents and their customers. The letting agency has to comply with any orders to pay you compensation, to pay a fine or to put something right. Tell the scheme if the letting agent doesn't comply.

#### 2) Complain to environmental health

You can complain to your local Council **Environmental Health** department.

- If your landlord won't do repairs and this affects your health and safety in your home, you can ask your local council to visit to inspect the condition of your home.

An Environmental Health visit should be free of charge. If an Environmental Health officer considers your housing to be harmful to your health and safety they can decide to:

- Order your landlord to carry out repairs or improvements – they'll serve your landlord with an improvement notice.
- Do the repairs and charge your landlord for the work.

When conditions are very bad, the council can:

- Make a prohibition order – this restricts access to all or part of your home or restricts the number of people who can live there.
- Order the demolition of the property.

In less serious cases, the council can serve a hazard notice to make your landlord aware of the problem.



### 3) Consider legal Action

- It may be possible to take your landlord to court if you reported repairs but they weren't done.
- You may be able to claim compensation if repair problems in your home made you or someone in your home ill; damaged your belongings or caused you inconvenience.
- Legal aid may be available if your health and safety is at risk. There are strict rules for who qualifies. You may qualify if you have a low income or claim benefits.
- If you do not qualify for legal aid ask a solicitor about conditional fee arrangements. This can mean that you do not pay a fee if you lose your case.

Talk to a housing adviser or a solicitor at a law centre or independent firm before making any decisions. **Shelter** can help you find local advice services. Phone 0344 515 1540 or go to [http://england.shelter.org.uk/get\\_advice/advice\\_services](http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/advice_services) directory for more help.

### Rent Reductions when repairs are a problem

- You do not have the right to stop paying rent because repairs are needed. If you stop paying your rent you could lose your home.
- You can ask your landlord for a rent reduction if you are not able to use part of your home or because the repairs are very disruptive.
- If you take your landlord to court or the Housing Ombudsman you might, under certain circumstances, be awarded compensation.

### Worried about eviction?

Get advice if you are worried about being evicted if you ask for a repair. Call **Shelter's** free national helpline on 0808 800 4444.

You can get further support from the following organisations to help ensure your home is protected:

Organisation	Type of support	Contact details
(Find out your) Gas Supplier	Gas	0870 608 1524
(Find out your) Electricity Supplier	Electricity	0800 029 4285
UK Job Centre (National Careers)	Careers/ Universal Credit	0800 100 900
Citizens Advice	General / Debt / Universal Credit	0800 144 8848
Shelter	Defends the right of everyone to a safe home	0808 800 4444 <a href="http://www.england.shelter.org.uk/get_help">www.england.shelter.org.uk/get_help</a>
Solace Women's Aid	Works to prevent violence against women and girls	0808 802 5565
Renters rights London	Information and Support for private renters	020 3826 4783 <a href="http://www.rentersrightslondon.org/about/">www.rentersrightslondon.org/about/</a>

**Additional contacts in your area:**