

COSY



The Government's Energy Bill Support Scheme

Do you need energy advice or information?

Energy use affects all of us in different ways – whether it's trying to reduce what we use for environmental reasons, needing to keep warmer in the winter months or finding ways to pay a bit less for what we use. To lend a hand with understanding and controlling our energy use we have two Community Energy Advisers serving rural Northumberland – Leanne Shipley and Brian Watson.

Over the past 12 months Leanne and Brian have been engaging with groups and individuals with the main aim of helping people to keep warmer and spend less through a wide variety of strategies. These have ranged from installing free simple measures to improve the energy efficiency of homes, looking into ways of paying less for energy, accessing financial help, adopting more energy-efficient habits and, if appropriate,

applying for a grant to make more substantial improvements to the house.

If you would like a home visit from Leanne or Brian and live in rural Northumberland please get in touch with them. Please note they both work part-time so there may be a slight delay in returning your call or email.

Contact our Energy Advisers

Leanne Shipley

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Brian Watson

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£400 energy bills discount to support households this winter
see page 5

Our EARN project is one year old!

Here's what we have done over the last 12 months

- 142 home visits, Fitted over 2,100 free energy saving measures in homes,
- 306 face to face energy appointments, Received 178 energy related phone calls,
- 1,258 people attending energy workshops, £141,000 is the financial benefit for our clients
- Energy advice has reached over 20,000 people via social media



What is the Energy Bills Support Scheme?

The government recognises that many households need support to help deal with rising energy bills. That is why it's providing a package of support worth £37 billion which includes the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

Through the Scheme, domestic electricity customers in Great Britain will receive a £400 grant which will appear as a credit from energy suppliers from October 2022 onwards. This will not need to be repaid.

Will I be eligible for the Energy Bills Support Scheme?

All households with a domestic electricity connection will be automatically eligible for the £400 grant. There is no need to contact energy suppliers concerning this at this point.

Do I need to apply for the support scheme?

Households will not need to apply for the Scheme, and in most cases we expect electricity suppliers to apply the reduction automatically to bills from October 2022.

The Government are working hard to design the delivery of this and there may be some variations in how consumers receive the benefit, depending on how they pay for their energy, for example whether by direct debit or through a prepayment meter. However, all households with a domestic electricity meter should receive the £400 reduction.

Is it a government loan?

This is a grant and will not need to be repaid. The earlier policy to recoup the payment has been cancelled following a further analysis of the sustained high energy prices and input received

by spreading some of the costs over a few years, so they are more manageable for households.

When will we receive further clarity on the design and delivery of the scheme?

The Government are working on the specifics of delivery and are actively engaging with energy suppliers, consumer groups and Ofgem to ensure that delivering this grant is as simple and efficient as possible.

A consultation on the Scheme concluded on 23 May. Responses are being analysed and the government response will be published later in the summer.

Is the scheme UK-wide?

The payment through energy bills will apply across England, Scotland and Wales.

I am on a traditional pre-payment meter, will I get the £400?

Yes. Previous schemes have used vouchers to reach those on prepayment meters and we will ensure that households whose energy is managed in this way will receive the grant.

If I live in a park home, will I get the £400? Or if I pay for energy in my rent, how do I make sure my landlord passes on the reduction?

The Government recognise that there are certain situations where a third party will be responsible for the bill (and be named on it). In these situations, any charges should then be passed onto the end user, typically through all-inclusive rent (landlord or tenant) or 'pitch' charges (for example park homes).

The Government are exploring this issue as they continue to develop the policy and they have gathered more evidence through the consultation.

I don't need this, can I opt-out?

All households with a domestic electricity connection will be automatically eligible for the £400 grant.

In line with the Government's high-level principles, they want to design a scheme that is simple to deliver while maximising the reach and ensuring that additional costs are minimised.

What if I change payment method or tariff, or if my energy supplier goes bust?

The Government are still designing the scheme but will ensure that customers who switch payment methods, or whose energy suppliers fail, will not be penalised.

What if I move house or switch supplier?

All suppliers will be applying the reduction to bills from October 2022.

This support does not fully cover the increased cost of the energy price cap – why not?

This scheme will help over 28 million households with the increased costs of global energy prices.

This £400 non-repayable grant for energy bills is in addition to a non-repayable £150 Council Tax rebate for those in England in bands A to D and £144 million in discretionary funding for local authorities to support households who are not eligible for the Council Tax reduction.

This means the majority of households will receive £550 in total.

When will we be informed on the final details and design of the scheme?

The fundamental elements of the Scheme are fixed, and the

Government are now working to design the detail of implementation and delivery.

The government response to its recent consultation on the scheme is expected to be published in the Summer.

If you have a pre-payment meter

Remember if you disconnect your gas pre-payment meter over the summer months the daily standing charge will still continue and the cost added to your meter, this can often accumulate debt. Try and keep topping up a little each week on your gas pre-payment meter to stop the cost building up.

- **Universal credit**
- **Income-based job seekers allowance**
- **Income related Employment and support allowance**
- **Income support**
- **Working tax credit**
- **Child tax credit**
- **Pension credit**

In addition:

A cost of living payment will be paid by the end of July directly into people's bank accounts, if they are eligible. This is £326, the money is from the Department of Work & Pensions.

A second payment of £324 will be paid in the autumn. This payment is for households that receive:

People on disability benefits will receive £150 in September (which may be on top of the cost of living payment above). This is for anyone that receives:

- * Disability Living Allowance
- * Personal Independence Payments
- * Attendance allowance
- * Scottish Disability Payments
- * Armed Forces Independence Payments
- * Constant Attendance Allowance
- * War pension Mobility Supplement

Still confused?

Contact our advisers for clarification

What has been announced?

Cost of living payments



8m lowest income households
£650



8m pensioner households
£300



6m receiving non means-tested disability benefits
£150



Energy grant for all households
£400

Northumberland Log Bank

Do you need wood fuel due to financial constraints, poor health, advanced age and/or rural isolation.

We can deliver **FREE** dry, seasoned logs.

THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THIS SERVICE

Please contact:

Kate Thick

Email: katethick@hotmail.com

Tel: 07900963234

The Northumberland Log Bank is a non-registered charity supported by Northumberland County Council.



OilCAN

Save money on your heating fuel

OilCAN is our bulk buying heating fuel service offering Northumberland residents, groups and businesses the opportunity to buy oil, liquid petroleum gas (LPG) and coal at lower prices. We combine the purchasing power of all our members to help them get the lowest possible prices for their heating fuels.

With OilCAN, you can:

- Save money on your fuel order
- Benefit from the lowest possible prices
- Order quickly and easily
- Receive your order within just ten days
- Get peace of mind knowing that if, for any reason, you run out, we can provide you with emergency provisions.

For more information contact

Carol on 01670 517178 or

email caroldavison@ca-north.org.uk

STOP PRESS

The new price cap should take effect on 1st October, we recommend you submit a meter reading on the 30th September to ensure it is included at the lower rate.

A Free Support Service

The Priority Services Register is a free support service to help people in vulnerable situations. Energy suppliers and network operators offer it, and each keeps their own register. You need to contact your energy supplier or network operator to get on it, alternatively contact our energy advisers who can register you directly. Electricity and gas suppliers must offer special services to customers who are of state pension age, have children under 5, customers with mobility issues or suffering from a chronic illness or have a visual or hearing impairment.

Among the benefits of being part of the PSR are:

- Free annual gas safety checks (subject to additional qualifying criteria)
- Priority in an emergency, this could include providing alternative heating and cooking facilities in the event of a loss of power supply
- Controls and adapters for appliances
- Meters moved to an accessible location for free (when possible)
- Meter reading service
- A password scheme
- Statements in large print or braille
- Statement nomination scheme

£400 energy bills discount to support households this winter

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) announced that millions of households across Great Britain will receive non-repayable discounts on their energy bills this winter, as the UK government today (Friday 29 July) sets out further details of the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

The £400 discount, administered by energy suppliers, will be paid to consumers over 6 months with payments starting from October 2022, to ensure households receive financial support throughout the winter months.

Those with a domestic electricity meter point paying for their energy via standard credit, payment card and direct debit will receive an automatic deduction to their bills over the 6-month period – totalling £400.

In all cases, no household should be asked for bank details at any point. Ministers are urging consumers to stay alert of potential scams and report these to the relevant authorities where they are suspected.

Announcement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/400-energy-bills-discount-to-support-households-this-winter>



Winter Fuel Payment



If you were born on or before 25 September 1956 you could get between £250 and £600 to help you pay your heating bills. This is known as a 'Winter Fuel Payment'.

The amount you will receive includes your 'pensioner cost of living payment'. This is between £150 and £300. You'll only get this extra amount in winter 2022 to 2023. This is in addition to any Cost of Living Payment you get with your benefit or tax credits.

You will get your Winter Fuel Payment automatically, you do not need to claim if you are eligible and either:

- Get the State Pension
- Get another social security benefit (not Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Child Benefit or Universal Credit)

If you do not get either of these, or if you live abroad, you may need to make a claim.

If you've received a Winter Fuel Payment before, you do not need to claim again unless you've deferred your State Pension or moved abroad.

The deadline for you to make a claim for winter 2022 to 2023 is 31 March 2023.

Cold Weather Payment

You'll get a cold weather payment if the average temperature in your area is recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees Celsius or below over 7 consecutive days.

You'll get £25 for each 7 day period of very cold weather between 1 November and 31 March.

This year's scheme will start on 1 November 2022. You'll be able to check if your area is due a payment from November 2022.

Cold Weather Payments are different to Winter Fuel Payments
www.gov.uk

Changes to Warm Home Discount

The Warm Home Discount is a one-off payment to the those at risk of fuel poverty over the winter months. This winter (2022-23), it's rising from £140 to £150, however the eligibility criteria has changed. If you are eligible the money will be added as a credit to your electricity bill. If you have a pre-payment meter you will receive a top up voucher. If you are eligible you will receive the payment automatically but only if electricity supplier is part of the Warm Home Discount scheme. If your unsure, you should ask your supplier if they participate in the Warm Homes Discount Scheme. Getting a Warm Home Discount doesn't affect your entitlement to the Winter Fuel Payment or Cold Weather Payment.

Some suppliers also offer indirect help to customers as part of the Warm Home Discount scheme. This might include advice on using less energy and help with reducing energy-related debts.

Are you eligible for the Warm Home Discount?

The eligibility requirements for Warm Home Discount have changed this winter (2022-23). If you have received it previously that does not mean that you will necessarily still qualify. Eligible people are grouped into 2 categories:

Core Group 1:

You must meet ALL the following criteria

- Your energy supplier participates in the scheme
- You or your partners name is on the bill
- One of you must receive the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit

Most customers in Core Group 1 receive this automatically because of a data matching exercise between DWP and energy suppliers. If you qualify for the Warm Home Discount you will receive a letter in autumn or winter telling you.

Core Group 2:

You must meet ALL the following criteria

- Your supplier is a compulsory participant in the scheme
- Your name is on the energy bill
- You are likely to have high energy costs (see below for how this is calculated)
- Your household is in receipt of one of the following means tested benefits:
 - Income related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Income based Job Seekers Allowance
 - Income Support
 - Universal Credit
 - Housing Benefit
 - Child Tax Credits and Working Tax Credits
 - Pension Credit Savings Credit

Government data is used to identify low income and high energy cost households under core group 2. Data is matched on benefits and Tax Credit receipt, which is held by the DWP with property characteristics provided by VOA (Valuation Office Agency) the government will assess your energy costs based on the type, age and size of your property. If you think the assessment is inaccurate, you can challenge it.

Renewables Anyone?

We've gathered together the latest information on what different technologies are currently on offer, the benefits and drawbacks associated with each one, along with the installation and running costs. Here is a snapshot of what is available on our website:

www.energyadvicenorthumberland.org.uk/renewables/

Interest in renewables is increasing as people consider how they can reduce their energy costs and at the same time reduce their carbon footprint.

Government is looking to encourage home-owners and landlords to do more to make their homes more energy efficient

and an important part of this is switching to greener ways to heat their homes.

A number of incentives are available, in addition to savings arising from producing free electricity and hot water from one or more of the technologies available.

Whilst the upfront cost of installing renewable technologies may be high, this can be offset by long term rewards – through reducing heating and hot water bills whilst at the same time reducing reliance on fossil fuels and avoiding the inexorable rise in costs of oil, gas and electricity.



Solar PV Panels

Solar PV convert direct sunlight into energy which can be used directly in your home.

Northumberland County Council Warmer Homes fund may help fund the installation of panels.

However, if you are not eligible for an NCC grant the cost of panels has reduced dramatically over the past few years and with increasing electricity prices, solar panels again an attractive investment for home-owners.

The average home will usually accommodate 4kws of solar panels (16 panels at 250 watts each) and this 4 kw figure is important as systems up to this size do not require special permission to be connected to the electricity grid.



Solar Thermal Systems

Solar thermal use the heat from the sun to heat your hot water and systems are simple, robust and need little maintenance.

There are two types, flat plate and evacuated tubes. Flat plate systems are cheaper to install.

Hybrid Solar Panels

Photovoltaic thermal systems looks like a standard pv array but produces lots of hot water as well as electricity.

Extracting heat makes the pv panels more efficient therefore increasing electricity production.

When combined with a heat pump, systems can give good all year round performance.



Biomass

Biomass heating is the combustion of grown products, normally wood based such as wood pellets, logs and wood chips. Pellets are clean, easy to store but more expensive than logs or wood chips.

Logs and wood chip are cheaper but are difficult to manage, need a large area for storage and must be kept dry. Wood chip is not suitable for domestic installations.

Both pellet and log systems are available as boilers or stoves with back boilers. The main difference is that pellet stoves/boilers work as the principal heat source but log stoves/boilers don't.

This is because pellets have a standard calorific value and can be fed at a consistent rate into the burner so a level heat output can be maintained. Logs cannot be controlled in the same way, so heat output varies with the quality of the logs and the amount of wood in the stove/boiler.

A log boiler can provide lots of heat but needs lots of manual loading of logs whilst pellet boilers can be automated. Pellet burning equipment is more expensive.



Heat Pumps

An air source heat pumps works like a fridge in reverse, taking air from outside the home extracts the heat and compresses it and passes the heat to water, which in turn heats the house. It is the same size as an air conditioning unit and physically replaces the boiler.

A heating system must be carefully designed and works best in an air tight, well insulated house. Radiators tend to be much larger than normal as the heat produced by the air source heat pump is lower than say, a gas boiler.

In effect, an air source heat pump will produce around three kws for each kw it uses, which the multiplier being called the coefficient of performance.

Air source heat pumps work well with underfloor heating.

If you would like more information regarding renewable technology, please contact Brian Watson

Email: brianwatson@ca-north.org.uk

Mobile: 07715408343

or check out our website: www.energyadvicenorthumberland.org.uk/renewables/

Landlords to face £5,000 fine for missing alarms, from 1 October

1 AUGUST 2022

On Friday 29 July, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published their guidance for the incoming laws for smoke and carbon monoxide alarms:

- Landlords, social housing providers and local authorities are all advised to get ready for the incoming regulations, which will come into force in England on 1 October.
- Rented properties will be required to have carbon monoxide alarms in all rooms where there is a 'fixed combustion appliance' except for a as cooker.
- Alarm type, power source, and placement are not specified under the new laws.
- Landlords can be fined for each breach, meaning they can be issued with unlimited £5,000 fines.
- Tenants will be expected to replace alarm batteries when required.
- Local authorities will be responsible for enforcing the new regulations.
- The guidance accepts that local authorities cannot bring enforcement action against themselves. In this instance, it is noted that judicial review is one way of challenging the action of public bodies.
- It is not clear how tenants should report a missing alarm or non-compliance.

www.policyconnect.org.uk

If you would like more information on Carbon Monoxide safety please contact our team at Community Action Northumberland.

GUIDE SHEET

A GUIDE TO CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS

A CO alarm detects the presence of carbon monoxide (CO) gas in order to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. CO alarms have evolved to become safety critical devices, constantly monitoring to protect people from poisonous CO gas, known as the silent killer.

WHO NEEDS A CO ALARM?

All properties with fuel-burning appliances should have a CO alarm. Whether it's a gas boiler, a coal fire or a flue running through the room, a CO alarm should be present in each area where a potential CO source may occur. The same applies to leisure vehicles such as caravans and boats, where additional risks are often present; with other vehicles, engines or generators increasing the risk. If you're camping, CO can even enter your tent from a smouldering BBQ outside, so always take an alarm with you when travelling.

CO ALARM FEATURES AND TYPES

CERTIFICATION

An alarm should carry a British or European Standard to **EN 50291**.

AUDIBLE ALARM

Early warning of CO is critical, especially if you are asleep. An audible alarm will notify of the danger as early as possible.

POWER SOURCE

Both mains powered and battery powered are available. Some alarms have replaceable batteries, and some are sealed for the life of the alarm - eliminating the risk of the alarm being inactive when you need it most.

DIGITAL DISPLAY

A digital display will visually warn of low CO levels - that are not high enough to sound an alarm, but can still be dangerous to those most at risk.

WIRELESS INTERLINK

Some alarms have the ability to link with other CO and smoke alarms, enabling all linked alarms to sound at the same time.

WIRELESS DATA EXTRACTION

Landlords and engineers can now connect their tablet or phone to some alarms to access historical data and view any low levels that have been detected.

Find out more at: <https://www.coalarmssavelives.com/about-carbon-monoxide-alarms>

SUPPORTED BY

Warmer Homes Grant

As energy prices continue to rise, fuel poverty will affect more Northumberland residents and NCC are actively working to ease fuel poverty across the County.

NCC's Warmer Homes scheme can help homeowners in Northumberland make energy-saving improvements to their homes whilst improving comfort and affordability.

What you could receive

Through their Warmer Homes scheme, you could receive:

- Heating controls to help control the temperature of your home.
- Insulation for walls and lofts to keep the heat in.
- Heating measures which use less carbon, such as air source heat pumps.
- Renewable energy generation such as solar panels.



Eligibility

To be eligible you must meet both of the following criteria:

- If your home has an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D, E, F or G (if your property does not currently have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) an EPC survey can be undertaken as part of the home survey).
- Your household income is less than £30,000 or someone living in your home receives benefits including Universal Credit,

Income Support and Disability Allowance or the occupants are assessed as at risk of fuel poverty.

Private landlords can also apply, however the maximum fundable by Warmer Homes for landlord properties is 66%. This funding is supplied by the Government.

https://form.northumberland.gov.uk/form/auto/warm_homes_fund or ring on 0345 600 6400

Contact Us

If you would like any help or advice please contact CAN

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