

Getting the best out of your home – energy

We are dedicated to helping residents get the best out of their homes. This leaflet provides useful information on where to get advice on staying warm and keeping well in winter.

Is your home warm?

If you think your home is cold and not insulated enough or your heating system is not working properly, please contact your housing association and explain your concerns.

Staying healthy

For information on keeping warm and healthy in winter visit: www.nhs.uk/livewell/winterhealth

Winter fuel payments

If you are aged over 60 years you are eligible for a winter fuel payment of £250 rising to £400 for people aged 80 years plus. If you do not receive one and think you should please telephone **0845 915 1515** or fill out an application form on line by visiting www.direct.gov.uk and type in winter fuel allowance in the search box.

Priority energy services

If you are living on a low income, retired or disabled you are likely to be a priority service customer and eligible to receive more help with paying your energy bills from your energy provider. To find out more contact the Home Heat Helpline telephone **0800 33 66 99**

Energy efficiency advice

For free independent energy efficiency advice contact South West Energy Saving Trust advice centre telephone **0800 512 012** (9 am – 5pm, Monday to Friday) or visit www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

Changing your energy supplier

If you have never changed your gas or electric supplier you could be paying more than you need to. In general, you will get the best price if you pay by direct debit and get gas and electric from the same energy supplier. New regulations mean you should have been sent an **annual energy statement** from your supplier telling you how much energy you have used and any terms and conditions of your contract. Keep this it is important. Contact your present supplier to see if they can offer you a better deal. Next check your statement to see that there are no hidden penalty charges if you change supplier.

If you are thinking of changing from a prepayment meter to a standard meter a new energy provider might charge you a fee, usually in the region of £50. To find out if you can get a better deal there are lots of energy comparison websites and services on the market. One of the biggest is **energylinx** who have set up a dedicated website and phone line for social housing organisations in the South West. If you would like to use this service telephone **0800 310 2183** or visit: <http://energy.advantagesw.co.uk/> If you change supplier using this website a fee will be paid to the housing associations to be used to combat fuel poverty.

Cold calling and bogus callers

Be very careful of anyone trying to get you to change your energy supplier. New regulations state doorstep sales people must not mislead the public and must provide you with a written estimate, sales literature that is clear, accurate and easy to understand.

Want to complain about your energy company?

To find out about changing energy provider or to make a complaint contact Consumer Direct, telephone **0845 404 0506** or visit www.consumerdirect.gov.uk This service may transfer to the Citizen Advice Bureau as part of the government's recent spending review.

Power cuts and gas leaks

For electricity blackouts telephone **0800 365 900**
For emergency gas leaks telephone **0800 111 999**

To find out who supplies energy to your home

For electricity contact Western Power telephone

0845 601 5972

For gas contact Wales and West Utilities telephone

0870 165 0597

You will need to give your full address and postcode.



Getting the best out of your home – energy

Some energy providers offer a reduced energy price (social tariff) or other products to help low income households manage their fuel bills. These are mostly provided to existing customers. From April 2011 the government intends to introduce 'Social Price Support' which will require energy providers to offer the best tariff to low income and vulnerable households.

Economy 10

EDF, Scottish and Southern and E.ON offer economy 10 meters that work on a similar basis to economy 7 but offer 10 instead of 7 hours off peak cheaper electricity. Those using air source heat pumps that feed hot water through radiators maybe better off with this type of meter. To receive an information leaflet about them visit

www.dcha.co.uk and click on living in your home, saving energy and water or telephone **0300 123 8080** and ask for Rose Hunter, Involvement and Green Living Manager.

EDF (was SWEB)

The Energy Assist tariff offers EDF customers a 6% discount on EDF Energy's standard energy prices and £37.50 discount per fuel (gas and electric) on your annual bill. In order to be eligible customers must either: spend more than 10% of their total net annual household income on their annual household energy costs; or be in receipt of Income Support or Pension Credit benefits. There are no confusing forms to fill in as the assessment can be done over the phone. The phone operator will need your National Insurance number and date of birth. To find out if you are eligible for the social tariff please telephone **0800 269 450**.

Ebico

Ebico are a not for profit organisation and offer the same tariff for gas and electric regardless of how you pay your bill so they are very good for key and card meter users. They offer a simple to understand tariff and their energy is supplied by Scottish and Southern. They can be contacted on telephone **0800 458 7689** and free for some mobiles **01993 608404**, email: info@ebico.co.uk and web site www.ebico.org.uk

E.ON

E.ON offers a WarmAssist social tariff giving a 15% discount on standard electric and gas prices to customers who have been with E.ON for at least 12 months and are over 80 or are over 60 and in receipt of either Pension Credit, disabled living or attendance allowance. They also offer a benefit check. To find out how you may be eligible for the WarmAssist tariff please telephone **0800 404 6287**.

npower

Spreading Warmth tariff offers a reduction of 20% on standard prices for households with a gross annual income under £13,500 and where one individual is either aged over 60, disabled, suffers a chronic illness or has a child under 16. To find out more telephone **0808 172 6999** or **0800 975 1373**.

Scottish and Southern Electric (SSE)

Energy Plus Care is assessed on an individual basis and offers SSE customers a 20% discount on standard energy prices to those at risk of fuel poverty. They also offer a benefit check. To find out more you can telephone them on **0800 622 838** or **0800 300 111**. They also have a £50 winter care rebate for low income households who may not be eligible for the 20% discount.

Scottish Power

Scottish Power offer a social tariff also known as 'fresh start' to customers who are over 60 and receiving disability or income related benefits and pay by monthly cash plan (pay cash into a post office or bank) or prepayment meter and can save households up to £120 on their bill. They also offer a benefit check. To find out more telephone **0800 027 2700** or **0141 568 6182**.

British Gas (Centrica)

The Essentials Package offers a social tariff which can save money for gas and electricity customers and matches their lowest tariff offered to direct debit customers. You have to be registered disabled or over 70 and in receipt of a means tested benefit and have a household income of below £15,000. If you pay by prepayment meter telephone **0800 294 8604**. For any other payment method telephone **0800 072 7100**.

Green electricity

If you are concerned about climate change and would like to get your electricity from renewable sources like hydroelectric, solar or wind you can change your electricity tariff to a renewable one. There are two companies worth looking at: Good Energy, telephone **0845 456 1640** or visit www.good-energy.co.uk and Ecotricity who match the price of EDF for standard electric and British Gas for their gas telephone **08000 302 302** or visit www.ecotricity.co.uk





Getting the best out of y

Everyone needs water to survive but for those living on a low or fixed income paying your water bills can be expensive. Listed below are useful water emergency contact details and some things to consider that could help you save water and money.

Worried about paying bills

If you've got unpaid bills from a fuel supplier, and you receive Income Support, Pension Credit, Employment and Support Allowance or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, you can **ask your benefits office** to pay the supplier directly out of your benefit. This system is called **Fuel Direct**. It covers your current fuel use and also pays off a certain amount of your unpaid bill each week.

Get help

For advice on debt and your rights contact your nearest **Citizens Advice Bureau** for help visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk and put in your postcode to find your local office.

If you are in extreme financial difficulties and are really struggling to pay your bills some energy companies have set up charitable trusts and hardship funds.

British Gas Energy Trust Scottish Gas Energy Trust

For customers to help with one-off payments of energy arrears telephone **01733 421050**.

www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk
www.scottishgasenergytrust.org.uk

EDF Energy Trust

For customers of EDF (formerly SWEB) to help with one-off payments for household bills and costs telephone **01733 421050**. For an application form telephone **01733 421060**. or email edfet@charisgrants.com or complete the application form on line.

www.edfenergytrust.org.uk

E.ON (was Powergen) CaringEnergy Fund

For customers of E.ON telephone **0800 051 1480**.

npower First Step Fund

For customers who are having difficulties in paying their energy bills contact the Warm Response Line telephone **01733 421060** www.npowerenergytrust.org.uk

Also worth visiting the Turn2us web site www.turn2us.org.uk or telephone **0808 802 2000** who can offer a grant and benefit search service funded through the Elizabeth Finn Foundation.

Water leaks WITHIN THE HOME

Turn off the water supply at the stop tap. If water has gone into any electrical fittings, you should also turn off your electric supply.

If you fully rent and your home is managed by:

Devon & Cornwall Housing telephone **0300 123 8080** during and out of office hours. Apart from supported and sheltered housing residents who have out of hours arrangements as follows:

Supported housing residents in Devon and Cornwall telephone Call24 on **01752 791717**

Sheltered housing residents in Devon telephone Call24 on **01752 791717**

Sheltered housing residents in Cornwall and Torridge telephone Cornwall Council/Carrick Lifeline on **01872 222810**

If you live in Mitchell Court or College Green you should telephone Sovereign on **01635 279507**

Penwith Housing Association Tel **0300 303 8030** during and out of office hours

Tor Homes Tel **0800 316 8839** during and out of office hours.

Water emergency numbers OUTSIDE OF THE HOME

Water – burst mains pipe telephone **South West Water 0800 169 1144**

Advice regarding floods, telephone **Flood Line 0845 988 1188**

How is your home metered?

If your home was built after 1989 you will have been fitted with a water meter and generally households with a water meter tend to be more careful about their water consumption and pay less, this is particularly so for single people and couples. If you pay standard water bills based on your council tax band you might wish to change to a meter. Looking at South West Water's 2010-11 charges, if your annual un-metered bill is over £500 and you use less than 100,000 litres of water you will save money by changing to a water meter. If you use 60,000 litres of water or below you could save around £200. See the chart opposite to work out how much water you use. To do this you need to work out how much water you use per week then multiply it by 52.

Activity	Litres	Frequency	Total water used in litres
Bath	114 x	Number per week	
Shower (ordinary)	35 x	Number per week	
Shower (power)	90 x	Number per week	
Toilet flushes	9 x	No per day x 7	
Automatic washing machine	114 x	Number of uses per week	
Dishwasher	40 x	Number of uses per week	
Cooking, drinking, hand basin use, washing dishes, clothes by hand	25 x	Number of people in property x 7	
Plus hosepipe/sprinkler	23 x	Number of minutes used a week x number of weeks used a year	
Total weekly amount used			
Times weekly total by 52 for annual use			

The water meter will be fitted free and if you decide you want to go back to unmetered water billing you can change back within 12 months of the date of installing the meter (once you know how much water you have used for the year). To find out more visit South West Water's website www.southwestwater.co.uk and click on apply for a meter or telephone **0800 169 1144**, minicom 0800 169 9965.

Water charges for those who can not have a meter fitted

If South West Water tells you they cannot fit a water meter you will be eligible for an "assessed charge" based on the number of people that live in the property. Often this is lower than the standard un-metered charge – for example the maximum for a single person per year for both water and sewage is £309 and for a couple is £472.50.

Properties where a meter cannot be fitted are most likely to be blocks of flats and those where access is difficult to fit a meter.

You are only eligible to apply for an assessed charge if you first apply for a meter and when South West Water complete a survey they find that one cannot be fitted. They will then give you another form to apply for the assessed charge. The meter applications are available by telephoning **0800 169 1133** or you can complete the application online at www.southwestwater.co.uk and click on apply for a meter.



Paying a reduced water bill

South West Water have a scheme named 'Water Sure' to help people on low incomes with young children and/or special medical conditions to get help with paying for their water bills.

To be eligible for help you must be in receipt of one or more of the following: **council tax benefit, housing benefit, income support, job-seekers allowance, new working tax credit, child tax credit or pension credit** and either:

- have three or more children under the age of 19 living with you for whom you receive child benefit.
- have someone living with you that has one of the following medical conditions: a skin condition, eczema, psoriasis, varicose ulceration, desquamation, or incontinence, abdominal stomas, ulcerative colitis, kidney failure and that as a result of the condition, the person affected is obliged to use significant additional volumes of water.



To find out more please telephone South West Water on **0800 169 1133** and ask for the Water Sure tariff scheme, you will need to give your water account number, which you will find on your water bill.

Dealing with leaks

If you have a meter and your water bill suddenly goes up in price you could have a water leak that is hidden from view. If you can get to your water meter safely you can check this yourself. Make sure that no water is running in your home (washing machine, flushing the toilet) and then read your meter. If it is located outside on the street take off the cover (you might need a screwdriver) check the meter number matches your bill (that the meter is yours) and then see if the numbers are moving – if they are you could have a leak. Telephone for a repair to be done. Once the leak is found and repaired contact South West Water telephone **0800 169 1133** and ask for a customer meter advisor to come and visit your home to check. If after visiting they are satisfied there is now no leak they will send you a 'non service leak allowance form' – to be completed. Following receipt of this South West Water will decide if they can reduce the debt from leaking water especially if the leak was unknown (piping from meter to front door) to the customer.

In debt and can't pay – Watercare and Water Direct

If you have built up water debts that you are struggling to pay contact South West Water debtline immediately telephone **0800 083 0283** and explain the situation. Their 'watercare scheme' provides one to one advice, a benefit check and a 'restart' payment plan and if you keep up your payments for every £1 you pay back South West Water contribute a £1. You can ask a carer or housing member of staff to refer you to this scheme. **Water Direct** - If you are on Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support or Pension Credits you can ask for payment for your water to be made directly to South West Water.

If you have internet access and are interested in finding out more about water saving visit **South West Water's website** www.southwestwater.co.uk and click on how to save water.

For more help and tips please visit www.waterwise.org.uk



If you have one, shower instead of having a bath, or if you have a bath, only half fill it. Please visit www.waterwise.org.uk for details.

Prepare for summer droughts (we might have a hot summer next year!) well in advance and buy a **water butt**. The rain that runs off your roof runs straight into the sewers and it makes good sense to save it and reuse it in the garden or for washing the car if you have one. If you intend to collect rainwater from your roof, most water butts come with a rainwater diverter that requires you to drill a hole into a down pipe. You should notify your housing adviser that you intend to do this as this is classified as a 'material change' to your home.

Repair dripping taps or overflows. A dripping tap or overflow wastes 5,500 litres of water a year: that's enough water wasted to fill a paddling pool every week for the whole summer. If you have a dripping tap contact your housing office or customer services team to get it repaired; mending one dripping tap or overflow could save you as much as £50 a year.

Put a Hippo or Hog in your toilet cistern. You can obtain one of these for free from South West Water, **Conservation Helpline** telephone **0800 378937 (7am to 10pm any day)**. They will need to know what size of toilet cistern you have, generally speaking toilets fitted pre 1991 were 9 litres or more and require a hippo, and toilets fitted from 1992 to 2001 were 7.5 litres and require a hog. Alternatively you could fill a plastic bottle with water and put it in your cistern.

Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth - a running tap wastes over 6 litres per minute. If the entire adult population of England and Wales remembered to do this, we could save 180 mega litres a day-enough to supply nearly 500,000 homes.

If you are replacing your **washing machine** buy a new water efficient A rated model.

If you use a tumble dryer in the winter and have a linoleum floor covering in the kitchen, re-use the warm water collected in the plastic tank to wash the floor.

If you have a car, use a bucket and sponge to wash it. Just 30 minutes with a hosepipe will use more water than the average family uses in a day. And, using a bucket will give your car a much more precise wash.

Fill a jug with tap water and leave it to cool in your fridge. This way you don't have to run the tap for ages just to get a cold drink.

Take charge of your energy

Take charge of your energy

Three steps to success:

1. **make friends with your meter**, read your meter regularly and write down the meter reading with the date. Knowing how much energy you are using helps you identify where you can save energy.
2. **get organised**, keep energy bills, especially your annual statement that energy companies have to send you as this will say much energy you used in the last year. This information helps you if you decide to switch energy provider and get a better deal.
3. **talk to your energy company**, at least once a year to make sure you are getting the best deal, if you are on a low income, ask about their social tariff, if you are struggling to pay your bill, tell them – don't let the debt build up.

Energy efficiency

There are lots of good energy efficiency information leaflets explaining what you can do to save energy in your home and avoid condensation.

Here is a short list of actions to take to save energy in winter:

- at night, pull the curtains to stop heat being lost through the windows, taking care not to drape them over radiators
- don't dry wet clothes on radiators
- dress warmly, put an extra jumper on instead of turning up the heating
- avoid opening windows and doors to cool a room if it is too hot; turn down your heating instead
- turn lights off in empty rooms
- don't leave your T.V and other electrical equipment on standby as they still carry on using energy
- let warm food cool to room temperature before you put it in your fridge
- defrost fridges and freezers regularly, don't leave the fridge door open and where possible to keep them running efficiently place them away from cookers and heaters
- wait until you have a full load of washing before using your washing machine and if not heavily stained wash at a low temperature (30°C)
- don't overfill your kettle when you make drinks but be sure the water covers the element
- use a toaster rather than an electric grill to make toast
- use energy efficient light bulbs.

How much does it cost?

Electrical energy is measured in watts and kilowatt hours (kWh). There are 1000 watts in one kilowatt. When you look at your electric bill or read your card meter you will be able to see how much electricity you have used and how much it costs you per kWh unit. When writing this the average standard electric tariff was 13p per kWh and this means if you use a 2 kWh electric fan for an hour it would cost you 26p. When you buy electric appliances they will have a label that says how much energy they use per hour. Some older electrical appliances are surprisingly expensive to run which is why if you are buying a new fridge, washing machine or electric cooker always choose A rated. Listed below is the average consumption rate of everyday electrical appliances in the home.

Appliance	Power rating	kWh	Cost to run 1 hour rounded to nearest 1p
Electric cooker (hob and oven)	12000 watts	12	£1.56
Immersion heater	3000 watts	3	39p
Old washing machine	2500 watts	2.5	33p
New A rated washing machine	1000 watts	1	13p
Kettle	2400 watts	2.4	31p
Television	150 watts	0.15	2p
Hair dryer	350 watts	.35	5p
Old fridge	350 watts	.35	5p
New A rated fridge freezer	26 watts	.026	Under 5p per week
Tungsten light bulb	100 watts	.1	1p
Energy saving light bulb	20 watts	.020	5 hours for 1p
Convactor heater Fan heater	2000 watts	2	26p
Panel heater	1500 watts	1.5	20p
Infra-red/ halogen heater	1000 watts	1	13p
Large old storage heater using night time economy 7 tariff of 5p per kWh	17000 watts	17	85p