

Robert  
Courts MP



# ENERGY GUIDE



A **FREE** information  
booklet from your local  
Member of Parliament



# **Energy Saving Guide Winter 2021/22**

**I have launched this energy saving guide to help residents in West Oxfordshire to save money by becoming more energy efficient.**

It is vital that local people get the support and advice they need to make their homes more energy efficient and reduce energy costs.

One of the main problems facing many households is being aware of what help and support is available to help save money and save energy. With the winter bearing down on us I hope you find this guide useful and that you will be able to reduce your costs.

*Robert Courts*

**Robert Courts MP**



# How to make your home more energy efficient.



## Smart Meters

Smart meters give consumers more control over their energy use, end estimated energy bills and make it easier to switch suppliers. In June 2020, the Government introduced a new four-year policy framework with fixed annual installation targets for energy suppliers, ensuring suppliers are responsible for the installation of smart meters.



Smart meters show near real time energy usage which is displayed in a clear format. Rather than kilowatt hours which often cause confusion, pounds and pence are shown so that you can keep a close eye on how much energy you are using.

This will bring an end to the use of 'estimated billing' by energy companies and you will only be charged for the actual energy that you use. **Your energy supplier will contact you directly about installing a smart meter or you can contact them immediately to request an installation.**

## Cavity Wall Insulation

**Approximately one third of heat lost in an uninsulated home is through the walls.** Insulating your walls is a very cost effective way of saving money and energy in your home.

If your home was built between the 1920s and the 1990s then insulating your walls could save you £110 on your annual heating bills. Not all homes can be insulated in this way, so if your home is a solid wall construction or was built before the 1920s, you may wish to consider installing internal or external wall insulation which could save you £375 each year.

# How to make your home more energy efficient.



## Loft Insulation

An uninsulated loft can result in you losing 15% of the heating that you pay for. Insulating your loft with 270mm of insulation could save you up to £215 each year. Some energy companies offer free cavity wall and loft insulation so check with your provider.

[www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/home-insulation/roof-and-loft](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/home-insulation/roof-and-loft)

## Check your Boiler

If your boiler is over 15 years old then it could be time to replace it with a new energy efficient one. Replacing an old boiler with an A-rated condensing model with a full set of heating controls could save you a quarter of your annual heating bill immediately, which is £235 on average for a gas heated home.



## Look for the Energy Saving Trust Logo

When buying new electrical products, look for the Energy Saving Trust logo which is a quick and simple way of finding the most energy efficient products. Electrical appliances such as televisions, computers and kettles, as well as heating and lighting products will have this logo prominently displayed.

## Insulate your Hot Water Tank

An insulating jacket for a hot water tank does not cost very much and very soon pays for itself. Fitting a jacket that is 75mm or three inches thick will save about £35 each year.

## Close your Curtains

As the days grow shorter as winter approaches, closing your curtains at dusk helps to stop heat escaping through windows. This is a simple and free way of reducing wasted energy and your energy bills.

## Energy Efficient Light Bulbs

**Energy saving bulbs last up to 10 times as long as regular bulbs** and if you replace all your light bulbs with energy efficient ones, you could save up to £45 each year and £670 over the lifetime of all the bulbs.

## Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI)

The Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive encourages residents to lower their carbon emissions and make use of renewable energy.



The Government provides a financial incentive for up to 7 years for homes which use:

- Biomass boilers
- Solar Water Heaters
- Certain Heat Pumps

For more information on this scheme or to check if your home is eligible to take part, telephone **0300 003 0744**.

## Your Energy Supplier

You could save money by switching to another energy supplier that is best suited to your needs.

In order to get advice on which supplier and price plan would be best for you, you can visit **www.ofgem.gov.uk** or contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau who will provide free and impartial advice as well as information on how to choose and change energy suppliers.



## Switching made easy.

**The Government has introduced a range of measures to make it easier for consumers to switch energy suppliers. The time that it takes to change energy supplier is now only 17 days, enabling consumers to benefit from reduced bills a lot sooner.**

The process has also been simplified, with energy companies encouraged to make information on tariffs and price plans more accessible and easy to understand. Energy suppliers are also obliged to place customers on the cheapest tariff and thus save money on their bills.

**In addition, if you are disabled, have a long-term illness or are over the pension age, you can ask your energy supplier about registering for the Priority Service Register.**

This would enable you to get help

with annual gas safety checks, meter readings, priority treatment in an emergency and most importantly means that you cannot have your utilities disconnected during the winter.

Energy companies also offer other forms of assistance to their customers.

If you are having trouble paying your bills or are worried about the cost of energy this winter, you should get in touch with your energy supplier as soon as possible to see what is on offer. Many energy companies offer trust funds and grant schemes which can help with:

- White Goods
- Unpaid utility bills
- Energy efficiency upgrades for your home



## What help is there?

### Price and Tariff Caps

The Government has introduced an energy price cap, which has already protected 11 million people from overpaying on their gas and electricity bills.

Too many homes were stuck on expensive tariffs and research found that consumers have been overpaying by £1.4 billion a year. That's why the Government introduced the price cap, which is set by Ofgem and reviewed every six months, to ensure people who do not want to shop around for better deals are protected from paying over the odds.

The cap has saved families on default energy tariffs around £75 to £100 on dual fuel bills, although the best deals are still to be found by switching suppliers.

The price cap is just one step the Government is taking to help people with their bills – it is also investing £9.2 billion in the energy efficiency of homes, schools and hospitals and giving the consumer watchdog more power to tackle rip-offs.



# What help is there?



## Cold Weather Payments

This is a payment that is made to help you with the cost of heating during the winter months depending on if you are already in receipt of other benefits.

You may be entitled to Cold Weather Payments if you receive:

- Pension Credit.
- Income Support.
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit.

**You do not need to apply for Cold Weather Payments as they will be automatically paid into the same bank account as your other benefit payments.**

A payment of £25 is made for each seven day period of cold weather between the 1st November and the 31st March. Payments will be made when the local temperature is either:

- Recorded as an average of zero degrees Celsius or below over seven consecutive days.
- Forecast to be an average of zero degrees Celsius or below over seven consecutive days.

**If you do not receive a Cold Weather Payment when you are entitled, you should contact either your pension centre or Jobcentre Plus.**





## What help is there?

### Winter Fuel Payments

Winter Fuel Payments are yearly one-off payments that also help people to pay for their heating bills during winter. They are paid to men and women who have reached the minimum age at which they can receive their State Pension. The amount that is paid is dependent upon your circumstances when you apply, but it could be between £100 and £300.

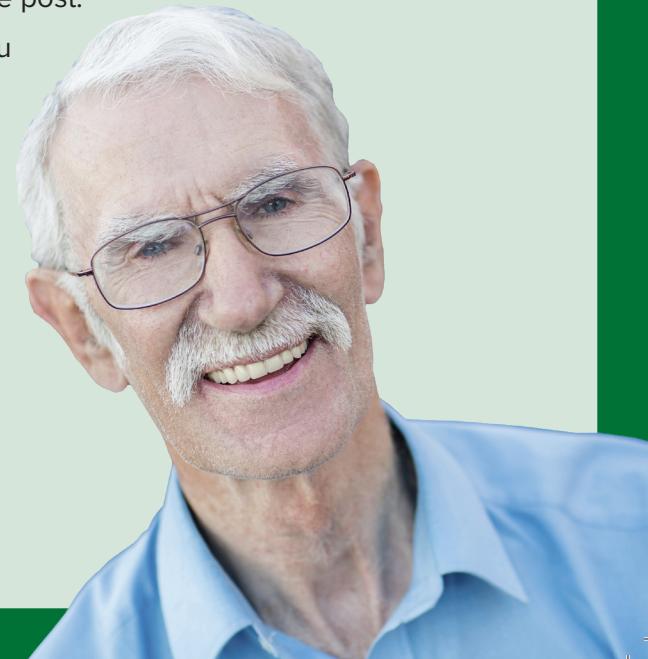
#### How to claim

Once you have reached the qualifying age (if you were born on or before the 5th October 1954) or if you are receiving certain benefits, you should automatically be sent a claim form in the post.

If you do not receive the claim form, you can request a copy of the form to be sent to you in the post by calling **0845 915 1515** or you can download the form by visiting [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and searching for 'Winter Fuel Payment'.

The form then needs to be returned to the following address:

**Winter Fuel Payment Centre  
Department for Work and Pensions  
Mail Handling Site A  
Wolverhampton  
WV98 1LR**

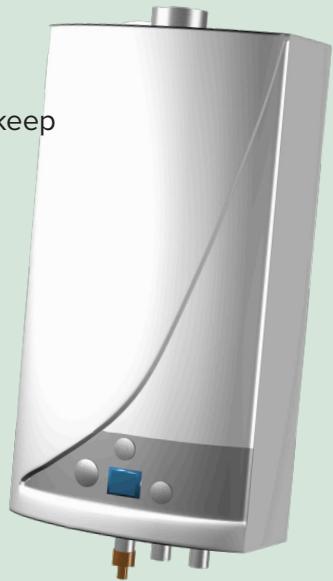


## Top Tips



### Your Top 5 Energy Saving Tips

1. Contact your energy provider about installing a Smart Meter
2. Where possible, insulate walls, loft and hot water tank. The contact details of the Energy Saving Trust, who may be able to help you secure financial support in making your home more energy efficient, are on page 11 of this guide.
3. Look out for the Energy Saving Trust logo when buying new electrical products
4. Use energy saving light bulbs and close curtains to keep heat in
5. Check whether you are on the best energy tariff and with the right supplier to meet your needs



# USEFUL CONTACTS

## ■ Age UK Oxfordshire

An independent charity, Age UK provides information and advice for elderly people about a wide range of issues and can refer you to other organisations which can provide more practical help.

**01865 411288**

[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

## ■ Citizens Advice Consumer

When you buy goods or services the law gives you consumer rights. These protect you from being treated unfairly by a trader.

**0345 404 0506**

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer)

## ■ Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire

**03444 111 444**

## ■ Energy Ombudsman

Contact the Energy Ombudsman if you have a problem or complaint that cannot be resolved by your energy supplier.

In the first instance, you should always contact your energy supplier. Only when they have exhausted their complaints procedures should you contact the Ombudsman.

**0330 440 1624**

[www.ombudsman-services.org/sectors/energy](http://www.ombudsman-services.org/sectors/energy)

## ■ Energy Saving Trust

A national, non-profit, organisation providing free and impartial information and advice on how to improve energy efficiency in your home. Linked to a network of local advice centres.

[www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

**0300 123 1234**

[energy-advice@est.org.uk](mailto:energy-advice@est.org.uk)

## ■ Gas Safe Register

Gas Safe Register is the official body for gas safety. They can provide you with advice on gas appliances as well as having a clear register of all reputable companies involved in the field of supplying gas.

**0800 408 5500**

[www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk)

## ■ Pensions Advisory Service

An advice helpline that can provide elderly people with advice on benefits to which they may be entitled.

**0300 123 1047**

[www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk](http://www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk)

## ■ Ofgem

Ofgem is the government regulator for the gas and electricity markets. Its purpose is to protect consumers and does offer consumer advice on its website.

[www.ofgem.gov.uk](http://www.ofgem.gov.uk)

## ■ Winter Fuel Payment

A form of financial help from the Government for elderly people.

**0345 915 1515**

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)