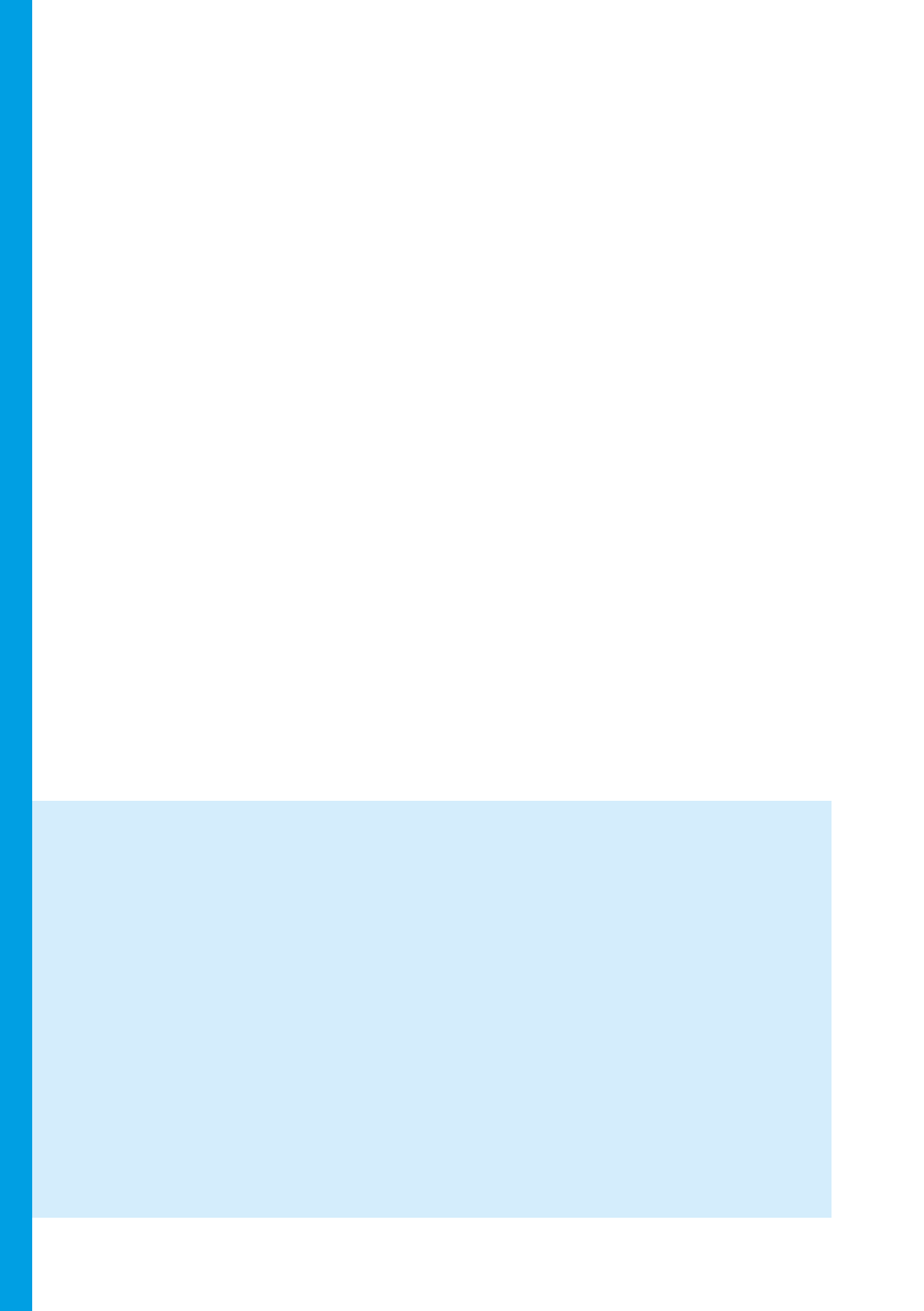


Improving energy efficiency around your home

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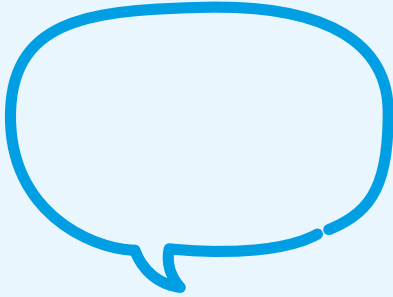
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Some of the savings mentioned in the guide might seem minimal, a few pounds here and there, but they all add up and can make a real difference. Depending on the size of your home, you might save a little less – or a little more.

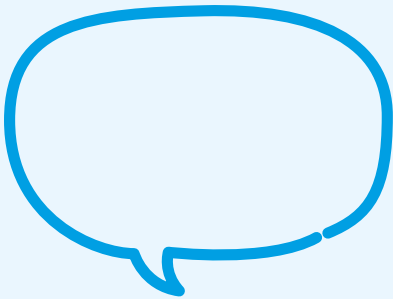
It can be tricky to know how best to go about saving energy. Here are some answers to questions people commonly ask.



No – your home will heat up at the same rate regardless of the temperature on your room thermostat. It's a good idea to set your heating on a timer to turn on about an hour before you need it.




Yes – lights use a lot of energy when they're on. You could save money just by turning lights off when you don't need them.



Properly installed insulation, good ventilation and heating should all help avoid cold spots and stop moisture from condensing on your walls.





There are plenty of things you can do to save energy and be more efficient with the energy you do use. Some are quick fixes, while others need some planning and have costs attached. You can find out about how you might get help

- Keep the rooms you use most at a comfortable temperature – usually around 18°C (64°F) is ideal. Stick with a constant temperature and tweak it when you need to – it's more efficient than turning the heating off and on again.
- Make the most of your thermostat and timers so you're using energy efficiently (there's more about this on page 14).
- Shut your curtains in the evenings to reduce heat loss through windows. Tuck them behind radiators, rather than letting them hang in front, so the radiators can better heat the room.
- Avoid putting furniture in front of your radiators or even keeping dry washing on them longer than you need to – it can mean the heat doesn't circulate as well.
- Turn off radiators in rooms you don't use and keep the doors to these rooms shut.

Fit draught-proofing strips and draught excluders around doors and seal gaps around window frames. You can even fit covers to letterboxes and keyholes.

If you do fit any of these, it's important to leave some ventilation to reduce condensation and prevent the build-up of waste gases from fuel-burning appliances. If you use gas appliances, ask a Gas Safe registered engineer for advice about ventilation (page 40).



- When making a cuppa, just boil the water you need rather than a full kettle. This could save you more money than

- Fix any dripping taps. A dripping tap can waste up to half a bath's worth of water a week.
- Turn off the tap when you're brushing your teeth or shaving. Leaving the tap running for just 1 minute can waste up to 6 litres of water.
- You might want to shower instead of taking a bath to save water. A short shower can use a third of the amount of water needed for a bath.
- Using a washing up bowl rather than running water can save up to 20 litres of water.





Boilers usually have a dial marked with numbers or from 'min' to 'max'. This sets the temperature of the water being pumped through to heat your radiators. The higher it is, the quicker the system will heat your home. But it's worth thinking about any particularly hot radiators and pipes if you have grandchildren around, or if there's someone in the house with mobility issues or a cognitive impairment.

Take a look at your boiler's manual for advice on setting its controls. If you don't have the manual anymore, contact the manufacturer for a copy or search online using the full name of your model.



Smart meters are a type of energy meter being offered to every household in England and Wales. Installation is free and they record exactly how much gas or electricity you use and automatically send regular readings to your energy company. This means you don't have to worry about taking meter readings and should get accurate bills (although it's still a good idea to check that your bills match the amount of energy you've used).



If your boiler breaks down, call out a Gas Safe registered engineer to find out what's wrong and whether it can be repaired. If you live in a rented property, call your landlord. If you're a homeowner, you may be able to get a new boiler:

- via the Energy Company Obligation scheme (see pages 34-35)
- with emergency assistance from your local council or from one of the schemes on page 26
-

As well as some of the smaller things, there are larger measures you can take that could make a bigger difference to the comfort of your home, such as insulation and double glazing. These can be expensive, but you'll waste less energy, which can save you money in the long term – and it's good for the environment too.

See pages 34-35 for information about schemes that help with the cost of these larger measures.

Insulation is an extra layer added to your home to make it harder for heat to escape. A lot of heat can be lost through the walls and roof, so insulating them makes a real difference.

- Insulating roof and loft spaces can really reduce heat loss in your home and save you hundreds of pounds per year – or even more if you have a detached house or a bungalow. Most homes have some loft insulation, but often not enough. Topping up your loft insulation will make your home warmer and save you money on your energy bills.
- If your home has cavity walls (walls with a space between the inner and outer layers of brick), the gap can be insulated. You could save hundreds of pounds per year by insulating them – and even more if your house is detached or semi-detached. You could save considerably more if your home has solid walls, but the insulation costs are much higher.
- Insulating hot water tanks and pipes cuts down the amount you spend heating water.
- Insulating your floor can make your home easier and cheaper to heat.

Double glazing reduces heat loss as well as noise from outside. Fitting double glazing can be expensive, so you could just install it in the rooms you use and heat most often.

If you live in a conservation area or a listed building where the local planning office doesn't allow double glazing, secondary glazing can be an option. This is simply a second layer of glass

If your boiler is more than 12 years old, consider replacing it. Boilers account for more than half of what you spend in a year on energy, so having an efficient boiler makes a big difference. There are a couple of main types of boiler to choose from:

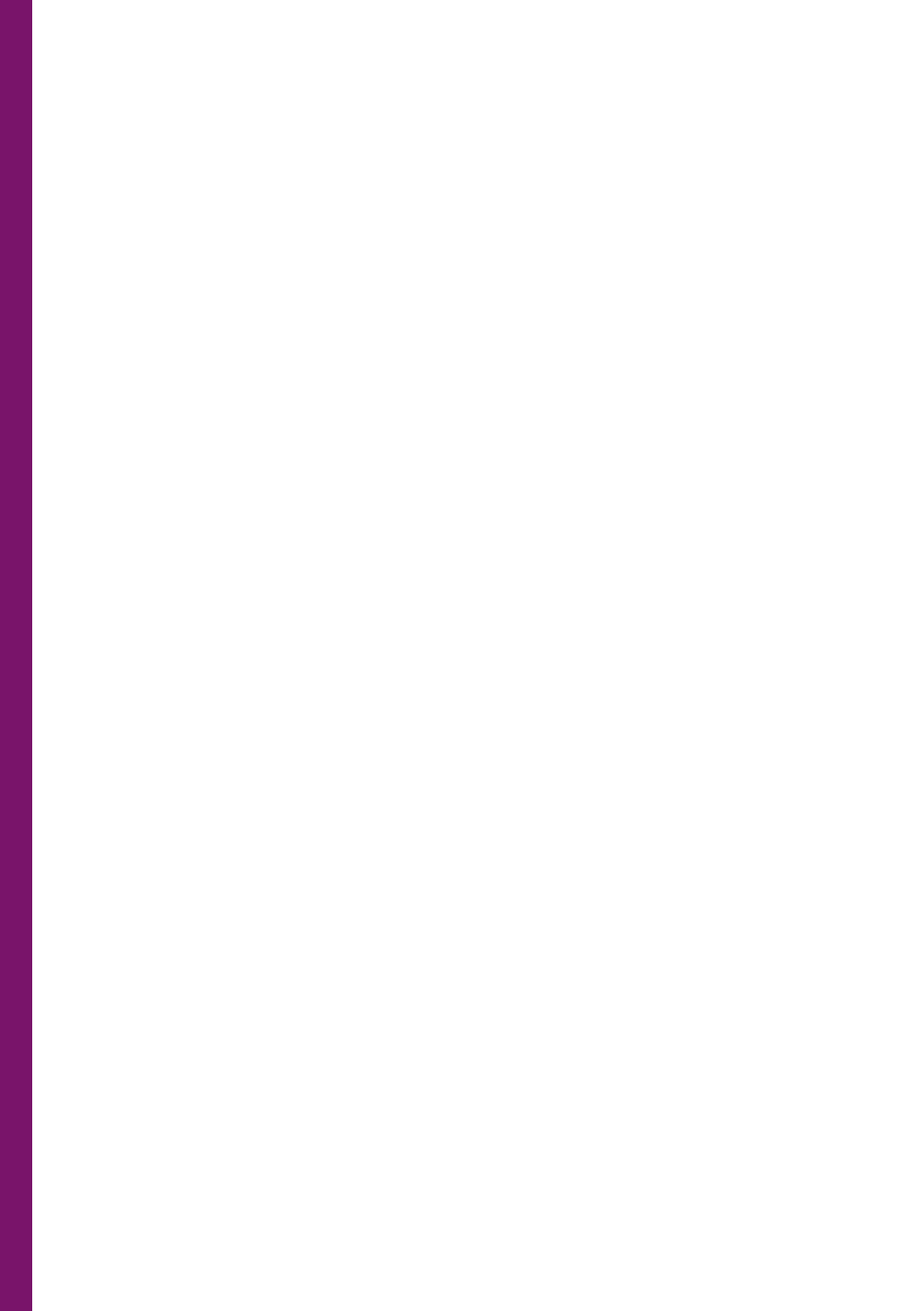
- A **combination or 'combi' boiler** is economical to run. It heats up water immediately from the mains so you don't have to wait for water to heat up, or worry about it running out. There's no need for a hot water tank or cylinder, saving you space. However, it may not be suitable for larger households that use a lot of hot water in a short space of time.
- Most older boilers are **conventional boilers** (also known as heat only, open vent or regular boilers). They take up more space than combination boilers, as you'll need a hot water cylinder in the airing cupboard and a water tank in the loft. You may have to wait for hot water as the tank refills.

For gas and propane boilers, the installer must be Gas Safe registered (page 40). For oil and solid fuel boilers, use an installer registered with OFTEC (Oil Firing Technical Association) (page 42).

Thinking about your bills and dealing with energy companies can feel overwhelming. But this section can help you understand your bills and what your options are.

Energy bills can look complicated, but you should always read them carefully to make sure you know what you're being





Contact your supplier if you have a prepayment meter and want to switch to a standard meter. You should be able to get this done for free. In England and Wales, contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service (page 39) if you run into difficulty. In Northern Ireland, contact the Consumer Council (page 39). Some suppliers have specific conditions – for example, you may need to pass a credit check or pay a deposit before they'll switch your meter. They're unlikely to allow you to switch if you're in debt to them, unless it's no longer safe or practical for you to use a prepayment meter. If you're a tenant, see what your agreement says about making changes to your home.

If you switch to a standard meter, make sure you take regular meter readings for accurate bills. If you can't change to a



There are three main steps to follow when switching to a new energy supplier.

1. Compare your tariff

If you're comparing tariffs across a range of suppliers, it's usually easiest to let a price comparison website do the hard work for you. You'll need to know your postcode, current tariff, how much energy you use, and how much you currently pay. This information should all be on your last bill.

2. Choose the best deal for you

When comparing prices, consider these questions:

- Are there any special offers or discounts? If so, how long do these run for?
- Are there any extra or hidden charges?
-



Next steps

If you switch, make sure to use an Ofgem accredited website. These are listed in our factsheet **Getting the best energy deal** along with more information. In Northern Ireland, contact the Consumer Council (page 39).

If you're not online, you can call many of the price comparison companies. For instance, you could call uSwitch (page 42). They'll use your information to work out the best tariffs for you.

Energy suppliers and distribution network operators have priority services registers for people who need extra support: those over State Pension age, those living with a long-term health condition or disability, or those who need support temporarily following an injury or illness or a hospital stay.

You pay your gas and electricity bills to your energy supplier, while distribution network operators are the companies that

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You shouldn't have to go without the energy you need to afford your bills. There are schemes available to help with cost-saving measures like heating and insulation improvements. It's also worth checking you're claiming all the financial support you're entitled to.

You might be able to get a grant to improve the energy efficiency of your home under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme. Under the scheme, energy suppliers provide money to help people pay for energy-saving measures such as boiler repairs and replacements, renewable heating systems, and insulation. You can generally only get your boiler repaired or replaced if you have insulation installed under the ECO scheme at the same time.

This money doesn't need to be paid back and you can get it from any supplier who is part of the scheme – it doesn't have to be your supplier.

You could be eligible for help from the ECO scheme if your home isn't energy efficient. For owner-occupiers, this means an energy performance rating of D, E, F or G. For tenants, it usually means a rating of E, F or G (social rented homes in band D are sometimes eligible). Owner-occupiers and private renters must be claiming certain benefits to be eligible, including Pension Credit, Housing Benefit and Universal Credit. This doesn't apply for social tenants.

If you think you meet these criteria, contact one of the energy suppliers who has signed up to the scheme and ask what

Every year, billions of pounds in state benefits go unclaimed by older people in the UK. Benefits can help with basic things like housing and care costs, or give you a bit more freedom to do things you enjoy. Even a small amount can make a big difference, and receiving some benefits, such as Pension Credit, means you're eligible for other sources of help too.

Means-tested benefits

If you have a low income or limited savings, you may be eligible for certain benefits such as Pension Credit, Housing Benefit, Universal Credit and Council Tax Support (CTS).

Other benefits

You may be eligible for Attendance Allowance (if you're State Pension age or over) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) (if you're under State Pension age) if you need help with daily activities and/or mobility. The mobility component is only available if you claim PIP – not Attendance Allowance. These are paid regardless of your income and savings.

Winter Fuel Payment is an annual payment to help with heating costs. Most people born on or before 25 September 1957 qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment in winter 2023/24. If you're eligible and receive certain benefits, you should receive this automatically. If you're unsure whether you're eligible, or you need to take a claim, visit www.ageuk.org.uk/benefitscheck

Next steps

For more information, see our guide **More money in your pocket** or our factsheet **Help with heating costs**. Visit www.ageuk.org.uk/benefitscheck to use our online benefits calculator. In Wales, contact Age Cymru Advice for their versions of the guide and factsheet, and visit their website to do a benefit check.

We provide information and advice for people in later life



Campaigns for affordable warmth and improved energy efficiency in the homes of people who are vulnerable to

to 01629467171.EatmesB5151 (mB52MC6/q28MCO 1381(f)-v.3454P 20 (71)113.15.-122 (6/mesB-7.1 (J)JETEMC/P Lang (en-GB)81)10.8 (e.v)-1.6 aw(2)-3622514 21216

Tel: 0800 304 71s1b77ao(J)JETEMC/P Lang (en-GB)/MCID 1654 BDC BT-C

Has a list of approved technicians for oil, solid fuel and renewable heating appliances.

Tel: **01473 626 298**

www.oftec.org

Provides the Staying Put home adaptation service in Northern Ireland.

Tel: **0330 123 0888**

www.radiushousing.org

You may want to read some of our relevant information guides and factsheets, such as:

- **Winter wrapped up**
- **More money in your pocket**

You can order any of our guides or factsheets by giving our Advice Line a ring for free on **0800 169 65 65** (8am-7pm, 365 days a year).

Our friendly advisers are there to help answer any questions.

All of our publications are available in large print and audio formats.

There's plenty of really useful information on our website, too. Visit www.ageuk.org.uk/energy to get started.



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