



Energy advice and support

if you are caring for a
child with a serious illness



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Book an appointment

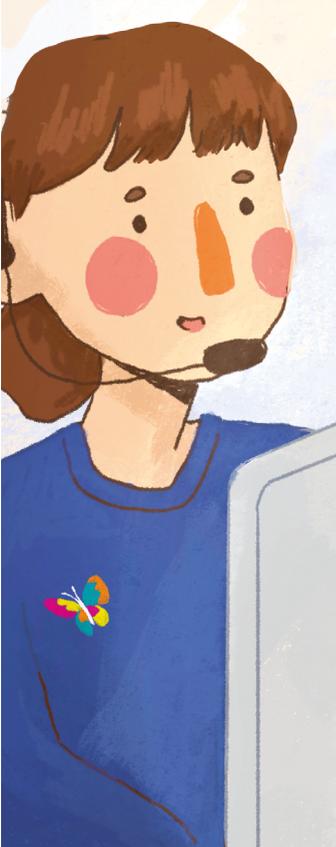
with our Energy Adviser to see how we could save you money on your energy bills

Thank you to gas distribution company SGN for making it possible for us to produce this booklet.



SGN

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Who are Together for Short Lives?

Together for Short Lives is the UK's leading charity for children's palliative care. We are here to make sure that children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions, and their families, can make the most of every moment they have together.

The Family Support Hub

Our helpline is open 9am - 4pm, Monday to Friday. Outside of these hours you can leave a voicemail or email and we will get back to you the next working day. We can support you practically, financially and emotionally.

We provide support and information and also help you to find the support and services you need in your local area. Our helpline is confidential, and all calls are answered by staff trained in how to best support you. More details can be found on our website togetherforshortlives.org.uk.

Our helpline is available via:



0808 8088 100



togetherforshortlives.org.uk



helpline@togetherforshortlives.org.uk



Energy advice service

If you are caring for a seriously ill child with complex medical needs at home you may have high energy bills because you rely on specialist equipment or need to keep your home warm at all times.

We want to save you money on your energy bills. If you are on a pre-payment meter we may be able to support you with a free voucher towards your gas and electricity and we can talk you through energy saving tips to help you save money.

Scan the below QR code with the camera on your phone to book an online or phone appointment, or visit togetherforshortlives.org.uk/energysupport



A word from our energy adviser...

“For three years I’ve been supporting families that are struggling with managing their energy costs with simple, expert energy advice. I am passionate about supporting families who have a child with complex needs, and I understand how the energy price rise affects families that rely on medical equipment to support them at home.”

The Priority Services Register

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is a free support service offered by energy and water suppliers.

It identifies people who need priority support during planned and unplanned outages. By registering for the free service you will receive extra help during this time.

You are eligible for the PSR if you live with children under five, use medical equipment reliant on electricity or water or have a disability.

Find out more and register at thepsr.co.uk, or scan this QR code.



Reducing energy use

Many families experience increased, hidden costs when looking after a child with complex needs at home. These costs include more expensive heating, electricity and water bills. We hope the tips in this section will help you to lower your bills by reducing your energy and water usage as safely as possible.

Gas (heating)

With over half your typical energy costs going on heating, it's important to know how to control radiators to help you save money and heat your home more efficiently.

- Turn off individual radiators and keep the doors shut in rooms you don't tend to go in so you can avoid wasting energy on unused rooms.
- Keep your radiators clear of clutter - when they are blocked by clutter and furniture the warm air can't circulate and so won't be as efficient.
- Bleed your radiators often to remove air pockets which in turn will make your home warmer.
- Fit radiator panels behind radiators under windows.
- Close your blinds and curtains in the early evening to keep the heat in.
- Get your system serviced once a year - to make sure it's safe and working as efficiently as possible.

Book an appointment

with our Energy Adviser to see how we could save you money on your energy bills





Reducing energy use: Electricity

With energy bills at an all-time high, saving electricity has never mattered more.

- Switch off devices on standby, they are using power even on standby.
- Turn off the lights if you are not using the room.
- Be aware of how many lights you have on in a room. If you have the main light on, do you need the lamp on too?
- Swap to LED bulbs.
- Don't overfill the kettle.
- Use a slow cooker or air fryer instead of your oven.
- Always cover pots and pans - the water will boil faster.
- Avoid using the tumble dryer, whenever possible dry clothes outside.
- Do not keep opening the oven door, you are letting the heat out and wasting energy - look through the glass instead.
- Use the eco mode on your dishwasher and washing machine, you will save electricity and water.

Reducing energy use: Water

There are many ways you can save water around your home.

- Use a bowl in the sink when washing fruit, vegetables or dishes. You can then use the waste water to water your plants.
- Fill a jug of water and put it in the fridge for when you want a cool drink.
- Turn off the tap when you clean your teeth. A running tap uses up to nine litres of water a minute.
- Wait until you have a full load before using your washing machine or your dishwasher.
- Always use the eco mode. Although it takes longer, it's much cheaper.
- If possible, take a shower instead of a bath. A five-minute shower uses about 40 litres of water. This is about half the volume of a standard bath.
- Use a water-saving device in your toilet cistern. Depending on the size of your cistern, you could save between one and three litres each time you flush the toilet.



Understanding your bills

When you receive a bill through the post, there may be some terms that you don't understand. Here's our guide:

Previous balance

This is the balance of the energy bill you had before.

Balance

This is the balance due for payment.

Charges

How much electricity and/or gas that you've used plus any standing charges.

Payments

How much you've paid since your last electricity and gas bill.

Standing charges

A fixed daily amount that customers have to pay, no matter how much energy you use.

This pays for government schemes to reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty, maintenance of the energy network and service administration charges.

Important tips

Check your bills show a meter reading and are not estimated to ensure that you are only billed for what you have actually used. Also check the meter number on your bill is the same as on your meter to prevent any mistakes.

Understanding your bills

What are tariffs?

An energy tariff is a plan for how much you'll pay for your gas or electricity.

If you don't switch provider or renew your tariff after your last fixed deal ended, you will usually be moved onto a standard variable tariff or default tariff by your provider that is subject to the energy

price cap. This is a cap on the price charged for each unit of energy, rather than a cap on your total bill, and is normally the most expensive.

Check on the Which? website if you are on the best tariff for you or to find the best deal if you are on a standard variable or default tariff.

Our Energy Adviser can support you to change tariff and help you to make sense of your bills. Book an appointment today at

**[togetherforshortlives.org.uk/
energysupport](https://togetherforshortlives.org.uk/energysupport)**

or scan this QR code with your phone.



Understanding your bills

Types of tariffs

A tariff includes the rate you'll pay for the gas or electricity you use and a daily fee called a 'standing charge'. You'll pay this no matter how much energy you use.

- **Fixed rate tariff:** If you want the certainty of knowing how much your unit cost will be for a set period and are happy to stick with your contract until it ends.
- **Variable rate tariff:** If you like the freedom and flexibility of switching whenever you want, and don't want to be tied into a contract.

- **Capped tariff:** If you like a certain amount of stability, but still want to benefit if market energy costs go down.

- **Unlimited energy tariff:** If you're on a fixed budget and want the assurance of knowing the cost, no matter how much energy you use.

- **Dual fuel tariff:** If you want the convenience of one bill and dealing with just one supplier for both your gas and electricity.

- **Prepayment tariff:** If you're struggling with bills and debts and want more control over your energy spending.

Understanding your bills

Prepayment meters

A prepayment meter, also known as a 'pay-as-you-go meter', can be a helpful and effective way to manage budgets and amount spent on gas or electricity as you pay in advance for your energy, by topping up.

However, if you have a prepayment meter you will still pay standing charges.

- This tariff could be a good option if you find pre-paying is an easier way to manage your bills.

- You can access this method of paying with either a prepayment meter or a smart meter set to prepayment mode.

- You can usually top-up online, or via your energy company's app if you have a smart meter in pre-payment mode.

- Traditional prepayment meters are topped up using prepay tokens, cards or a key that you take to the shop to load your credit.

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If you are on a pre-payment meter, we may be able to support you with a free voucher.

Together for Short Lives are partnered with Fuel Bank Foundation who provide emergency fuel vouchers for families on pre-payment meters. If you are in your emergency credit on your prepayment meter and do not have the funds to top up your meter, contact us to find out how we can support you with a fuel voucher:

togetherforshortlives.org.uk/energysupport
energy@togetherforshortlives.org.uk

Can I switch my prepayment tariff?

You can switch supplier and tariff as long as you have less than £500 of debt on your meter. Smaller providers may have lower limits. If you're in debt, your energy firm may refuse to change how you pay.

If you want to pay a different way and have a smart meter, your energy company will need to change it to 'credit mode'. They can do this remotely. If you have a traditional prepayment meter, you'll need a new meter. Your supplier might charge you for this.

Understanding your bills

Water bills

Your water company will normally charge you in one of three ways:

- **Metered charges:** Instead of being charged a flat rate (usually based on the rateable value of your property), you can choose to be charged according to the amount of water you use by having a water meter installed.
- **Unmetered charges:** If you do not have a water meter, you are an unmetered customer. Your bill is not based on how much water you use.

- **Assessed charges:** The assessed charge is used if you've requested a meter, but they are unable to fit one – it is an estimate of the bill you would pay if a meter was fitted. You will not be offered an assessed charge unless you apply for a meter. If you receive your water service and your sewerage service from different suppliers, you may receive two bills – one from each company.

Every water company has a social tariff scheme which can help reduce your bills.

Support with bills

If you are having difficulty paying your energy bills, you are not alone.

Some energy suppliers have schemes to help their customers struggling to pay their bills. Each scheme will have different eligibility requirements.

Here are some steps you can take, and remember, our Energy Adviser is here to support you. Book an appointment using the QR code at the bottom of this page.

Top tips

- Contact your energy supplier as soon as you can if you are worried about paying your energy bills or are in debt to your supplier.
- Suppliers must work with you to agree on a payment plan you can afford under Ofgem rules. This includes reviewing a plan you may have agreed to before.
- You can ask your energy company for a review of your payments and debt repayment, payment breaks or reductions. You can also request more time to pay and access to hardship funds.



If you are on a pre-payment meter we may be able to support you with a fuel voucher. Scan this QR code to book an appointment with our Energy Adviser to find out how.

If you're struggling to pay

If you do not think you can pay your energy bill, then it's important you speak to your supplier as soon as possible.

Over the following pages you'll find information on how you can get extra support for your gas, electricity and water bills.

And remember: your energy supplier may offer grants if you are falling into debt with them. Speak to our Energy Adviser for more information.

Gas and electricity bills

The first place to turn is directly to your supplier.

- Your energy supplier will look at your bills and offer energy saving advice.
- They will look at your tariff to check you are on the best deal for your circumstances.
- If you are unable to pay your bill you can ask your energy supplier for a repayment plan.
- When you contact your

energy supplier, they may request information to help them understand your situation better.

- They will use this information to create a repayment plan that you can afford.
- It's important to agree to a plan you can afford (you do not have to agree to one that you cannot afford) and keep up with your repayment plan to avoid falling deeper into debt.

Water bills

If you are struggling to pay your water bill, call your supplier as soon as you can. Your supplier will explain your options to you and support you to apply for the right scheme for you.

- Ask if a water meter could save you money.
- You could pay less for your water if there are fewer people in your property than there are bedrooms, or your property has a high rateable value.

- All water companies offer a social tariff for eligible customers that reduces water bills. A social tariff can offer reduced bills to customers who would otherwise struggle to pay.
- Support is available for low-income customers who use a lot of water for essential family or health reasons through the WaterSure scheme. The WaterSure scheme is available for certain customers with a water meter and allows bills to be capped. Talk to your supplier.

Top tips



It's important to remember that your water supply cannot be disconnected.

Book an appointment with our Energy Adviser to see how we can support you with your bills. Scan this QR code to book now.

Frequently asked questions

How do I book an appointment with your Energy Adviser?

It's really simple, visit togetherforshortlives.org.uk/energysupport and make an online or phone appointment. The sessions are completely free and are a bespoke one-to-one service.

Am I eligible for a discount on my bills?

You may be eligible for a discount if any of the following circumstances apply to you:

- Your household income is low.
- Someone in your home gets a means-tested benefit.
- You've got three or more children under 19 living at home.
- Someone living with you needs more water because of a medical condition.

Why sign up to the Priority Services Register?

- If you use medical equipment/

aids which use energy or water the Priority Service Register helps to prioritise help during prolonged supply interruptions.

- You will receive prior warning of planned work which may interrupt your water or energy supply.
- You will receive priority treatment should your water or energy supply be interrupted.
- Register today at thepsr.co.uk

Can electricity or gas be cut off without warning?

Ofgem rules state that energy suppliers are required to follow a process before they can disconnect your power. They should provide you with a notice of disconnection and allow you enough time to make payment arrangements.

If you're having difficulty paying your bill, contact your energy supplier immediately to prevent disconnection, and book an appointment with our Energy Adviser.

Find out more

Together for Short Lives' Energy Advice service

Book a free telephone or online appointment with our Energy Adviser: togetherforshortlives.org.uk/energysupport
energy@togetherforshortlives.org.uk

Citizens' Advice

citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/contact-us

Money Helper

Free impartial advice and guidance backed by the Government.
moneyhelper.org.uk/en

Ofgem

The energy regulator for Great Britain working to protect energy consumers, especially vulnerable people.
ofgem.gov.uk

Ofwat

The Office for Water Services regulates water companies in England and Wales to provide good quality and efficient service at a fair price.
ofwat.gov.uk

Priority Services Register

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is a free UK wide service which provides extra advice and support, including when there's an interruption to your electricity, gas or water supply.
thepsr.co.uk

Which?

Independent provider of advice on products & service
which.co.uk

Your notes

Save money on your energy bills



If you are caring for a seriously ill child, book an appointment with our Energy Adviser and get support with:

- Understanding your energy bills
- Switching to get a better energy deal and negotiating with energy and water suppliers
- Vouchers for energy support
- Energy saving and energy use
- Applying for the Priority Services Register
- Condensation and dampness issues
- Understanding smart meters
- Access to practical and financial support from our Family Support Hub



Find out how to get support by booking a free online or phone appointment. Simply scan this QR code with your phone or visit

togetherforshortlives.org.uk/energysupport

