



## **Finding the best deal from the energy companies, as well as advice on energy efficiency**

We all have to pay for gas and electricity we use, but are you paying more than need to?

This section looks at two aspects of your energy:-

- The price you pay, and
- How can you be more energy efficient.

### Are you paying too much for your gas and electricity?

Over recent years consumers across the country have found it difficult to know if they are getting the best deal for their gas and electricity. Prices have gone up and down again but generally they are higher than they used to be. The companies make their price changes at different times so it's difficult to know if you're looking at a 'level playing field'.

There is also confusion about what is the best tariff to be on from a range of well over 100 now available. The normal charge is called standard but you will get lower prices if you use the same supplier for both gas and electric. This is called 'dual fuel'. You will also get a cheaper price if you use a price from the internet – these are called online tariffs, and probably cheaper again if you pay by Direct Debit.

If you have a prepayment meter you will probably be paying more than any of the other methods. Although many people see prepayment meters as a good idea to help budget costs it is at a cost. There are various campaigns across the country trying to persuade the energy companies to reduce their prices for prepayment customers.

Listed below are some internet sites you can use to compare the prices charged by the various companies. If possible you should try and use the calculator with the actual number of units that you have used over a year, so you might want to see if you have any previous bills. This will give you the best idea of which company is best for you, but if you don't have those figures the comparison sites will give you a good idea.

For two of the companies there are freephone telephone numbers to use if you do not have access to the internet.

## Energy Suppliers Comparison websites

[www.uswitch.com](http://www.uswitch.com)

[www.energyhelpline](http://www.energyhelpline)

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

[www.simplyswitch.com](http://www.simplyswitch.com)

[www.theenergyshop.com](http://www.theenergyshop.com)

Freephone [0800 404 7908](tel:08004047908)

Freephone [0800 074 0745](tel:08000740745)

Use the information on this section to reduce your bills or get help paying them

### Can your energy supplier help you with your bills?

If you find it difficult to pay your bills, your energy company may be able to lower your gas and electricity bills. This is known as a '**social tariff**'.

You may qualify for a social tariff if you pay more than 10% of your household income towards your energy bills and/or are on benefits. Ring your energy company and ask them what social tariffs they might be able to offer you.

Examples of what energy companies can provide include:

#### **Npower**

Npower's First Step Scheme offers a range of help and advice including:

- One-to-one help with managing your bills and saving energy
- A check to see what benefits you may be entitled to
- Funding to help you pay off any money owed to the company
- Cheaper energy bills

[You can find out more on the First Step website](#), or by ringing **0808 172 6999**, textphone **0845 603 0652**.

#### **E.ON**

The E.ON StayWarm scheme for the over-60s offers a fixed price for your gas and electricity for 12 months.

You can join StayWarm if:

- You, or someone in your home is over 60 years of age
- Your home has three bedrooms or fewer
- Four people or fewer live in your home
- You take both electricity and gas from E.ON
- You pay by monthly direct debit

To find out more, [visit the StayWarm website](#) or call **0845 300 4382**.

E.ON has also teamed up with Age Concern to provide gas and electricity to people over 60. Called Age Concern Energy Services, customers are offered a range of benefits including cold weather payments and competitive gas and electricity prices.

[Find out more on the Age Concern website.](#)

### **ScottishPower**

Qualifying customers on ScottishPower's Carefree Priority Services Register can go onto the Carefree Plus tariff, offering a fixed saving of £112 on their energy bills. A benefits eligibility check will also be offered and free energy efficiency improvements may also be available.

To find out more, [visit the ScottishPower Carefree website](#) or call **0845 2700 700**

### **Southern Electric**

With Southern Electric's **energyplus Care** scheme you could receive up to 20% off your energy bills if you spend more than 10% of your household income on energy.

Other services include a benefits eligibility check and free or discounted energy efficiency improvements to your home.

To find out more, [visit Southern Electric's website](#) or call **0800 622 838**

### **British Gas**

British Gas offers its most vulnerable customers lower gas and electricity bills. This is called the 'Essentials Tariff' and is particularly aimed at customers who don't have a bank account and use 'pay as you go' meters.

[You can use this form to find out more](#) or call British Gas general enquiries on **0845 955 5200**

### **EDF Energy**

Call EDF Energy to find out more about the special tariffs they offer customers on low incomes. [You will find contact telephone numbers on their website.](#)

[Or go to the EDF Energy website to email your enquiry to them.](#)

### **Ebico**

Ebico is the UK's only not-for-profit energy supplier. It aims to provide affordable energy to everyone. The company was set up in 1998 and has no shareholders. It supplies gas and electricity at fair rates to all its customers, whatever their circumstances, income or method of payment.

You can call Ebico on **0800 458 7689** to find out more, or [apply online](#).

Apart from social tariffs there is other help available too

**The British Gas Energy Trust** is an independent charity that can offer grants to individuals and families to help them pay off money owing to energy suppliers, as well as other household bills.

For more information, [visit The British Gas Energy Trust website](#), telephone **01733 421021** or email [bget@charisgrants.com](mailto:bget@charisgrants.com).

**The EDF Energy Trust Fund** can offer grants to help people pay off their gas or electricity debts.

To qualify you must be an EDF Energy domestic customer (previously London Energy, Seeboard Energy or SWEB Energy.)

To find out more, [visit the EDF Energy Trust Fund website](#), call **01733 421 021**, or email [edfet@charisgrants.com](mailto:edfet@charisgrants.com)

### **Am I entitled to a winter fuel payment?**

If you are over 60, you will usually be entitled to a lump sum towards your fuel bills. This is called the winter fuel payment.

[Find out more about winter fuel payments on the Pension Service website.](#)

On this website you will find contact details and frequently asked questions.

You can also ring the winter fuel helpline on **0845 915 1515**, textphone **0845 601 5613**. Lines are open 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.

You may also be able to claim for past winters. [Find out more on the Pension Service website.](#)

### **What grants are available to help me make my home more energy efficient?**

Depending on your age and the benefits you receive, you may be able to get a grant to make your home warmer, healthier and more energy efficient.

The government-backed scheme, Warm Front, can provide a free package of insulation and heating improvements.

[Find out more on the Warm Front website.](#)

If you have a query about the Warm Front scheme, you can email [enquiry@eaga.com](mailto:enquiry@eaga.com) or call freephone **0800 316 2805**.

**The Home Heat Helpline** offers free practical advice for people who are worried about paying their energy bills.

Call free on **0800 33 66 99** to speak to a specially trained advisor.

The Home Heat Helpline can give you information about:

- Energy saving grants and how to apply
- Energy saving tips
- How to apply for money set aside by energy suppliers to help customers in financial difficulty.

You can also call if you are worried about someone else such as a relative or friend.

The Home Heat Helpline is open 9am–8pm Monday to Friday and 9am–3pm on Saturdays.

The minicom number is **0800 027 2122**.

[You can also visit the Home Heat Helpline website for more information](#)