

Updated for
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**Matt
Hancock MP**

Working to help you save money

ENERGY

GUIDE



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

How can you save money?



In rural communities such as ours, many residents face increased energy costs as temperatures drop over the winter period.

One of the main problems for many households is being aware of the wide range of help and support that is available, and the steps that you can take to reduce your bills.

That is why I have produced this energy guide to help West Suffolk residents save money this winter.

I hope that you find this guide useful, and that you will be able to reduce your energy costs.

As ever, if there is anything I can do to help, please do get in touch

Matt Hancock MP



How to make your home more energy efficient.



Smart Meters

The Government has committed to ensuring all homes and small businesses that want one will get a smart meter, with energy suppliers being responsible for their installation.

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 about installing a new smart meter or you can contact them immediately and start saving straight away.**



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

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 carried out a range of measures to make it easier to switch suppliers. On average, the time that it takes to change energy supplier is just 17 days so as to speed up the process for consumers and so that they can start to benefit from reduced bills a lot sooner.

We have simplified the entire process, encouraging energy companies 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 have introduced plans for a cap on tariffs, a price cap for prepayment customers and an end to rip off energy prices.

Over 60% of homes are on Standard Variable Tariffs and the Government's new Bill will mean that Ofgem will set a price cap on these tariffs. The cap will be set at a level that still gives customers good deals to shop around but improves the terrible prices paid by some people.

A new price cap will also help those customers who prepay. Prepayment deals are around £300 a year more expensive than those deals available for direct debit households and often impact the most vulnerable households. The cap is expected to reduce their bills by around £300 million a year.



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 July 1953) 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 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

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.

0800 055 6112

www.ageuk.org.uk

■ Age UK Suffolk

01284 757740

www.ageuk.org.uk/suffolk

■ 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

■ 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

■ 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

0300 123 1234

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

■ 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

■ 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

■ Winter Fuel Payment

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

0345 915 1515

www.gov.uk

■ Oil Buying Clubs

If you use oil to heat your home or business, you may be interested in joining a local oil club. Oil clubs bulk buy oil to save money, this can save you between 10-20% on your oil costs.

You can find a short list of some of our local oil buying clubs below:

The Newmarket Heating Oil Club

The Haverhill Heating Oil Club

The Mildenhall Heating Oil Club

The Lakenheath Heating Oil Club

www.oil-club.co.uk/heating_oil/heating-oil-suffolk



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