WARMER WINTER CHECKLIST

Worried about fuel bills and keeping warm? This checklist could help.

For no-cost tips, practical ideas and where to find further help and advice – read on and see what might work for you.

Find more information and links to practical how-to guides online at: **www.lowcarbonhub.org/energy-saving-advice**

Don't pay more than you need to for your energy

☐ **Check how you pay your bill, it can make a big difference**

- Paying by direct debit is usually cheaper than paying by cheque or cash.
- Paying by monthly direct debit can be cheaper than quarterly payments.
- Pre-payment meters can be the most expensive way to pay for your power. If you think a standard meter would be better for you, talk to your supplier. Most will swap them free of charge.
- Some suppliers charge for paper billing – getting bills by email may be cheaper, and more environmentally friendly.

- **On a manual prepayment meter?**

  The Energy Bills Support Scheme entitles every household to £400 off their bills. Most bill payers have this automatically credited to their bills. However, if you are on a manual prepayment meter this credit will be sent you by post, email, or text and you have 90 days to claim it.

☐ **Check your tariff**

It is currently quite hard to switch suppliers, but this may change. Comparison websites can then help you check if you are on the best tariff.

Get the support you are entitled to

☐ **Sign up to the Priority Services Register**

If you are over 60, have young children or use electrically powered medical equipment, register with your energy company and get extra help and support if there is a power cut.

☐ **Visit the *Help for Households* website**

Financial support is available to help everyone with their energy bills this winter.

The *Help for Households* website explains all the different support that's available for energy – and also sets out national schemes that can help with the cost of living.

☐ **Contact Better Housing Better Health**

A free service helping all Oxfordshire residents to keep warm, stay healthy, and live well. Call them for free on 0800 107 0044.

Find out more at **www.lowcarbonhub.org/energy-saving-advice**

Get the most out of your heating

Learn how your heating controls work

☐ Sit down with a cup of tea and read your boiler manual. Alternatively, there are lots of 'how-to videos and guides' on the internet for every heating system type, from combination boilers to storage heaters, which can help you get to grips with the basics.

Set your controls so your heating is only on when you need it

Set your heating so it is only on when you will benefit from it. Remembering to put on a cosy jumper ahead of the heating can help you save money. It's basic, but it should allow you to maintain the same comfort level. You can try:

☐ Setting the thermostat to the lowest comfortable temperature, usually in the 18 – 21°C range. Turning down by just 1°C could save £75 from your energy bill.

☐ Setting the programme so the heating comes on just before you get up in the morning and get home for the day.

☐ Switch off the heating before you go out for the day, or go to bed, as your home will stay warm for some time.

Turn down heating in rooms you aren't using

☐ Turn down radiators and heaters in rooms when you aren't using them and set storage heaters to only heat rooms when needed.

☐ Radiators can be made controllable by adding Thermostatic Radiator Valves (TRVs). They can cost between £10-60 each. Digital TVRs are more expensive but can be programmed to adjust the heating in each room. Take care to protect rooms from damp and avoid frozen pipes by using frost-free settings.

Get your heating system running at its most efficient

☐ Move furniture away from radiators so hot air can circulate.

☐ Bleed your radiators to remove trapped air.

☐ If your radiators are hot at the top but cold at the bottom, the system might have sludge in it, and benefit from being professionally cleaned.

☐ Check to see if your heating system is suitable for running at a lower flow temperature. You may be able to save 5–10% on your heating costs.

Create energy-wise routines

Every day

☐ Open your curtains in the morning, to make the most of winter sunshine.

☐ At dusk close your curtains. If they cover a radiator, tuck them behind so the heat stays in the room.

☐ Close internal doors to trap the heat in the room.

☐ Try a different energy saving hack from our 'no-cost/low-cost' energy saving ideas each day and see which work for you.

Every month

☐ Check the programme on your heating controls and tweak to match changes in your household needs and length of days.

Every year

☐ Once summer comes, turn your heating off entirely – otherwise it may use fuel throughout the summer.

☐ Create a home emergency kit in case of power outages. Include a torch, water, battery or wind-up radio, batteries, key medicines, and key contact numbers.

☐ Twice a year, adjust timers for daylight saving.

Keep your heat!

Once you have your heating working efficiently, consider which of the following DIY projects you could try to cut down draughts and retain your heat. If you rent, talk to your landlord first. *How-to guides* are available on our website.

10%
of heat lost in a typical home is from the windows

Doors

- ☐ Add insulating tape around the door frames.
- ☐ Add a door brush to the bottom of the door.
- ☐ Add a keyhole cover.
- ☐ Draughtproof your letterbox or consider replacing it with a tightly closing model.
- ☐ Make or buy a draught excluder.

Floorboards

- ☐ Use floor board draught excluder (£25 for 40m) that expands to fill gaps.
- ☐ Fill gaps between your skirtingboard and the floor.
- ☐ Rugs can help prevent heat loss through cold spots in floors.

15%
of heat loss is due to draughts

Chimneys

- ☐ An open fireplace can lose lots of heat. If you aren't using a fireplace, you can buy a 'chimney balloon' or chimney sheep' to prevent heat going up the chimney, or you can make your own.

Windows

- ☐ Install thermal blinds or add thermal material to existing curtains to help trap in heat.
- ☐ Temporary 'secondary glazing film' can be put over single glazed windows, trapping an insulating layer of air. Cost £5–15 per window.

Lofts

- ☐ Add more insulation to your loft. It's recommended for homes to have 270–300mm of insulation laid on the floor of the loft.
- ☐ Add draughtproofing tape around your loft hatch and put insulation on the hatch itself too.

Up to a quarter of a home's heat can be lost through an uninsulated loft

Hot water

- ☐ Get an insulating jacket for your hot water tank and add lagging to pipes.
- ☐ Gaps around pipe outlets etc. can also be a source of draughts that can be filled.

Radiators

- ☐ Add radiator panels behind radiators that are on external walls. There are lots of different types you can buy, or make your own with card and foil. Cost: around £8–12 per radiator.

Long-term improvements

From cavity wall insulation to installing solar panels, there are lots of bigger changes we can make to our homes to make them more energy efficient, save money, and reduce our carbon emissions.

- ☐ **Explore what improvements are possible in your home with Plan Builder**
  This free online tool can help you explore and plan what measures might be suitable for your home and give you an idea of the potential costs.

- ☐ **Check to see what grants are currently available**
  You may be eligible for energy efficiency upgrades to be fitted to your home, free of charge. These upgrades are known as 'retrofitting' and could help to reduce your energy bills and make your home easier to keep warm.

- ☐ **See if the Cosy Homes Oxfordshire service is right for you**
  If you have the funds to pay for work, and are considering multiple home improvements, this service provides a full, one-stop-shop service to help you increase the energy efficiency of your home.

Contact details for these services can be found in the 'Where to go for further support' section.

Where to go for further support

- **Low Carbon Hub**
  For more energy saving advice and how to sign up to the Priority Services Register.
  lowcarbonhub.org/energy-saving-advice

- **Oxfordshire County Council**
  The latest energy efficiency grant news for Oxfordshire residents.
  oxfordshire.gov.uk/retrofit

- **Better Housing Better Health**
  Call 0800 107 0044 for free and impartial energy advice for all Oxfordshire residents from understanding your bills to accessing grants and support.
  bhbh.org.uk

- **Help for Households**
  Government website with key financial support available to help with the cost-of-living crisis.
  helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk

- **Cosy Homes Oxfordshire**
  Start your energy efficiency journey with the free Plan Builder online tool. They also offer a one-stop retrofit service for householders wanting to invest in transforming their house into a cosy home.
  cosyhomesoxfordshire.org.uk

For practical advice

- **LEAP** The Energy & Money Saving Service:
  applyforleap.org.uk   Freephone 0800 060 7567
- **Energy Saving Trust** **energysavingtrust.org.uk**
- **Centre for Sustainable Energy** **cse.org.uk**

Join the call for change

Tackling the energy crisis, and preventing runaway climate change will take more than individual action. We need the government to also take action to fix our broken energy system. You can help by signing a petition calling for investment in energy efficiency and support for renewable energy.

Check out the *Warm this Winter* campaign: **www.warmthiswinter.org.uk**

Struggling with it all?

- Your local Citizens Advice can help with financial support and emergency fuel vouchers.
- Can't afford your energy bill? Contact your energy supplier. They may be able to spread out payments, or even reduce your bills.
- If it's all getting too much, the Samaritans are waiting for your call. Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call free on **116 123**.

About us

Low Carbon Hub is a social enterprise that's out to prove we can meet our energy needs in a way that's good for people and good for the planet. Because we are run for the benefit of the community, we use all of our profits to fund community-led action on climate change.

With thanks to everyone who has supported our Warmer Winter Appeal.

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OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL