



WARMER WINTER CHECKLIST

Support notes for Energy Champions

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Energy Champion Guidance Notes

You can download a [copy of these notes](#) from the Energy Champion section of the Low Carbon Hub website, which includes live links to all the web resources mentioned in this document.

Please note these notes are based on the Low Carbon Hub research and are accurate, to the best of our knowledge as of November 2024 but should not be relied upon for formal advice. Version 3 11.24.



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

1. Energy Champion Resources

We are working with volunteer Energy Champions across Oxfordshire to provide advice and support to people facing difficulties because of the energy crisis.

You can find electronic versions of the following literature at:

www.lowcarbonhub.org/energy-saving-advice

- Warmer Winter Checklist (in English, Urdu and Ukrainian)
- No Cost Low Cost Leaflet
- Beat the Heat

In the Energy Champions section of the webpage you can find links to register, order more materials for and report on the success of your events:

Energy Champion events

> **Register your energy advice stall / event**

> **Risk assessment template**

> **Post-event monitoring form**

Links to key websites to refer people for support

Referral information

Below you'll find the links and information for referring people to key services.

> **Priority Services Register**

> **Better Housing Better Health**

> **LEAP: The Energy & Money Saving Service**

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

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

Take care not to tell people what is best for them. Instead suggest options they might want to explore to help them make their own informed decision. Questions to ask include:

- **What sort of meter are you on?**

If you have a prepayment meter you pay for your energy before you use it, on a pay-as-you-go basis. Paying this way used to be quite different from other ways of paying, but recent reforms have changed that a bit.

Things to consider:

Now, generally, if you're on a standard variable tariff – one whose price is reviewed every three months or so, paying by prepayment is cheaper than by direct debit. But direct debit is likely to stay by far the overall cheapest option for those who switch energy tariffs.

Money Saving Expert have a good overview: www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/switch-prepaid-gas-electricity/

If you want to change your meter, most providers will do this for free. Citizens Advice have a section to help decide whether a prepayment meter is right for you:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/your-energy-meter/decide-if-a-prepayment-meter-is-right-for-you/

- **If you have a credit meter – is it a smart meter?**

If so, it should automatically send in meter readings.

If not, you need to submit manual readings.

Things to consider:

Sending in regular readings so bills are based on actual, not estimated energy use prevents nasty surprises, or building up significant credit.

This is especially important around the time of price changes.

- **Do you pay by direct debit?**

If you do, you will receive regular statements setting out how much energy you have used and whether you are in credit or debt.

If not, you will receive a regular bill based on your use, which you need to pay.

Things to consider:

It can be cheaper to pay by direct debit – and monthly can be cheaper than quarterly.

If you are struggling, there are emergency funds, and your supplier is obliged to help you.

Check your tariff

Switching is becoming easier to do again, and there are a few options.

Things to consider:

For the latest advice on whether switching is a good idea, Money Saving Expert is a useful website including information about the pros and cons of sticking to existing tariffs, switching

and/or fixing your rate (www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/are-there-any-cheap-fixed-energy-deals-currently-worth-it).

A dual fuel tariff (getting your gas and electricity from the same supplier) may save money. Some tariffs have 'off-peak' cheaper hours, which you can take advantage of by switching to a 'time of use' tariff – but you may pay more at other times. This can be good for EV owners who charge their car at home.

There are switching/comparison sites that are Ofgem-accredited – these include Uswitch (www.uswitch.com) and Money Supermarket (www.moneysupermarket.com).

Understanding the Energy Price Cap

According to Money Saving Expert, the Price Cap limits what you pay for each unit of gas and electricity that you use, and it sets a maximum daily standing charge (what you pay to have your home connected to the grid). It only applies only to providers' standard and default tariffs.

KEY MESSAGE: There is no upper limit to what you actually pay – if you use more energy, you'll pay more; use less and you'll pay less.

The Cap only applies to providers' standard and default tariffs, so if you're on a fixed-term energy deal, the Cap doesn't apply (although currently those who prepay for their energy do still get a small discount on standing charges under the Energy Price Guarantee). Most of us are now likely to be on a capped tariff, especially if you have not switched recently.

It is reviewed every three months, and you can find the current rates and an Energy Price Cap calculator on their website: www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/what-is-the-energy-price-cap/

Where to go for further information

Centre for Sustainable Energy leaflets

- Understanding your gas or electricity bill
- Prepayment meters: the pay-as-you-go way of buying energy
- Dealing with your energy supplier

Local Energy Advice Partnership (LEAP)

- BILL: How to read your energy bill - England

Energy advice for key groups

Other organisations offering energy advice and support include:

- Oxford City Council tenants can find further advice on their website (www.oxford.gov.uk/home-estate/help-council-tenants-get-lower-energy-bills) or call the Contact Centre on 01865 252 372 or email the tenant-focussed Energy Advice team via energyadvice@oxford.gov.uk.
- Macmillan Cancer Care – can help access energy schemes and grants. You can make a phone appointment with an energy adviser by contacting the Macmillan Support Line.

You can call the Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00**. More details available on their website : www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/get-help/financial-and-work/energy-advice.

- Age UK offer support through their free advice line on 0800 678 1602 and have advisers at over 120 Age UK branches plus online information: www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/money-legal/debt-savings/energy.

Want to learn more?

NEA training: Paying for Fuel 2.5hr training course covers:

- Identify and read different types of meters
- Calculate electricity consumption and cost
- Compare different types of tariff and payment methods
- Calculate fuel statements
- Locate information related to switching energy tariff or supplier.

3. Get the support you are entitled to

The climate crisis may result in more extreme weather – which can in turn result in disruption to energy services. Encouraging people to be prepared will help build more resilient communities.

Sign up to the Priority Services Register (PSR)

A national register of people most in need of help if there is a loss of power, whether due to repairs or a storm. You can register if you are:

- Deaf or hearing impaired
- Have a disability
- Live with children under five
- Are blind or partially sighted
- Have a chronic illness.
- Use medical equipment reliant on electricity
- Are over 60
- Temporarily need extra support.

To register:

You register with your network operator. There are three covering different areas in Oxfordshire. If someone wants to check which is relevant to them, they can do so at www.energynetworks.org/customers/find-my-network-operator.

Oxfordshire falls under three different District Network Operators:

Scottish & Southern Electricity Network (SSEN)

They cover most of Oxfordshire.

Register via their online form (www.ssen.co.uk/power-cuts-emergencies/priority-services/priority-services-registration-form) and select 'Low Carbon Hub' from 'how did you hear about us'

Or use their paper forms with a Freepost address

Or phone: 0800 294 3259

The Priority Services form is available in a selection of other languages on their website: www.ssen.co.uk/power-cuts-emergencies/priority-services/.

National Grid

It was previously called Western Power Distribution – WPD. You can sign up and get further information at their Priority Services Hub.

www.nationalgrid.co.uk/customers-and-community/priority-services

UK Power Networks

Covers the Chinnor area. Their PSR information is here: www.ukpowernetworks.co.uk/power-cut/priority-services.

Support is free and includes:

- **Priority treatment during planned or unplanned power cuts**
The priority services line is available 24 hours a day and they will contact you, or your nominated contact, if they need to switch off your power to carry out essential maintenance.
- **Connection to local emergency services**
They work with local authorities, emergency services and agencies, like the British Red Cross, to provide extra support to people on the PSR.
- **Emergency power supplies**
If you use medical equipment or aids reliant on electricity they aim to provide extra support during prolonged supply interruptions.
- **Safety advice tailored to your needs**
E.g., braille, textphone, easy read, CD or a language other than English.
- **Provisions for your community**
During severe weather events and prolonged power outages, our access to local welfare vehicles helps us in our aim to provide meals, drinks, warmth and charging points.
- **Peace of mind**
A service where you can agree a password to use when dealing with the staff at Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks to look after your personal safety and home security.

Contact Better Housing Better Health

www.bhbh.org.uk 0800 107 0044

A charity contracted by Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council to give free impartial and confidential energy advice to anyone with energy-related questions and support needs. We can refer people, or people can refer themselves. They offer:

- Free phone line that anyone can call 0800 107 0044
- A call-back service: www.bhbh.org.uk/make-a-referral/
- Some home visits, primarily for those who are considered 'vulnerable' – over 60s, under 5s, medical conditions etc.
- Have up-to-date advice on all grants and financial support
- Can help with fuel vouchers, form filling, finding out suppliers, warm packs...
- Can signpost to other sources of support where specifically relevant to individual caller, e.g., LEAP for draft-proofing, income maximisation, boiler and white goods replacement schemes, Citizens Advice for advocacy with energy suppliers.

They can help with:

Energy bills

- o Look through your energy bills with you and explain what the different sections are
- o Show you where your meter is and how to read it
- o Check any energy debt and refer or signpost to specialist debt advice agencies
- o When available, provide an emergency top up voucher for prepayment meter credit

Insulation of property

- o Check what insulation is already present in your home
- o Note any issues with damp and mould and advise on how to manage

Heating systems

- o Check the heating system type and age
- o Advise on temperatures, flow rates and settings
- o Check heating controls and advise on best use

Energy and money saving tips

- o Explain cost savings from different tips and tricks around the home
- o Check eligibility for local and national energy efficiency grants.

Grant eligibility checkers

Various retrofit grant support schemes exist for a wide range of households and circumstances. Further details are in the Long-term Improvements section of these notes.

You can check your eligibility and register your [interest for grant support](#) with Oxfordshire County Council: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/retrofit

Oxford City Council have a handy summary table in the grants section of the [Retrofitting your home](#) area of their website: oxford.gov.uk/retrofit

Additional support

LEAP – Local Energy Advice Partnership

We can refer people on to LEAP if we think they are eligible. NB, individuals can't self-refer so it is not included in the checklist leaflet. BHBH may also cross refer for the additional services they can offer e.g., extensive draught proofing, home visits, appliance replacement.

Support they can offer includes:

- Telephone energy advice
- Home visits for qualifying households which covers tariff advice; fuel debt advice; smart meters; warm homes discount; Priority Services Register
- Appliance replacement scheme, subject to availability
- <https://applyforleap.org.uk/leap-appliances/>
- Refer people on to IncomeMax, a service who can check people are getting the benefits they are entitled to and apply to trusts for additional funding and help with fuel debt.

Eligibility criteria are on their website: <https://applyforleap.org.uk/eligibility/>

They include a total household annual income of less than £31,000 **or** being in receipt of one of a wide range of benefits.

To refer someone:

- Use the online form
- Tick the 'referring someone else' option
- The person you refer will get an email with a reference number
- 5-7 days from the point of referral
- They will attempt to contact them three times.

Visit the Help for Households website

This is a government website listing government and company financial support. As well as energy related rebates and support it covers other areas of financial support for people struggling with the cost of living including social tariffs for water, broadband and mobile.

<https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/>

4. Get the most out of your heating system

We think it's really important that everyone learns how to use their heating controls properly. If they don't know how to work them properly, they risk wasting money or not being warm enough.

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.

- These web pages are a good starting point:
 - Central Heating: www.cse.org.uk/advice/central-heating-controls/
 - Storage Heaters: www.cse.org.uk/advice/night-storage-heaters/

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 – we know it's basic, but it should allow you to maintain the same comfort level whilst reducing the house temperature by a degree, as our first tip below suggests!

You can try:

- Setting the thermostat to the lowest comfortable temperature, usually 18–21°C
 - It is recommended that households with elderly, young children or people with health problems keep their main living areas within that range and probably closer to the top of that range.
- Turning down by just 1°C could save £75 from your energy bill.
 - This is only suggested for households WITHOUT elderly, young children or people with health problems.
- Setting the programme so the heating comes on just before you get up in the morning and get in at the end of the day (or to follow whatever timings are relevant to your household schedule).

- Getting the timing right may take some experimenting (every house will be different). It is suggested that turning the heating on 30 mins before getting back to the house is a good starting point.
- Setting the heating to switch off a short time before you usually go out for the day or go to bed. Your house will stay warm for some time after the heating is off.
 - Getting the timing right may take some experimenting (every house will be different). It is suggested that turning the heating off 30 mins before leaving is a good starting point.

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 you need it.
 - This may include spare bedrooms that aren't in use all of the time or certain rooms at certain times of the day. For example: do you use your living room in the morning? Could you turn the radiators off in there in the morning?
 - It is recommended that you don't turn radiators off completely to avoid damp issues or frozen pipes – some regular heating is important.
- Radiators can be made more controllable by adding Thermostatic Radiator Valves (TRVs). This can cost between £10–60 each. Digital TRVs 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.
 - This simple video provides some more information on how to use TRVs – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rszcxKsONgE>

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.
 - It is recommended that you check your radiators every month to ensure that they are still working okay. Some may need bleeding more regularly than others.
 - Bleeding radiators is a simple task that most people should manage, if they have a radiator key (available very cheaply at DIY stores). This is a great little video that will show you how: www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuGlebYijcA
 - Note: If you have a combi boiler then you may need to adjust the pressure of the boiler after bleeding your radiators. This is similarly quite simple, but some people may worry about doing this. Manuals should explain how it is done.
- If your radiators are hot at the top but cold at the bottom, the system might have sludge in, 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.

- o The flow temperature is the temperature that your boiler heats up the water to before it goes to your radiators.
- o A lower flow temperature can make your system more efficient and therefore reduce your bills without reducing your comfort.
- o Only suitable for condensing combi boilers.
- o The Money Saving Boiler Challenge gives tailored instructions:
<https://moneysavingboilerchallenge.com/>
- o Alternatively this is a great little video that will explain it all in more detail -
www.youtube.com/watch?v=T022zY9I_0

5. 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 works for you.

Every month

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

Every year

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

Create a Home Emergency Plan kit in case of power outages. Include a torch, water, battery or wind-up radio, batteries, key medicines, and key contact numbers (further details below).

Twice a year adjust timers for daylight saving.

Make a Home Emergency Plan

The network operator SSEN has a handy Home Emergency Plan template. This is a really good tool to help **any household** do the thinking and take practical steps to be prepared in the case of an emergency like a power cut or big storm. It lists useful items and documents (e.g., bottled water, radio & torch, identity documents) to collect into one place, so they are accessible and enable you to respond quickly and safely.

It is useful for everyone to know about the plan in the house – and a good idea to make plans for and/or with other family members who do not live with you.

Key message in emergency:

Go in, stay in and tune into local radio.

A home emergency plan template can be downloaded here:

<https://lowcarbonhub.box.com/s/bo81o46d854mupvkvpno9y19ttctrna>

6. Keep your heat!

Once your home is warming up it's important to stop heat escaping.

The UK has some of the oldest and leakiest homes in Europe and the Energy Saving Trust have identified the areas with the biggest source of heat loss from our homes:

35% of heat is lost through the walls of the house.

25% from the roof.

25% from the floors.

15% from draughty windows and doors.

There are several low-cost measures we can all take to reduce heat loss from our homes and keep our energy payments as low as possible.

Walls and floors

We can lose around one third of heat through the walls of our homes, and though insulating walls can be expensive, it can lead to significant savings.

If your house was built after 1920 it probably has cavity walls which means installing cavity-wall insulation is often one of the most cost-effective measures, you can take to save energy in your home. It can save an average £210 a year in a typical 3-bedroom semi-detached house.

Solid wall insulation can be applied internally or externally and is significantly more expensive than cavity wall insulation, but it should eventually lead to reduced energy bills.

Stop heat escaping from your chimney

The benefits of installing a chimney balloon are that it keeps warm air in the room and prevents cold air coming into the room from the chimney. It could save up to £90 a year. The chimney balloon should fit snugly against all four walls of the chimney breast.

Once installed and inflated, it's important to hang a cord and label from the balloon as a reminder that it's there. Always remove the balloon before lighting a fire in the grate.

A chimney balloon can also be made from stuffing an old pillowcase with unwanted clothes, which can then be inserted in the chimney breast.

Fixing draughty windows and doors

Draught-proofing your windows and doors by installing simple low-cost measures means you'll use less energy to heat your home, so you'll save money as well as making your home warmer and more comfortable.

Doors

Draught-proofing external doors can stop a considerable amount of heat from escaping from your home and won't cost you much. There are four main areas that leak heat and let cold air in:

- Keyholes – Fit a purpose-made cover that drops a metal disc over the keyhole. Keyhole covers, or escutcheons, cost around £3 each.
- Letterbox – Fit a letterbox flap or brush but remember to measure your letterbox before you buy.
- Gaps at the bottom of doors – fit a brush or hinged flap draught excluder to the base of your door. You can also make your own draught excluder from a tube of fabric stuffed with unwanted clothes.
- Gaps around the edges – fit foam, brush, or wiper strips like those used for windows.

Windows

If you're able to allocate some money to spend, you can significantly insulate your home and reduce heat loss through your windows by replacing single glazing with double glazing (Which? review of double glazing options: <https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/double-glazing/article/how-to-buy-double-glazing/choosing-double-glazed-windows-and-doors-auxkN5y2Y0Zn>).

A low cost but effective way to make a draughty window more airtight is to use temporary secondary glazing film. It costs around £4 and can be applied to the window frame and then heated to expand with a hair dryer.

- **Window foam seal:** This is like a thick tape and comes in rolls of various colours. It's easy to install, cheap and available at larger DIY stores. However, it doesn't work well for sliding windows.
- **Foam sealant:** This special foam can be sprayed into gaps around windows or doors. It's more expensive than foam tape.
- **Metallic or plastic brush strips:** These are more expensive than foam tape but should last longer and work much better for sash windows.

A great video that shows how to insulate the main areas of your home is this one from Which? Video 'Four ways to insulate your home and save money on your energy bills':

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bQDCb47_Vs

Radiators

Radiator reflector panels can be fitted behind radiators attached to outside walls. They help to reduce heat being lost into a cold outside wall by reflecting radiant heat away from the wall and back into the room. It acts as a reflective barrier, reducing energy losses and hence saving money on your annual fuel bill. They are easy and quick to fit, and the radiators don't need to be removed from the wall.

Hot water

Insulating your hot water tank, if you have one, with a thermal jacket can save up to £50 per year.

Insulating your hot water pipes with thermal tubing is an easy and cost-effective way to reduce the chances of your pipes freezing in very cold weather.

Loft insulation

Around a quarter of home's heat is lost through the roof, which is why loft insulation makes such a difference.

If your home has an accessible loft with no damp or condensation problems, it will be a good candidate for loft insulation.

Laying loft insulation from zero to a thickness of 270mm in a typical 3-bedroom semi-detached home could cut £270 a year from energy bills, as less heat will be lost through the roof. In a mid-terraced house, the savings are around £200 a year.

The cost of insulating the loft for a typical semi-detached home could be under £500 and you'd see the savings back in under two years.

Even if you already have some insulation your loft may need a top-up. The recommended depth for mineral wool insulation – the most common material – is at least 270mm. Good loft insulation can last for up to 40 years.

Further sources of information:

Energy Saving Homes seminars

The bite-size films are a series of 2-4 minute films made by Energy Saving Homes (www.facebook.com/EnergySavingHomesOxford) recorded from the Energy Saving Homes fair in 2022. The films are all about how to save energy in your home – with examples from real people. The films cover the following topics:

- Low-cost energy saving measures from Oxford residents that cost less than £10.
- Insulating your walls, loft and floor
- Air source heat pumps
- Solar panels and storage
- Double or triple glazing and ventilation
- Help with finance
- Opportunities for contractors

You can view them on the Low Carbon Oxford North YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpecfI9qbrmt1veN3cuOOd1fWkNg1soY->

Low Carbon Oxford North Housewarming Guides

Low Carbon Oxford North has created seven helpful guides, written by independent experts to support people who want to improve their homes.

The housewarming guides will walk you through the options, considering key questions for each stage of any plans to ensure they will work for you and your home.

Most of the focus is on major eco-renovation but there is lots of useful advice for low-cost things you can do yourself.

You can find them online at: <https://lcon.org.uk/energy/housewarming/>

7. Long-term improvements

Use Plan Builder to find out what might be suitable for your home

The free Plan Builder tool is a great place for anyone to start their retrofit journey and get an instant overview of retrofit opportunities for your home. You access it via the Cosy Homes Oxfordshire homepage. www.cosyhomesoxfordshire.org

How to use Plan Builder:

Put in your Oxfordshire postcode, and you'll see everything we know about the current energy efficiency and performance of your home, based on existing data. Some of this data may be out of date, so you may wish to update anything you notice is incorrect, which you can do via the Plan Builder tool.

Then, choose your budget and priorities, and the Plan Builder will create a draft retrofit plan for your home – which you can edit to suit your needs.

If you would like to go forward with the Cosy Homes Oxfordshire paid-for service, there is an option to submit the plan to Cosy Homes Oxfordshire and request a follow up all.

Retrofit grants: check to see what grants are available

Grants are available for qualifying private tenants and homeowners. New grants can become available at different times. The best place to check for the latest grants is:

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/retrofit

Oxford City Council also has a handy summary table in the grants section of the Retrofitting your home area of their website.

<http://oxford.gov.uk/retrofit>

Support for landlords

CSE run a landlord advice service on Minimum Energy Efficiency standards:

www.cse.org.uk/support-for-landlords/

Single measures

If you feel confident you know what work needs to be carried out and feel confident to research and project manager it yourself, or just want a single measure such as PV installed, here is useful advice for finding a retrofit installer on the Oxford City Council website, www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20062/carbon_reduction_and_energy_saving/1605/retrofitting_your_home/3

They stress it is essential to conduct thorough research before carrying out any home retrofit works. They suggest the following resources:

- [TrustMark](#), where you can search for local tradespeople in your area who are certified
- [MCS Certified installer list](#)
- [Buy With Confidence](#)
- If you are living in a hard to heat home, [Better Housing Better Health](#) can provide you

- with guidance on suitable installers to carry out energy efficiency work
- [Energy Saving Trust](#) has advice for find a retrofit installer in your area.

For an impartial whole house retrofit service: Cosy Homes Oxfordshire

Whole House Plans

The Cosy Home Oxfordshire service is for homeowners (owner occupiers and landlords) who are able to pay for retrofit measures and would like impartial expert advice and support to plan and support the implementation of retrofit measures on your home.

They can turn your initial indicative Plan Builder overview into a bespoke Whole House Plan based on an in-depth on-site assessment of your property. The cost of retrofitting your home depends on its size and what needs doing. That's why Cosy Homes offer a personalised approach.

The Whole House Plan gives you an in-depth look at the most cost-effective measures tailored to your home, creating a long-term vision for energy efficiency and comfort.

Here's what the Whole House Plan costs, inclusive of VAT:

- 1-2 bed home – £375
- 3-4 bed home – £600
- 5+ bed home – price on request (these can be a bit more complex, so extra details may be needed).

This cost covers the detailed assessment and expertise needed to design the right plan for your home.

Further services:

Once you've reviewed your Whole House Plan with your Cosy Homes Retrofit Coordinator, you'll receive a Client Service Agreement outlining any additional costs before moving forward. This ensures you have a clear understanding of what's involved, including things like a Building Performance Requirement (BPR) or technical reports, if needed.

Please note this is a paid-for service, and best suited to households looking to carry a number of retrofit and low carbon technologies at once. As a rule of thumb, it is most appropriate for projects likely to cost at least £20,000 and involve several measures.

Every retrofit is unique, and the cost of your retrofit will depend on the work you choose to do. The Whole House Plan gives you estimates, but final prices come from the contractors once you're ready to begin. Cosy Homes services include:

- Facilitating contract documents between you and your contractor(s).
- Coordinating retrofit measures for appropriate sequencing.
- Inspecting work to ensure contractors deliver as promised.
- Resolving any issues or conflicts that may arise.
- Signing off on the work.

The Retrofit Coordinators will guide you through the whole process, but if your project is particularly large or involves several contractors, you may want to consider hiring a full-time project manager.

8. Struggling with it all?

Refer households struggling with the cost of living to agencies able to offer them support.

This could include:

- Their current energy supplier
- Better Housing Better Health
- LEAP
- Citizens Advice.

The cost-of-living crisis means that for many people, their household income is less than their monthly outgoings, so that they have a negative monthly budget. For these households, their needs go far beyond simply tackling their energy bills.

1. We want people to be able to afford the energy they need.

Sometimes using less, through energy efficiency measures, can help – but in some cases it's about helping people to be able to afford the energy they need to keep warm and healthy.

2. Energy efficiency measures can still help.

People struggling with their energy bills will probably have already tried very many different ways to reduce their energy use but there may be some practical ideas you can suggest.

3. People in negative household budgets will need additional help and support.

Can't pay your energy bill?

Contact your energy company.

Ofgem rules mean suppliers must offer payment plans you can afford, and you can ask for 'emergency credit' if you use a prepay meter and can't top up.

The Ofgem website has advice on getting help if you can't pay your bills here:

www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/getting-help-if-you-cant-afford-your-energy-bills

It includes how to get support if you can't reach an agreement with your energy company, grant funding and debt support advice.

Citizens Advice may be able to provide you with emergency fuel vouchers.

Citizens Advice

Advice available on-line, by phone and by email

Adviceline Freephone: [0808 278 7909](tel:08082787909)

Citizens Advice can offer financial advice including debt advice and support claiming benefits. They can help with energy efficiency; income maximisation; benefits; debt and money; consumer issues; health; housing; immigration; employment; family and law and courts.

Citizens Advice may be able to offer the following for free:

- Home energy efficiency assessments - these will give the client their accurate energy rating but also ideas on how to improve energy efficiency
- Boiler checks
- Hot water cylinder jackets
- Radiator keys/meter keys
- Chimney balloons
- Radiator foil
- Door and window draft excluders
- Window film insulation
- Electric blankets
- Funds to replace inefficient energy appliances
- Funds for low energy cooking appliances.

Find your local branch via the website, although please note many no longer offer face-to-face advice. Get in touch with your local branch to see what help they can offer. For example, they may be able to offer emergency fuel vouchers for people of prepayment meters. Information on this is also available online: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/get-help-paying-your-bills/you-cant-afford-to-top-up-your-prepayment-meter/

Energy Champions: we can refer clients through to their email advice - with the client's permission to do so, we fill in the form as if we were the client. The link to do this is here - <https://citizensadviceoxford.org.uk/get-advice/email-us/>

Citizens Advice can be particularly helpful if someone is in energy debt and needs help to negotiate with their energy company.

Search for your local Citizens Advice: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/search-for-your-local-citizens-advice

Debt advice

There are other forms of debt relief and support – e.g. from suppliers, British Gas Energy Trust's Individual and Families Debt Write Off Fund etc.

Find online debt and money information at www.turn2us.org.uk, www.StepChange.org and on the [Citizens Advice](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) national website.

When it's all getting too much: The Samaritans

For some, the stress of coping with energy bills may be overwhelming. The Samaritans are on hand 24/7 to help and the Samaritans website has helpful advice here, www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/if-youre-worried-about-someone-else/, on:

1. Signs that someone may not be OK

2. What to do if you think someone is struggling
3. Supporting someone online
4. When you should let someone else help
5. How to talk about getting extra support
6. Looking after yourself

Suggestions from LCWO Energy Champion Neville Scrivener, who spent many years working as a mental health nurse:

- A good initial response is “mmm” as it gives you time/space to think before you respond further.
- Give people space to talk.
- “Have you been able to talk to anyone else about this?” - brings in idea of others being source of support, so not just sitting with you.
- “Who might you be able to talk to?”
- You can recognise how they feel – all the evidence suggests this does not have a negative impact e.g. “I'm really sorry to hear you feel like that”.

Want to learn more?

NEA training: Vulnerability in the energy market

<https://www.nea.org.uk/training/course-outlines/vulnerability-energy-market/>

Objectives

- Define how the energy sector defines vulnerability
- Identify risk factors and triggers which suggest a householder is potentially vulnerable
- State supplier obligation in regard to supporting vulnerable consumers
- Explain Priority Services Register (PSR) offered by the fuel suppliers, Distribution Network Operators and the Gas Distribution Network Companies

Content

- How the energy sector (fuel suppliers, Distribution Network Operators, Gas Distribution Network Companies and Ofgem) define and identify vulnerable customers
- Energy UK's 'Safety Net for Vulnerable Customers' and Ofgem's Vulnerability Strategy which set out the definitions of a vulnerable customer used by the sector.
- Support available to vulnerable customers including the Priority Services Register.