

The Healthier Energy Project



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Rossendale
& Hyndburn

Spring newsletter - March 2022 - Issue 3

Welcome to the Spring 2022 newsletter of the Healthier Energy Project - an energy advice project run by Citizens Advice Rossendale & Hyndburn in partnership with Homewise, funded by the Energy Redress Fund.

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Energy MOT: Countdown to Autumn

It's Spring! Hopefully time for a bit of warmer weather and less need to use the heating; BUT, now is the time to prepare for October when the price cap will rise again - just in time for winter. Follow our energy MOT to reduce your energy use as far as you can before that happens...

Step 1 - Check your Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). An energy performance certificate will tell you how energy efficient your home is, rating it from A (good) to G (bad). All homes marketed for sale or rent in the UK should have an EPC done, and rented homes must have an EPC of E or above, any lower and the landlord should be making improvements. Anyone can look up an EPC on the .Gov website - <https://www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate>

Step 2 - Check eligibility for home improvement grants. If your EPC is below average then you or a landlord *might* be able to get a grant to improve the energy efficiency of the property; this often means adding insulation, which will keep your home warmer for longer and help you to use less energy. Insulation is essential for keeping your fuel bills under control. Check eligibility for grants on the website of Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL) - <http://www.chil.uk.com> and the Simple Energy Advice website - <https://www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk> and also ask your supplier about ECO grants.



Step 3 - Fix the draughts. Check for draughts around doors, letterboxes, keyholes, windows and install draught excluders where possible. Get draught excluder stripping for doors and windows, cover open keyholes, install letterbox covers, put draught seals at the bottom of doors, or make your own draught excluders. Thick curtains will keep draughts from windows at bay and close the doors to unused rooms (especially draughty ones!) and don't forget the chimney. More energy saving tips here on the website of the *Centre for Sustainable Energy*: <http://www.cse.org.uk/advice>

Step 4 - Make use of your heating controls. Whatever kind of heating system you have, spend some time learning how the controls work. If you have a timer - is it set to come on and off at appropriate times? Is the thermostat set to between 18-21°C? Are you making sure that the heating goes off at night? The best advice for most homes is to use the heating only when needed, not to keep it on low all the time. <https://bit.ly/3M0mBYD>



Step 5 - Check your bills for usage, tariff and meter readings. The most important part of your bills is the bit that shows your meter readings, how much energy you have used and how much it costs. Energy usage is measured in kilowatts per hour (kWh) - and you're charged for every single one of those kilowatts, so it pays to know how many you're using and how much they cost. The cost per kilowatt is shown in your tariff so look that up, and check whether your annual usage is above or below average for your type of household. Make sure that your energy company is getting accurate readings, otherwise they have to guess how much you're using which doesn't always turn out well! *The Centre for Sustainable Energy* has a guide to understanding your energy bills; follow the link for more - <https://bit.ly/3Eaoqzp>

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Energy MOT continued...

Step 6 - Compare tariffs and providers.

There are very few cheap tariffs around at the moment; most variable tariffs will be at the price cap and many fixed tariffs will be higher. Even so it's still worth checking whether you can get a better tariff with your own supplier or elsewhere. Don't forget to look at the standing charge as well as the cost per kilowatt, not just the overall cost quoted. When you do a comparison try to use your actual annual usage in kilowatts per hour, not the amount of money you are paying - because the amount of money you are paying now might not be a true reflection of how much energy you are actually using, especially if your supplier hasn't been receiving regular meter readings.

<https://energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk>

If you follow all of these steps over the next six months then you'll be in the best shape you can be when the price cap rises again in October.

Remember that it can take time to apply for grants and get work done so that's why looking up your EPC and checking eligibility for grants are at the top of the list; those things would need to be started now in order to have any chance of work being done in time for winter - planning ahead is vital.

If you're still going to struggle then contact your energy supplier to let them know. If you are already in fuel arrears you might be able to access a grant. Also see below for a list of measures that the Government is putting in place to help people manage throughout the energy crisis;

- £200 repayable discount on energy bills that will be repaid over 5 years.
- £150 Council Tax Rebate payment (non-repayable) for all households that are in Council Tax bands A-D in England.
- £150 payment for households in England in Bands A-D that pay less than £150 Council Tax, or do not pay Council Tax as a result of Local Council Tax Support.
- A discretionary support fund, distributed via Local Authorities, for households that need support but are not eligible for the Council Tax Rebate.
- Warm Home Discount to be increased to £150 and eligibility to be expanded (see next article).
- Household Support Fund has been extended for another 6 months.



Warm Home Discount changes in 2022

The Warm Home Discount, an energy rebate that some customers can get off their annual fuel bill, has been updated for winter 2022 - here are the main changes...

Previously the Warm Home Discount scheme was open to two groups of people - the 'core group' who would receive it automatically, and the 'broader group' who had to apply to their energy provider. Under the new scheme there are now two core groups:-

- **Core group 1** - pensioners who receive the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit.
- **Core group 2** - people on a low income who are in receipt of certain means tested benefits AND whose energy costs are likely to be high - this will be determined by Government data combined with data from the energy company.

The amount of the rebate will go up from £140 to £150 and will be applied automatically to those who are eligible. Customers can appeal if they wish to challenge a decision, e.g. if they haven't been included and think that they should be. At the time of writing the information on the .Gov website hasn't been updated with the new info, but here is the link for when it is - <https://bit.ly/3lCdU5o>



Contact Us

Our energy advisers can offer advice about keeping your home warm, your energy costs down, coping with energy debt and budgeting - contact us on the details below...

Energy helpline - 01254 304129

Online - <https://carh.org.uk/index.php/contacts>

Consumer helpline - 0808 223 1133

Adviceline - 0808 2787 975