

Energy support available in Cambridgeshire

Practical information to help people manage their electricity and gas bills

1. Financial support available for energy bills

❖ Warm Home Discount – increasing from £140 to £150 this Winter (22/23)

Households on means tested benefits with high energy use may be eligible for a one off £150 payment from their energy supplier every winter. The £150 is not paid to the applicant but taken off their electricity bill sometime between September and March. Applications must be made directly to the energy supplier annually, except for those on Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit) who should receive this automatically.

❖ Energy Bills rebate - £150

A £150 one off payment between April and September 2022 for households in council tax bands A to D, known as the Council Tax Rebate. If you pay by direct debit, the payment should automatically be paid into your account. If you pay by other means you will have to contact your local authority to arrange payment to you.

❖ Energy Bills Support Scheme - £400 discount

Energy bills discount due to come in from October is being doubled from £200 to £400. Households will receive a £400 discount on their energy bills from October onwards. The discount is credited directly to their account/prepay meter.

❖ Cost of living support

The government announced additional support for households on certain benefits – full information can be found here [Cost of living support factsheet](#)

❖ Household Support Fund - £100

Up to £100 payment to help with paying for household energy bills and food. Available to people experiencing immediate financial hardship. [Household Support Fund - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

❖ Winter Fuel Payment – from £250 to £600

Automatic payment of up to £300 for people aged 66+ as at Sep 2022. Payments are made automatically in November and December. [Winter Fuel Payment](#)

❖ Cold weather payment

This is paid for periods of very cold weather lasting 7 days or more between 1 Nov and 31 March for people on specific eligible benefits. <https://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment>

❖ Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme

CLAS can provide information, advice and practical support and assistance in times of exceptional pressure. Following an assessment, you may be eligible for a CLAS award. The awards can be in the form of supermarket vouchers, energy vouchers, new cookers, or recycled white goods and furniture. CLAS energy vouchers for people on prepaid meters are available via Cambridge & District Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Rural Cambs. Applicants can self-refer. [Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme](#)

Access to the following grants is via a professional referral:

❖ **Stay Well Grant – up to £400**

Grants of up to £400 are awarded for vulnerable individuals and families facing fuel poverty. For those that are homeless, other costs of keeping warm (such as sleeping bags) will be considered. Individual customers cannot apply on their own behalf. Please contact your local Citizens Advice - [Citizens Advice Cambridge & District](#) or [Citizens Advice Rural Cambs](#) for access to this grant. <https://www.cambscf.org.uk/stay-well>

❖ **Energy supplier grants**

Some of the bigger energy suppliers have their own funds to support households in energy arrears. Main examples include Eon and British Gas. These funds are open to all, not just their customers. Would advise going through a local Citizens Advice (see links above) for these grants, as a financial statement prepared by a Debt Advisor is needed as evidence of seeking Debt Advice.

2. Keeping track of energy costs

Knowing what you are using and spending on energy will help you feel more in control. You can do this by reading your meter regularly or getting a smart meter installed.

- ❖ **Reading your meter:** Always check your actual usage and let your supplier know if an estimated bill is too high. If you are unsure how to read your meter, check your supplier's website or call them.
- ❖ **Smart meters:** These are free and you can see how much you are using every day and how these change depending on what you have switched on. If you are getting one installed check with your supplier that it is the most up to date version.
- ❖ **IMPORTANT** – if the information on your bill looks wrong contact your supplier.

3. Understanding energy bills

Electricity and gas are 'priority' bills – if you do not pay them, you run the risk of your supply being cut off. Your bills are made up of:

- ❖ **Unit cost** - Gas and electricity is sold in kilowatt-hours (kWh) and the price of these varies from supplier to supplier. The cost of fuel you use is the unit cost x the number of units you use. This is the only part of your bill that you have control over - the more units you use, the more you pay.
- ❖ **Standing charge** – this is a fixed cost that you have to pay every day regardless of how much energy you use.
- ❖ **VAT** – this is charged at 5%
- ❖ **Discounts** – you may be eligible for a discount if you get your gas and electricity from the same supplier or if you pay by direct debit
- ❖ **Add ons** – some suppliers add on for extra services, e.g., receiving a paper bill in the post.

Remember– The energy price cap is the maximum amount that the supplier can charge for the unit cost and standing charge – your energy costs will be higher than the price cap if you use more units.

4. Energy efficiency tips

Small changes can make a big difference. For example:

- ❖ **Heating** – turning down your thermostat by just one degree can save you on average £116 a year
- ❖ **Lightbulbs** – using low energy lightbulbs. Free low energy bulbs are available through PECT. Contact warmhomes@pect.org.uk to request
- ❖ **Water** – set your temperature to 60 degrees centigrade and close the door when bathing or showering
- ❖ **Kitchen** – only boil the water you need in a kettle and put lids on pans when cooking
- ❖ **Appliances** – turn off appliances on standby and if you are buying new appliances buy those with the best energy rating you can afford.
- ❖ **Repairs** – If your home is draughty due to repairs needed with windows or doors or fans, please report the repair so that you can avoid losing unnecessary heat. Contact your landlord if you are in rented property’.

More useful information here <https://www.nea.org.uk/get-help/advice-resources/>

5. Saving on water bills

Using less water at home will also save on energy costs/ You can consider:

- ❖ **Water meter** – ask your supplier if having a water meter will save you money or you can use water meter calculator <https://www.ccwater.org.uk/watermetercalculator/>
- ❖ **WaterSure** - This scheme helps those with a water meter and on benefits and need to use a lot of water either for medical reasons or because the household has 3 or more children. Your water bill is capped, i.e. you will not pay more than the averaged metered bill for your area.
- ❖ **Reduced tariff** – Many water companies have social tariffs which offer reduced bills to customers who would otherwise struggle to pay. Schemes can differ in terms of who is eligible for help and what assistance is provided. Contact your water company to find out more.
- ❖ **Water saving devices** – your water company will also offer free water saving devices – contact them to find out more.

6. Advice services:

- ❖ **Cambridgeshire Home Energy Support Services (CHESS) - provided by PECT and Cambridgeshire ACRE**

Provides advice and support to households in **Fenland, Huntingdonshire, East Cambs and Cambridge City** around heating and energy. Following a referral or self-referral a call or home visit will be booked in with one of our energy advisors who will help with any relevant issues. Frontline workers can be kept up to date on this project by signing up to be a volunteer on the project.

To refer, email warmhomes@pect.org.uk, call 01733 568408 or fill in the referral form on – www.pect.org.uk/projects/warmhomes

- ❖ **LEAP**

Households in **Peterborough and South Cambs** can receive a similar service from LEAP to help with issues around heating and energy.

Call 0800 060 7567 or email support@applyforleap.org.uk to refer in or visit www.applyforleap.org.uk for more information.

7. Bills you cannot pay

If you cannot afford to top up or pay your energy bills, even after checking this advice, please seek more help. Useful contacts:

- ❖ **Citizens Advice Rural Cambs 0808 278 7807**
<https://www.citizensadviseruralcambs.org.uk/faq-items/help-energy-costs/>
- ❖ **Cambridge & District Citizens Advice 0808 278 7808**
<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/budgeting/budgeting/get-help-with-bills/#>

8. Priority Services Register

All energy and gas companies have priority services register for households in more vulnerable situations. The support available will depend on your supplier and your needs but offers you additional protection – contact your supplier to find out more.

9. Home improvements

❖ **Eco/Affordable Warmth**

This scheme helps low-income homeowners receive help with boiler replacements, insulation, and first-time central heating. This can be accessed either through an energy supplier, for example Eon can offer boiler replacement at heavily reduced price, or through an appropriate installer who can access the funding on behalf of the household. Installers can be found on www.trustmark.org.uk.
[ECO3 Scheme](#)

❖ **Local authority**

There may be grant funding available through the local authority for low income or vulnerable homeowners to assist with energy improvements in the home. Contact the local authority or PECT to see if this is available for any households you are supporting at the time.

❖ **LEAP**

For those in [Fenland](#), LEAP can offer boiler replacements and first-time central heating for homeowners in receipt of benefits. See referral details above.

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10. Other information

Other useful places to go for information include:

- ❖ <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/>
- ❖ <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/>
- ❖ [Get Help - National Energy Action \(NEA\)](#)
- ❖ <https://www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk/grants>