



WarmHomesEssex
Improving health through practical advice for fuel poor households

Uttlesford
Frontline



Factsheet

Keeping warm & well in winter

This factsheet has been produced in conjunction with Warm Homes Essex. It gives information which can help you save money on your bills and on local services and national schemes which can help you stay warm and well in winter.

Warm homes Essex

A cold home is bad for your health. Warm Homes Essex is a new service set up by Citizens Advice to provide practical advice and support to people who are finding it hard to heat their homes and keep warm and well. So, if you have high fuel bills; a low income; need help with switching your electricity or gas supplier; have a home that suffers from draughts, mould or damp, or you have an old or inefficient boiler or heating system, please get in touch.

The Warm Homes service can help in a number of different ways – for example by checking your benefit entitlements; helping you to manage fuel debts; advising on emergency fuel payments and grants for home improvements; offering energy saving ideas and making sure you are getting the best tariffs for you.

Call 01799 618858 or email warmhomes@uttlesfordcab.cabnet.org.uk

Winter benefits

Winter Fuel Payment

An annual one-off payment of between £100 - £300 to help pay for heating during the winter. Payment is made automatically to people in receipt of the State Pension or another social security benefit (not Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Child Benefit or Universal Credit). Most payments are made between November and December and are received by Christmas. Those who are eligible but do not get paid automatically, need to make a claim before the 31st March.

For more information go to <https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment>

Cold Weather Payments

This is a one-off payment to help pay for extra heating costs each time the temperature drops below a specific temperature for a set period of time. The payment is made if the average temperature in the local area is recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees celsius or below for 7 consecutive days.

The Cold Weather Payment scheme runs from 1 November to 31 March. There will be a payment of £25 for each 7-day period of very cold weather between 1 November and 31 March.

You may get Cold Weather Payments if you are receiving:

- Pension Credit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Universal Credit
- Support for Mortgage Interest
- You don't need to apply, you will be paid automatically if you are eligible.

If you've had a baby or a child under 5 has come to live with you, tell Jobcentre Plus if you get Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance. You won't automatically get Cold Weather Payments if you don't.

If you don't receive your Cold Weather Payment, tell your pension centre or Jobcentre Plus office. If you're getting Universal Credit, contact the helpline instead.

If you go into hospital, tell your pension centre or Jobcentre Plus office - this could affect your payment.

More info on <https://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment/eligibility>

Disability Benefits

If you need help to apply for Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance, Carer's Allowance and Disability Living Allowance, the Uttlesford Citizens Advice Disability Benefits Team may be able to arrange to visit you in your home. At a home visit, the disability benefits teams can also offer advice about

- Energy efficiency in the home
- Energy supply
- Safety in the home, e.g. smoke alarms, fire guards, carbon monoxide detectors
- Cold weather planning
- Emergency planning e.g. care options, lifeline alarms
- Other support available such as assisted bin collections, fall prevention transport schemes, mobility aids, toenail cutting

To speak to a member of the team call 01799 618840 or email bureau@uttlesfordcab.cabnet.org.uk

Benefit Check

Uttlesford Citizens Advice can carry out a full benefit check to make sure you are receiving all the benefits you are entitled to. Call 01799 618840 or email bureau@uttlesfordcab.cabnet.org.uk to make an appointment.

Alternatively, the following websites may be helpful.

www.turn2us.org.uk

www.entitledto.co.uk

Warm Home Discount Scheme

If you receive the guarantee credit part of Pension Credit or you are on a low income you may be eligible for a reduction in your electricity bill of £140 under the Warm Home Discount Scheme. The money is not paid to you - it's a one-off discount on your electricity bill, between September and March.

Check with your supplier because not all suppliers are part of the scheme. If you are thinking of switching – check your eligibility first, as you will need to stay with your supplier until the discount is paid. This doesn't affect you if you get the discount automatically.

If you get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit

You qualify for the discount if, on a qualifying date, the following apply:

- your energy supplier was part of the scheme
- your name (or your partner's) was on the bill
- you were getting the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit (even if you get Savings Credit as well)

This is known as being in the 'core group'. If you are in this group you'll receive a letter between October and December telling you how to get the discount if you qualify. Your letter will say if you need to call a helpline to confirm your details. Your electricity supplier will apply the discount to your bill by 31 March.

If you do not get a letter, contact the Warm Home Discount helpline if you think you're eligible for the 'core group'.

0800 731 0214 - Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm

If you're on a low income

If you do not get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit but:

- your energy supplier is part of the scheme
- you're on a low income
- you get certain means-tested benefits

You may be able to apply directly to your electricity supplier for help. This is known as being in the 'broader group'. To get the discount you'll need to stay with your supplier until it's paid. Your electricity supplier decides who can get the discount - check with your supplier to see if you're eligible and how to apply. Check with your supplier as early as possible. The number of discounts suppliers can give are limited. Your electricity supplier will apply the discount to your bill by 31 March.

Pre-pay or pay-as-you-go meters

You can still qualify for the discount if you use a pre-pay or pay-as-you-go electricity meter. Your electricity supplier can tell you how you'll get the discount if you're eligible, for example a voucher you can use to top up your meter.

Park (mobile) homes

You apply a different way if you live in a park home. Contact Charis Grants for more information about the scheme for park homes.

Charis Grants Ltd

Telephone: 0330 555 9424

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5:30pm (closed on bank holidays)

For more info go to <https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme>

Priority Services Register

You will normally be able to get priority services from your energy supplier if you:

- are disabled or have a long-term health condition
- are recovering from an injury
- have mental health problems
- don't speak or read English well
- have children under 5 or are pregnant
- have reached your State Pension age

You might also be able to sign up for priority services for other reasons - for example, if you are recently bereaved or you have returned to living independently after some time in residential care.

Services may include:

- protection from cold callers with a password protection scheme
- meter moved free of charge if it's hard to use or read the meter
- a free quarterly meter reading if you can't read your meter
- bills sent to a relative, carer or friend
- your bills and meter readings in a braille, large print, audio tape, text phone or type talk
- advance notice if supply is going to be interrupted
- priority reconnection if supply is interrupted
- alternative facilities for cooking and heating if supply is interrupted
- extra help to use meter or appliances

For further information and to register for free, contact your energy supplier.

Reducing your energy bills

Switching your energy supplier

Approximately 70% of households are on standard tariffs - this could be costing approximately £300 more than a cheaper tariff with the same supplier.

Before switching - check:

- whether you have a fixed-term contract that lets your supplier charge you a fee to leave - this is called an exit fee and you can check it on your energy bill
- what the customer service rating is like for the potential new supplier
- whether your current supplier offers a cheaper tariff - it will save you the effort of switching

You might not be able to switch if you're in debt to your supplier or you're a tenant.

If you get the Warm Home Discount (a benefit for pensioners and people on a low income), check whether the new supplier offers it - you'll lose it if they don't

Steps to switch energy supplier:

1. Compare tariffs from different suppliers.
2. Once you've found one, call the supplier - they'll set up the switch and tell your old supplier. Alternatively, you can switch online.
3. Take a meter reading on the day of the transfer to give to your new supplier - this means they won't charge you for energy used before the switch.
4. Pay your old supplier's final bill or get a refund if you're in credit.

Once the switch has started, you'll also need to give the new supplier your energy meter reference numbers, known as 'MPRN' or 'MPAN' numbers. You can find these numbers on your energy bill.

Top Tips

- Give regular meter readings to your supplier
- Opt to buy your gas and electricity from the same supplier - you will get a saving
- Manage your account on-line if you can - you will get a small saving
- If you can get a Warm Home Discount - check that your new supplier will also offer this before switching.
- If you rent and pay the energy bill - you have the right to switch.

Energy Comparison sites

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

<https://clubs.moneysavingexpert.com/cheapenergyclub> - can set up an email alert to notify you when you can save money by switching

www.uswitch.com – can undertake the switch on your behalf

Essex Energy Switch

<https://essex.ichoosr.com/uttlesford/home>

Energy Switch uses group buying power to negotiate a cheaper price. Energy companies bid against each other to offer the lowest rates. You will receive an email containing a new gas and electricity offer, valid for one month, which is calculated using your existing energy usage and costs. Only when you receive the offer will you need to decide whether or not to accept.

Anyone who pays an energy bill can take part. As well as homeowners this includes tenants and customers on pre-payment meters.

If you need help, contact the helpline on 0800 048 8285.

Heating Oil

Never buy oil without checking prices online. Note down the best prices and then haggle over the phone with local delivery companies. Suppliers typically add a minimum of 4p/litre onto the wholesale price they pay. If you're anywhere near this, you've got a good price.

Don't leave buying oil until the last minute – emergency deliveries are more expensive. Plan a few weeks ahead to get the best prices. Summer is often the best time to buy – December is often the most expensive month.

Companies may try to tell you that you need additions to your oil – but these may not be required. Check with your boiler manufacturer.

Oil Comparison sites

www.boilerjuice.com

oil-club.co.uk

www.cheapestoil.co.uk

www.fueltool.co.uk

<http://www.heatingoilshop.com>

Community Oil Buying Scheme for Essex

<http://www.af-affinity.co.uk/cas/>

By making the most of joint buying power, savings are passed on, without the hassle of telephoning suppliers to get quotes. There is currently no membership fee to join the scheme. Minimum order quantity is 500 litres, but you can order oil as many times as you like throughout the year.

- Free lifetime membership
- Two community buying ordering dates per calendar month (excluding December)
- Extended credit terms for those on Direct Debit
- Monthly Prepayment Plans
- Daily and urgent orders available 5 days per week
- A dedicated customer service team from 8.30am - 5:00pm Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays.

For more information go to:

<https://www.essexrcc.org.uk/docs/Affinity%20A5%206PP%20Fuel%20Syndicate%20Leaflet.pdf>

Or call 01603 881 888 or email enquiries@af-affinity.co.uk

Opening hours: Monday to Friday 8.30am - 5:00pm excluding bank holidays

To register go to: <http://www.af-affinity.co.uk/rcce/> or call for a paper form

Home Improvements

Uttlesford District Council Energy Advice Team

The Energy Advice Team can provide advice on

- how to reduce energy costs
- how to keep your home warm by having insulation and other energy saving measures installed
- grant funding, ways to save money, energy and water.
- Energy saving devices/booklets/thermometers are also provided free of charge.

The service is free and is available to all residents. Call 01799 510510 / 01376 552525 or go to www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Energy Company Obligation

The ECO scheme means that large gas and electricity suppliers are obliged to help households with energy efficiency measures. The Big Six energy firms all provide ECO support as well as a number of the smaller suppliers – ask your supplier if they take part in the scheme.

Under ECO, grants are available to cover all or part of the cost of energy efficiency measures including loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, solid wall insulation or the installation of a new boiler

It can also be used to pay for homes to be connected to district heating systems, where appropriate, or for heating controls to be installed.

Eligibility depends on:

- what improvements are needed
- your address
- level of carbon or cost savings made
- whether you receive income based benefits such as Pension Credit or Universal Credit. If you receive the Warm Home Discount you're likely to be eligible. This scheme also includes those receiving Child Benefit and disability benefits.

If you are a social-housing tenants and in a home with an energy efficiency rating of E, F or G, you may also be eligible.

For more details about the scheme call 0800 444202 or check online at www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk/

CVSU Winter Resilience Handy Person Service

If you both own and live in your property you could be eligible for up to £400 worth of quick fix measures to tackle problems associated with the onset of winter, for example fixing external broken doors and windows; installing handrails on steps; fitting radiator heat reflector panels; draft proofing external doors and windows, putting up curtain rails and correction or removal of trip hazards.

To be eligible, you must receive one or more of the following:

- Guarantee Personal Credit
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Working/Child Tax Credit with an income less than £16,105
- Income Support
- Income Related Job Seekers Allowance
- Universal Credit
- Disability Allowance Benefit

If you are not in receipt of these benefits, you may still be eligible if you need to spend more than 10% of your income on all fuel used to heat your home.

For more information call CVS Uttlesford on 01371 878400.

Private rented accommodation

If you rent your home from a private landlord and it is in a poor state or repair, you should speak to your landlord. If satisfactory repairs are not made, or your home is unsafe or has insufficient kitchens or bathrooms, the council can help you. Contact environmental health if your home is unsatisfactory because:

- it is damp, cold, or the roof leaks
- the drains are blocked
- the windows are broken or rotten
- a gas fire or water heater makes you feel unwell or has soot marks
- electric sockets are blackened or blow frequently
- there is other disrepair that affects you
- the power or water has been cut off because your landlord has not paid the bill

For more information contact Environmental Health on 01799 510482 or email environmentalhealth@uttlesford.gov.uk.

Home Safety

Fire Safety Checks

Essex County Fire Service provide free fire safety advice such as electrical and kitchen safety, as well as offering guidance on night time routines and a fire action plan. This will include how to summon the Fire Service and how to escape the property should a fire occur. Smoke alarms are also provided and fitted, at no cost to the occupier, if it is deemed necessary.

Phone: 0300 303 0088 (9.30am - 4.30pm, or leave a message out of hours)
Email: home.safety@essex-fire.gov.uk

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas and, as such, it is very difficult to detect and can easily be inhaled without you realising. Being exposed to high concentration levels can kill quickly and without warning.

The main effects to look out for are:

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Breathlessness
- Collapse
- Loss of consciousness

These symptoms are very easy to mistake for flu, food poisoning, viral infections and simply tiredness. If symptoms only occur at home and they disappear or get better when you leave home, then this may indicate a carbon monoxide leak.

The most common cause of a carbon monoxide leak is from incorrectly installed or poorly maintained household appliances – such as cookers, heaters and central heating boilers. A blocked flue or chimney can also cause carbon monoxide levels to rise to lethal concentrations in an enclosed space.

If you think you have a carbon monoxide leak:

- Get fresh air immediately.
- Turn off the appliance and leave the house.
- Ring the National Gas Emergency Helpline on 0800 111 999.
- Seek medical attention as soon as possible

Carbon monoxide is completely undetectable by smell or taste. Alarms work in a similar way to a smoke alarm; they can be purchased from your local DIY store or supermarket and are easily installed and checked following the manufacturer's instructions.

If you smell gas or you think there has been an escape of other fumes such as carbon monoxide, call the FREE 24 HOUR national EMERGENCY number on 0800 111 999.

Fall Prevention

Clearing paths in winter

- Do it early in the day – it's easier to move fresh, loose snow.
- Don't use water – it might refreeze and turn to black ice
- Use salt if possible – it will melt the ice or snow and stop it from refreezing overnight (but don't use the salt from salting bins as this is used to keep roads clear).
- Use ash and sand if you don't have enough salt
- Pay extra attention when clearing steps and steep pathways

How to help prevent falls:

- wear well-fitting shoes, preferably with non-slip soles
- have regular eye tests and always wear your correct glasses or contact lenses
- be aware that some medications can make you feel dizzy or drowsy
- take some exercise to improve your muscle strength and balance
- use non-slip rubber mats in the bath/shower
- install grab rails in bathrooms, close to the bath, shower and toilet
- remove rugs, or use double sided tape to secure them to the floor
- keep your home well-lit especially in the hallway and on the stairs
- ensure lightbulbs are replaced promptly when they expire
- keep items you use regularly in cabinets that are easy to reach

Falls Prevention

Falls Prevention and strength and balance (home based and class based) are offered as part of the core services provided by the therapy teams in West Essex.

For individuals experiencing falls, or at risk of falling, there are a number of services on offer including:

- a home visit to assess risks of falling and the need for any aids such as grab rails;
- an exercise programme to improve your strength, fitness and balance;
- provision of equipment and walking aids;
- group exercises for balance training.

Care is provided in patient's homes and in clinics across west Essex

Strength and Balance exercise groups are offered in– Epping, Harlow and Uttlesford.

Contact 01279 827524

Lifeline Service – Community Alarms

Lifeline is an emergency telecare service which provides clients with the ability to call for assistance in an emergency 24 hours a day. Users can be connected to a call centre that will contact a relative/friend for them. It allows clients to remain safe and independent in their own home for longer. The service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. As long as there is a working telephone line and power socket, the user should be covered in an emergency. The system can be installed within 3 working days.

Provided that you have not had a Lifeline service before, you will be eligible for a free 12-week trial period. After the 12 weeks, the service is paid for by direct debit for 10 months of the year.

There is a wide range of additional Telecare sensors that can be programmed to a Lifeline to meet an individual person's needs. These include:

- Falls detectors
- Smoke detectors
- Flood detectors
- Heat sensors
- Movement detectors
- Bogus caller buttons
- Bed sensors
- Carbon monoxide (CO) detectors

Some of this requires an assessment from Social Care Direct on 0345 603 7630. Please enquire with the Uttlesford District Council housing team if you are interested in additional sensors.

Requests for Lifeline are processed by the housing administration team at Uttlesford District Council. The units are then installed by a Council Sheltered Housing Officer. Installations are made Monday to Friday by prior appointment.

Phone: 01799 510510 or Email: fsimmonds@uttlesford.gov.uk

Website: www.uttlesford.gov.uk

In an Emergency

Power Cuts

- Have a torch, with spare batteries to hand. If you're using candles please be careful.
- It's handy to have access to hot water during a power cut, so if you have any warning, boil water and store in flasks in advance.
- Keep an old fashioned corded phone which you can plug into the phone jack as cordless phones will not work in the event of a power cut.
- Keep fridges and freezers closed - they will stay cool for many hours.
- For information during a power cut call UK Power Network on 105

Frozen pipes

- Turn off the stop valve immediately.
- Open all cold taps to drain the system.
- DO NOT turn on hot taps – your hot water cylinder may be damaged if the pipes leading to it are frozen. Call a plumber if you are in any doubt about what to do.
- Check for leaking joints and burst pipes. Thaw out frozen pipes by warming them gently with a hair dryer or wrapping the pipe in a warm cloth. Never apply a direct flame.
- DO NOT switch on your immersion heater or central heating boiler until you know all of the water in the pipes has thawed and that none of the pipes or joints are damaged.
- Contact your household insurer if snow or ice has caused damage to your property.
- If severe weather means you need to evacuate your home (and if it's safe and time permits) turn off the water and electricity and secure your premises before you leave.

Flooding

- Register free with the Environmental Agency's Flood Warnings Direct service to get early warnings of expected floods in your area.
(<https://fwd.environmentagency.gov.uk/app/olr/home>)
- If water levels are rising you can make your own sandbags from old pillow cases or plastic sacks by filling them with earth and laying them like normal sandbags.
- Sandbags can be obtained from your local builders' merchant, filled or empty, and you can store your own sand to fill when needed.
- The National Flood Forum has lots of good information about ways to protect your property from flood. (www.floodforum.org.uk)

Keeping Healthy and Well

Tips for the Winter

- Have regular hot drinks and at least one hot meal a day if possible.
- Eating regularly helps keep energy levels up during winter.
- Wear several light layers of warm clothes (rather than one chunky layer).
- Keep as active as possible. Try to move around every hour.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia happens when a person's body temperature drops below 35°C (95°F). If someone you know has been exposed to the cold and they are distressed, confused, have slow, shallow breathing or they're unconscious, they may have severe hypothermia. Their skin may look healthy but feel cold. Babies may be limp, unusually quiet and refuse to feed.

You should seek medical help immediately if severe hypothermia is suspected - Dial 999. Remove any wet clothing and wrap the person in blankets or towels and give them something warm (but not alcoholic) to drink.

Flu Jabs

The injected flu vaccine is offered free of charge on the NHS to people who are at risk. You are eligible to receive a free flu jab if you:

- are 65 years of age or over
- are pregnant
- have certain medical conditions including
 - Chronic heart, liver, respiratory, kidney, or neurological disease
 - Diabetes
 - Immunosuppression
 - Splenic Disfunction
- are living in a long-stay residential care home or other long-stay care facility
- receive a carer's allowance, or you are the main carer for an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if you fall ill
- are a front-line health and social care worker. It is your employer's responsibility to arrange vaccination for you.

Private vaccination

'Flu jabs can be administered by a G.P. or at a Pharmacy. If you are not eligible for a free 'flu jab on the NHS scheme, these are available privately at a cost of £9-£10. Speak to your G.P. or Pharmacist for details.

Energy Efficiency

Heating

- Get the room temperature right. Heat the rooms where you spend the most time (18–21°C / 64–70°F is perfect), the rest of the home can be set at 16 degrees. Make sure you warm up your bedroom before going to bed or use a hot water bottle or electric blanket (not at the same time) to ensure that you are cosy.
- Only heat your home and water when you need it! During your annual boiler check, ask your engineer for a quick lesson on how to set the timer or dig out the instructions.
- To avoid frozen pipes while you're away, adjust your thermostat to 16°C and open the loft hatch to allow warmer air to circulate. Remember to switch off the water heating function.
- Mould and condensation can be a sign that your house is not staying warm and can be bad for your health. Condensation forms on cold surfaces like walls and windows where there is little movement of air, so remember to ventilate kitchens, bathrooms and bedrooms after use and maintain a low level of heat in these rooms – 18 degrees is great.
- On a sunny day, opening your curtains will let warmth into your house, but when it's colder or the sun goes down don't forget to close them to keep that heat in. check for draughts around doors and windows.
- Turn down the thermostat on the hot water tank. There is little point producing scalding hot water in the tank if you then simply add cold water in your mixer shower or bath to get it to a nice comfortable temperature.
- Insulate your hot water cylinder with a jacket to help limit heat loss
- Avoid blocking radiators with furniture – allowing convection currents to flow around the room as the hot air will be felt across the room quicker.
- Make sure your boiler has been serviced. This will ensure it is in proper working order, is safe and is running as efficiently as possible thus saving fuel costs.

Insulation and drafts

- Ensure that you have enough loft insulation – 10 inches or 270 mm is now recommended to reduce heat loss from your roof.
- Cavity wall insulation will definitely keep your home warmer.
- Cap your chimney if you don't use it or if you use it occasionally block the draught with an inflatable chimney balloon.
- Draught-proofing is one of the cheapest and most efficient ways to save energy. Where it is practical you should seal windows, doors, loft hatches and pipework leading outside. Don't forget the letter box.

Lighting

- Change light bulbs for energy efficient ones
- Always turn off the lights when you leave the room

Cooking

- Boil only the water you need in your kettle and descale it regularly
- Use a toaster rather than a grill when making toast
- Save time and stock up. If you're going to use the oven, bake a few meals at a time to get the most out of having your oven on.
- Heat your home with cooking. Leave the oven door open after cooking to let the heat warm your kitchen.
- Avoid pre-rinsing the dishes in hot water. Save water and energy by just scraping the dishes before they go in the dishwasher.
- Keep your fridge and freezer full – they use less energy.
- Use the right ring for the right thing. If your cooker has a small ring, use a small pan. You might only be heating up a small meal, and doing so in a big pan wastes a lot of energy.
- Use microwaves to reheat food as opposed to the oven – they heat up the food far quicker so are therefore more efficient
- Put lids on pots and pans to reduce cooking times
- Allow cooked food to cool before putting it in the fridge / freezer, otherwise the fridge / freezer will have to work harder to cool it down.
- Regularly defrost your freezer – ice building up in the freezer reduces its effectiveness

Washing

- Fill the washing machine, dishwasher or tumble dryer.
One full load uses less energy and water than two half loads
- Fix leaking taps and make sure they are fully turned off
- Wash your clothes at 30-40 °C and save significant amounts of money.
- Air-dry your laundry rather than tumble drying it, particularly if there's warm or windy weather.
- Take your clothes out of the dryer before they're completely dry - they'll iron much quicker and you'll use less energy on your drier.
- Avoid drying clothes on your radiators as it lowers the room temperature, which means the boiler will need to work harder

Appliances

- Don't leave appliances on standby and remember not to leave laptops and mobile phones on charge unnecessarily. Unplug them when they are charged.

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