



Who we are

Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 and promote their rights and interests.

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

Our mission is to inspire, involve and empower older people in Scotland, and influence others, so that people enjoy better later lives.

We have three strategic aims:



We help older people to be as well as they can be



We promote a positive view of ageing and later life



We tackle loneliness and isolation

How we can help

We know that growing older doesn't come with a manual. Later life can bring changes and opportunities to your life and you may need to know about rights, organisations and services which are unfamiliar to you.

That's why we provide free information and advice to help you on a range of topics including benefits and entitlements, social care, legal issues such as Power of Attorney, housing and much more. All of our guides are available to download for free from our website, or you can contact our helpline team to have copies posted to you for free.

Our **helpline** is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families in Scotland looking for information and advice.

Later life can bring times when you just need someone to talk to. Our **friendship line** is part of our wider helpline and older people can call us for a chat. We're here to listen, provide friendship and offer support.



Call us free on: **0800 12 44 222** (Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm)



Visit agescotland.org.uk to find out more.



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Introduction

This guide provides information about your home's energy supply, tips on keeping your home warm for less and what to do if your energy supply goes wrong. It also provides advice on staying well in the winter, why it's important to keep warm and how to prepare in case bad weather hits.



Energy costs

In the past, the Gas Board and the Electricity Board were the only home energy suppliers. These days there are different suppliers to choose from. Each has its own set of charges for its services, called a tariff.

Choosing the right tariff for you

A tariff lists the charges for the different parts of the energy supply service. Different tariffs suit different people depending on how much energy you use and when you use it. A tariff will generally include:

- The **standing charge** the cost of your home being connected to an energy supply
- The price for each unit of gas or electricity you use, measured in Kilowatt Hours (KWh); there may be different rates for different times of day
- Any **exit fee** you need to pay if you want to leave the contract early

Tariffs can charge a **fixed rate** per Kilowatt Hour, or they can charge a variable rate that changes as the actual cost of providing the energy changes.

Each supplier has a **standard variable rate tariff**, which in the past was the most expensive. When the energy market was more stable, it was possible to save £200-£300 a year by shopping around for a better value tariff. However, the energy regulator **Ofgem** started to limit the amount a supplier can charge for a standard variable rate tariff by introducing a price cap, and for many people these are now the best deal.

The price cap was first put in place on 1 January 2019 and is reviewed regularly. However, it is still worth asking your energy supplier if they have any other tariffs that may be more cost effective for you.

Ofgem provides energy advice for consumers on their website www.ofgem.gov.uk.

Shopping around for the best value tariff may become worthwhile again when the energy market stabilises. You will need information about your bills and tariff to start the process. Websites such as **uSwitch.com**, **comparethemarket.com** or **moneysupermarket.com** can help you compare your tariff with others that are available.

Help with energy costs and services

Your energy supplier and the government can provide help towards managing your energy costs.

Warm Home Discount

If your energy supplier is part of the Warm Home Discount Scheme, you may qualify for a discount on your electricity bill if:

- you receive Guarantee Pension Credit and your name (or your partner's name) is on the electricity bill;
- you have a low income, receive certain means-tested benefits, live in a property that meets the high-energy-cost criteria, and meet any other criteria set by your energy supplier.

If you receive Guarantee Pension Credit, you should receive the Warm Home Discount automatically if your supplier is part of the scheme and you were with them on the qualifying date (usually around July/ August each year).

If you have a low income, check with your supplier to see if you are eligible and to find out how to apply. It is worth applying early because the number of discounts suppliers can give is limited.

If you have a pre-pay electricity meter, the discount is usually given as a top-up voucher or credit.

Winter Heating Payment

From winter 2022, the Winter Heating Payment was introduced in Scotland to replace the old Cold Weather Payment. The Winter Heating Payment will be an automatic one-off annual payment of £50. This will be paid by Social Security Scotland to people who receive a benefit like Guarantee Pension Credit. Unlike the Cold Weather Payment, the Winter Heating Payment does not depend on how cold the temperature gets.

Winter Fuel Payment

The Winter Fuel Payment is an annual lump-sum tax-free payment to help older people with winter heating costs.

There are different rates of payment depending on your age, your partner's age, whether you are receiving Pension Credit and whether you live in a care home. If you are part of a couple and you both qualify for the Winter Fuel Payment, you will receive one payment to be shared between you.

If you receive State Pension, or you received a Winter Fuel Payment last winter, you should receive this year's payment automatically. Otherwise, you may need to make a claim by calling the Winter Fuel Payment helpline on **0800 731 0160**.

Social security benefits like Pension Credit can help people meet their day-to-day living costs, including keeping on top of fuel bills. If you are not clear about what you are entitled to, see our **Benefits Maze** quide or call the Age Scotland helpline on **0800 12 44 222** and ask for a benefit check.



You can also take an online benefit check at www.agescotland.entitledto.co.uk or www.turn2us.org.uk.



Priority Services Register (PSR)

Your gas or electricity supplier may be able to help you with free services if you are over pension age or have a disability or long-term health condition.

Services available to you may include:

- advice on energy efficiency
- priority in getting your energy supply restored after power cuts
- advance notice of planned service interruptions
- alternative power supply arrangements if you have medical equipment that will be affected by planned interruptions
- a password scheme protecting you against bogus callers
- advice on adaptations to make electrical equipment easier to use if you have a disability (including easy-to-grip controls and plugs)
- sending your bill to someone you choose who can help you manage your account
- supplying bills in large print, audio or braille

You will need to ask to be added to your supplier's **Priority Services Register**. Contact them directly or call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** to find out if you qualify and to have your name added.



Age Scotland runs workshops providing information on benefits and energy costs. Visit **www.age.scot/EnergyWorkshops** or call the helpline on **0800 12 44 222** for more information.

Saving energy in the home

There are things you can do to use energy more efficiently in your home and make sure you are not using energy you don't need. You may already be taking some of these steps as many of them are common sense, but you may find some new ones.

Reducing energy use

These simple changes can save energy, and added together they can make a big difference:

- turning your thermostat down from 22 degrees to 21 degrees
- changing your old traditional or halogen lightbulbs to LEDs
- switching electrical items off completely instead of leaving them on standby mode
- showering for one minute less than you normally do
- switching off lights when you're not in the room
- turning the heating down when you leave the house

These simple ideas can add up to a big saving and help you keep control of your bills.

In the kitchen

- boil only the amount of water you need when making hot drinks
- cook with a pan that is no bigger than you need, and keep the lid on
- position your fridge at least 10cm (4 inches) away from the wall and clean dust off the coils regularly - your fridge will use less energy
- allow food to reach room temperature before refrigerating or freezing – this saves energy and reduces food poisoning risk
- turn your electric oven off 10 minutes before the end of cooking time – it will hold its temperature; but make sure food still gets piping hot
- keep your fridge and freezer well stocked but not over-crowded, and defrost your freezer regularly - these steps reduce energy use
- defrost things in the fridge overnight instead of cooking straight from frozen – this reduces cooking times

Washing and laundry

To save on hot water:

- wash up in a bowl rather than under running water
- wait until you have a full load of laundry before running the washing machine
- run your washing machine at a lower temperature but do an occasional hot wash to minimise the risk of smells

To reduce the energy needed to dry clothes:

- use a high-speed spin so clothes come out of the washing machine almost dry
- dry your washing outdoors if and when you can; let the sun and wind do the work

Keeping heat in your home

You can reduce how much energy is needed to heat your home by taking steps to reduce heat loss. The amount you can save depends on the size and age of your home and how you use energy. Older homes can lose a lot of heat through the walls and roof, so more energy will be needed to keep your home at a comfortable temperature.

Some energy saving measures are simple; others will require professional expertise and may be expensive.

Simple measures to reduce heat loss

- close curtains and blinds in the evenings to reduce heat loss through windows
- if you struggle to heat all of your home, prioritise heating the rooms you use the most
- keep radiators clear do not put large pieces of furniture in front of them, or hang clothes on them to dry
- put thermal reflectors behind your radiators and add a shelf above them to direct heat into the room

Insulation

Insulation is an extra layer of material that makes it harder for heat to escape. Different parts of your home can be insulated to save energy and therefore money.



Roof: Up to a quarter of the heat lost from homes is lost through the roof. The recommended depth of mineral wool insulation is 270mm (10 inches); there are also other materials you can use.



Hot water tanks: Fitting a 75mm-thick hot water cylinder jacket can be simple and cheap to install. It will keep your hot water warmer for longer.

Walls: If your house was built with a space – or cavity – between an inner and an outer wall, the space can be insulated. Solid walls can also be insulated, externally or internally. There may be financial help available towards the cost of insulating your home. The help you can get may depend on your income or where you live.



Windows: Double-glazing reduces heat loss through windows and reduces noise from outside. You could get double-glazed windows only in the rooms you use and heat most, or you could prioritise the windows that allow the most heat to escape.



Secondary glazing is a second layer of glass fitted behind your existing windows. It costs less than double-glazing and may be your only option if you live in a conservation area or a listed building.



Home Energy Scotland can provide information about steps you can take to insulate your home, the savings you may be able to make, and any financial assistance available. Contact them on

0808 808 2282 or visit www.homeenergyscotland.org.

Blocking draughts

Draughts allow cold air in and heat to escape. Common draughty areas are door frames, window frames, wooden floors, skirting boards, roofs and chimneys. You can reduce draughts by:

- sealing gaps around window frames
- placing rugs on wooden floors
- fitting draught-proofing strips and draught excluders around doors
- fitting covers to letter boxes and keyholes
- installing a chimney balloon these block cold air from coming down the chimney and stop hot air from leaving; these can be deflated and removed when you want to use your fireplace

Get professional advice about sealing draughts from a chimney; ventilation is needed to reduce condensation and ensure fumes can escape.



Smart Meters

A Smart Meter replaces a traditional meter and provides new services for tracking your energy use. It can help you see which appliances use most energy and where you may be able to make extra savings. With a Smart Meter:



- you will get an in-home display that can show you how much you are spending per week, day or hour
- your meter readings will automatically be sent to your supplier at least once a month, so you won't need to do this yourself
- if you are blind, have low vision, or have difficulties with dexterity or memory loss, your supplier may be able to fit a meter that better suits your needs

Your supplier should contact you when they are fitting Smart Meters in your area. You don't have to have a Smart Meter, but there is no additional charge to have one fitted. If you have both electricity and gas, you will need a separate meter for each supply.

If you have had a Smart Meter for quite some time, you may have a first-generation meter and will need a new one if you change energy suppliers. From early 2019, suppliers began installing second-generation meters. These don't need to be replaced if you change suppliers.

Contact your energy supplier for more information about Smart Meters and how to get one installed.



Citrus Energy offers advice and recommendations about energy efficiency, benefits, and schemes to help save energy and money. They can also advise you on managing energy debt and what to do if your energy supply has been limited or cut off. Contact them on **0800 221 8089**

Home safety and emergencies

What to do in an emergency

Electrical safety

If there is a power cut, you can:

- call Scotland's national freephone number 105 – you will be put through to your local electricity network operator
- visit www.powercut105.com to report a power cut online and track updates



• call your network operator's emergency number directly:

Scottish and Southern Energy 0800 300 999

Scottish Power Energy Networks
0800 092 9290 (from landlines) / 0330 1010 222 (from mobiles)

You can also call these numbers if you suspect you have a problem with wires outside your home.

For problems with electrical appliances or the wiring inside your home, the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation **Contracting (NICEIC)** can provide details of approved electricians in your area. You can call them on 0333 015 6625 or visit www.niceic.com/find-a-tradesperson.

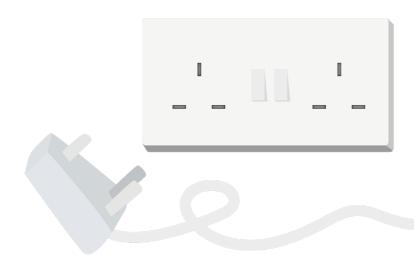
Your local Care and Repair service or Trusted Trader scheme may also have details of reputable electricians in your area.

- To find a Care and Repair service, contact 0141 221 9879 or visit www.careandrepairscotland.co.uk
- To find out if there is a Trusted Trader scheme in your area visit www.trustedtrader.scot or speak to your local council



Age Scotland runs workshops on what to do in a power cut and how to heat your home for less.

Visit www.age.scot/EnergyWorkshops or call the Age Scotland helpline on **0800 12 44 222** for more information



Gas safety

SGN is the gas network operator across Scotland. If you think you might have a gas leak:

- phone the SGN National Gas Emergency Number on 0800 111 999 (24-hours a day)
- open doors and windows
- put out any flames if you can do this without putting yourself at risk
- do not create a new flame or turn electrical switches on or off
- keep people away from the area and turn off the gas at the control valve.

The person who takes your call will give you further safety advice. SGN aims to send an emergency gas engineer to attend all uncontrolled gas escapes within one hour, and all controlled escapes (where the gas meter has been switched off and there is no smell of gas) within two hours.

If you need repairs to gas appliances, only use a gas engineer who is on the **Gas Safe Register**. Visit **www.gassaferegister.co.uk** for details of registered gas engineers in your local area or call **0800 408 5500**.

Oil fuel safety

Advice about how to safely use oil-fired heating can be found at **www.ukifda.org/consumers**. You will also find information about fuel suppliers, energy efficiency and keeping your oil tank secure.

Water safety

Make sure you know where your water stopcock is and check that it is easy to turn. You will need to be able to turn off the water at the stopcock if pipes burst or if you need to have plumbing work done.

Fire safety

The **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service** can provide advice about fire safety and arrange a free Home Fire Safety Visit. Contact them on **0800 0731 999** for information and to book.

Carbon monoxide safety

Carbon monoxide poisoning causes around 50 deaths per year in the UK and leads to many more people needing hospital treatment. The usual cause is gas, oil or solid fuel appliances which have not been properly installed or maintained.

Carbon monoxide can kill quickly with no warning or can make you ill over a period of time. You cannot smell it, taste it or see it. The six main symptoms are headaches, dizziness, nausea, breathlessness, collapse and loss of consciousness.

If you experience any symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning:

- open doors and windows immediately, turn off gas appliances and leave the house
- tell a doctor as soon as possible or go to hospital let them know that you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning; they can do a test to check
- if you think there is immediate danger, call SGN's **National Gas Emergency Number on 0800 111 999**
- get a Gas Safe registered engineer to inspect your gas appliances and flues to see if there is a problem – or ask your landlord to arrange this if you are in rented accommodation.

You can buy a carbon monoxide alarm online, from most DIY stores or through many energy suppliers.

Prevention and detection

The rules about smoke and heat alarms, and about carbon monoxide detectors, changed in Scotland on 1st February 2022.

Every home must now have:

- a smoke alarm in the room you use most during the day
- a smoke alarm in every hallway and on every landing
- a heat alarm in every kitchen.

The alarms must be mounted on the ceiling and must be linked, so if one alarm goes off the others will too. Many alarms are battery powered and linked without wires.

You must also have a carbon monoxide detector in any room containing a flue or a carbon-fuelled appliance (like a boiler, fire or heater – but not a cooker). The carbon monoxide alarm does not need to be linked to the fire alarms.

If you are a property owner, you are responsible for making sure your property meets the new rules. If you want to sell your property, the home report will need to show that it has the correct alarms and detectors.

If you are a tenant, your landlord is responsible for ensuring the property has the correct alarms and detectors.



Protect yourself from scams

Many energy suppliers have stopped doorstep sales due to public concern about mis-selling.

If a salesperson calls on you uninvited, don't feel pressured to do anything if you are unsure. Simply say 'no thank you' and close your door.

People may offer to save you money by switching you to a different energy supplier, try to sell you things to improve energy efficiency in your home, or ask you to sign up to a scheme.

If you are interested but want to protect yourself from possible scams, you could:

- ask the person for identification
- get the company's number from the phone book or online, and ring to check that the salesperson is who they say they are - close your door and ask them to wait outside until you have checked their identity
- ask them to call back at another time when a friend or family member can be with you
- ask them to leave some information with you, to give you time to think about what you want to do

You do not have to let anyone into your home. If you have concerns about someone's behaviour and feel threatened, call 999 and ask for the police. If you do not feel you are at risk but wish to report a suspicious incident, contact your local police station by calling 101.



When an engineer visits to fit a Smart Meter, the time and date should be agreed with you in advance.

Preparing for bad weather

Make sure you have supplies of essential items in case the weather changes suddenly, and that you know where to find emergency numbers and items:

- keep simple cold, flu and sore throat remedies in the house; your pharmacist can make suggestions and also give advice on how to manage minor illnesses
- order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time, particularly if bad weather is forecast; your pharmacy may offer a prescription collection and delivery service
- keep basic food items in the cupboard or freezer in case it's too cold to go shopping
- keep a radio and torch handy in case of a power cut
- keep your mobile phone, laptop or tablet fully charged so you can use the battery power if there is no electricity
- keep this guide handy so you know what to do if you have a problem with your energy supply

Winter wellness

Winter can be a difficult time for our overall wellbeing. This section explores the different ways you can take care of yourself in winter and explains why keeping your home warm is an important part of staying well in the colder months.

Why it's important to heat your home -

low temperatures increase the risk of flu and other respiratory problems, and can raise blood pressure. This effect on blood pressure is more likely in older people, and high blood pressure can increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Breathing in cold air also increases the risk of chest infections. The colder your home, the higher the risk to your health.

Get out and about – it is good to exercise if you can. Exercise is good for your heart, lowers the risk of type 2 diabetes and some cancers, and can also help your mental wellbeing. If you are worried about taking exercise, speak to your GP about what would be safe for you. You might enjoy a walk and a chat or prefer indoor exercise like dancing or bowling - call the Age Scotland helpline on **0800 12 44 222** for help finding activities in your community.

Even if you can't get out, keep moving - staying active is essential for your wellbeing and fitness – and it generates heat which helps to keep you warm. When you are indoors, try not to sit still for more than an hour at a time. Get up and walk around and spread any chores throughout the day.

Eat well – eating at least one hot meal each day will help to keep you warm, as will having hot drinks during the day and before you go to bed. It can be tempting when it's cold to only eat food that is filling and comforting, but eating as healthily as you can is important for your overall wellness.

Include a good range of foods in your diet. **Age Scotland**'s **Eat Well** guide explains the Eat Well plate, how food can affect your mood, food labelling and what to keep in your store cupboard. Try to base most of your meals on the **Eat Well plate** – and aim for five portions of fruit and vegetables each day so you're getting plenty of nutrients and vitamins.





Consider taking a vitamin D supplement - vitamin D is needed for healthy bones, teeth and muscles. Your body can create vitamin D from sunlight during summer months. However, during winter in Scotland, the sun is not strong enough for your body to make vitamin D – and it's difficult to get the amount we need from food alone. Ask your pharmacist or GP if a supplement would be a good idea for you.

Protect yourself – ask your GP what vaccines they recommend for you, which may include flu, pneumonia and Covid-19.

Stay positive – it is not unusual to feel down in winter, especially as days are short and nights are long. Try to keep to your usual routine, do somethina you enjoy every day and get some fresh air if you can. Contact the Age Scotland helpline on 0800 12 44 222 to find out what opportunities there are to get out with good company in your local area.



If the cold dark weather affects your mood, see our guide Keeping well and who can help.

Stay connected - in winter it can be harder than usual to visit friends and family. If you can't see people face to face, try calling them for a chat or send them an email or message online.

If you are feeling lonely or just want someone to talk to, call the **Age Scotland helpline** for a chat with one of our friendly advisers. Call free on **0800 12 44 222**, Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm.

Who can help?

Age Scotland helpline 0800 12 44 222

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers. Our specialist **energy adviser** can help with questions about energy rights.

If you need an interpreter call **0800 12 44 222** and simply state the language you need e.g. Polish or Urdu. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Age Scotland helpline will do the rest.

You can call us for a copy of our publications list or download / order copies from our website at **www.agescotland.org.uk**.

Citrus Energy offers advice and recommendations about efficiency, benefits and schemes to help save energy and money. They can also provide advice on managing energy debt and what to do if your energy supply has been limited or cut off.

0800 221 8089

Home Energy Scotland gives expert information and advice about energy issues including energy efficiency, help with energy costs that may be available and changing energy suppliers.

0808 808 2282 / www.homeenergyscotland.org.uk

Citizens Advice Scotland provides free, confidential and independent advice on a wide range of topics including heating, housing, money, benefits, employment and consumer issues.

0800 028 1456 / www.cas.org.uk

Care and Repair Scotland offers advice and assistance to help people repair, improve or adapt their homes.

0141 221 9879 / www.careandrepairscotland.co.uk

The **Gas Safe Register** is the official list of gas engineers who are registered to work on boilers, cookers, fires and other gas appliances.

0800 408 5500 / www.gassaferegister.co.uk

If you have a **power cut**, call **105** to be connected to your local electricity network operator. You can also report a power cut on their website and track updates on the problem.

105 / www.powercut105.com

The National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation **Contracting (NICEIC)** can provide details of approved electricians in your area.

0333 015 6625 / www.niceic.com/find-a-tradesperson

SGN is the gas network operator across Scotland. If you think you might have a gas leak, contact them immediately using the number helow

National Gas Emergency Number:

0800 111 999 (24-hours a day)

The **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service** can provide advice about fire safety and arrange a free Home Fire Safety Visit.

0800 0731 999 / Text "**FIRE**" to **80800** from your mobile phone



Unsure where to turn for energy advice?

Age Scotland's range of free workshops can help you get a better understanding of your household energy bills, find ways to stay warm and save money, and learn about the future of energy in Scotland.

Book your place today at

www.age.scot/EnergyWorkshops



How you can help

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

All the information we provide is free and impartial. It helps older people access their rights and entitlements and can be life changing.

We are also a lifeline for older people who are feeling lonely and isolated. You can help us to support older people who need us most.

Together, we can make a difference.



Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

- ➤ Call **03330 15 14 60**
- Visit age.scot/donate
- ➤ Text **AGESCOTGIVE** to **70085** to donate £5*
- Complete the donation form and return by Freepost



Fundraise

Whether it's having a bake sale or running a marathon, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/fundraise**.



Leave us a gift in your Will

By choosing to leave us a gift in your Will, you can help us to continue being there for older people in the years to come. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/legacy**.

^{*}Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message

Please donate today



Complete the form and return to RSBS-KEHC-GBBC, Age Scotland, Edinburgh, EH9 1PR

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You can read	d Age Scotland's privacy policy at age.s	cot/privacypolicy.

^{**}Age Scotland, part of the Age Network, is an independent charity dedicated to improving the later lives of everyone on the ageing journey, within a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland.



Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 so that they can love later life.

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

Let's keep in touch

Contact us:

Head office 0333 323 2400

Age Scotland helpline 0800 12 44 222

Email info@agescotland.org.uk Visit our website

www.agescotland.org.uk



Sign up to our newsletter

Our regular newsletters by email contain details of our campaigns, services and how you can support our work.

Sign up today at **age.scot/roundup**



Follow us on social media

Our social media channels are a great way to keep up to date with our work and issues that affect older people.



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