



**WARM
AND
WELL**

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Staying Warm:

You probably already know quite a lot about staying warm in your home and how to cope with a Scottish winter; this guide aims to give information about ideas and options you may not have come across before to help you manage even better in the winter to come.

Everyday Energy efficiency

Many aspects of energy efficiency are simply common sense, but if you read over the checklists on the following pages then look around your home you can save energy, stay warmer and benefit the environment too.

Hot water and central heating

- Get to know how the timer and thermostat controls work on your boiler system or electric heaters so you have hot water and heat when you need them but don't waste energy at other times.
- Check that your heating isn't set too high or too low. In winter, the recommended living room temperature during the day is around 70°F (21°C), with at least 64°F (18°C) for your other rooms. In cold weather, setting your heating to come on earlier is usually better than turning up the temperature.
- Don't set the water temperature too high – 140°F (60°C) is fine for most people's needs.
- If you have gas heating, have your system serviced once a year to ensure that it's running safely and efficiently. Make sure that the person you ask to service it is registered with the **Gas Safe Register**, call **0800 408 5500** or see their website **www.gassaferegister.co.uk**. If you are a tenant, your landlord is responsible for arranging this check.

Lighting

Old style light bulbs are being phased out and replaced with low energy bulbs. These are more expensive than older bulbs but they use up to 80 percent less electricity and last around ten times longer. A single low-energy light bulb could save you between £3 and £8 per year.

If it is safe to do so, turn off lights off when you leave a room, but keep stairs and other areas well lit to reduce the risk of falling.

Electrical appliances

- Switch off appliances rather than leaving them on standby when you are not using them.
- If you have an off-peak energy tariff, save money by running appliances such as your washing machine during off-peak periods, when possible, but remember that the noise of your washing machine may disturb your neighbours.
- When you are buying new appliances, look for products with the Energy Saving recommended logo because they have met Energy Saving Trust criteria for energy efficiency and will cost less to run.
- Don't leave your phone or other equipment on to charge overnight. Most phones charge in around two hours. Unplug chargers when they are not in use – many still use electricity when they are plugged in, even if they're not connected to anything.

In the kitchen

- Only boil the amount of water you need for hot drinks.
- Always use the right sized pan for what you are cooking. Keep lids on pans as much as possible, to reduce heat loss and condensation.
- Keep the fridge at least 10cm (4 inches) away from your wall as it will let the coils work more effectively. Clean dust off the coils regularly – dust can increase the fridge’s energy consumption.

Do not put hot food in a fridge or freezer, let it cool to room temperature first. It takes more energy to cool it down and can lead to uneven cooling, which can cause food poisoning.

- Turn your electric oven off 10 minutes before the end of cooking time. It will keep the same temperature.
- Fridges and freezers work best when they are full
- Defrost your freezer regularly.
- Defrost frozen food in the fridge overnight to reduce the cooking time, typically by half.

Washing and laundry

- Wash up in the sink or a washing-up bowl rather than under running water.
- Wait until you have a full load before running the washing machine or use the half-load or quick wash setting.
- Run the washing machine at a lower temperature. Do an occasional hot wash though, to get rid of bacteria and odours in the machine.
- Use a high speed spin so clothes comes out of the washing machine almost dry, reducing the time they will take to dry.
- Hang your washing out to dry when the weather allows and let the sun and wind do the work to save energy and money.

Keeping the heat in your home.

The amount of money you can save by taking a few energy efficiency measures to keep heat in your home can be considerable but will vary depending 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, which means you will have to use more energy to maintain a comfortable temperature. Some energy saving measures are simple, others will require professional expertise and may be expensive.

Simple measures to reduce heat loss

You could try the following steps:

- Draw your curtains or blinds in the evenings to minimise heat loss through windows.
- If you cannot properly heat all of your rooms, make sure you keep your living room (or the room that you use the most) warm throughout the day and heat your bedroom before you go to bed.
- Keep your radiators clear. For instance, don't put a large sofa or a bed in front of one.
- Putting thermal reflectors behind your radiators can prevent heat loss. Adding a shelf above them can throw heat forward into the room.

Insulation

Insulation is an extra layer added to your home to make it harder for heat to escape. Up to a quarter of the heat lost from homes is lost through the roof. The recommended depth of mineral wool insulation is 270mm but there are other materials that you can use. Insulating your loft could reduce your heating bills by up to £175 per year.

Hot-water tanks are another source of heat loss. Fitting a 75mm thick, hot-water cylinder jacket can be straightforward and cheap to install – less than £20 and could save you up to £40 a year.

If your house was built with cavity walls – that is, with a space between the inner and outer layers – this gap can also be insulated. This can cost up to £500. Solid walls can also be insulated but this is usually more expensive. There may be financial assistance available to help with these costs. Contact Home Energy Scotland for information about steps you can take to insulate your home, the savings you may be able to make, and any financial assistance available.

You can contact **Home Energy Scotland** on **0808 808 2282** or see their website **www.homeenergyscotland.org.uk**.

Draught-proofing your home

A draughty house can be uncomfortable and you will use extra energy to keep rooms warm. 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.
- fitting draught-proofing strips and draught excluders around doors.
- fitting covers to letter boxes and keyholes.
- A chimney balloon blocks cold air from coming down and stops hot air from leaving. It can be deflated and removed when you want to use your fireplace.

You need to have some ventilation to reduce condensation and to ensure that fumes from burning gas, oil or solid fuels can escape.

Glazing

Double-glazing reduces heat loss through windows, saving you up to £160 per year, and reduces noise from outside. You could also partly double-glaze your home, focusing on the rooms that you use and heat the most or where you know most heat escapes.

Alternatively, secondary glazing, a second layer of glass fitted behind your existing windows, can help to reduce heat loss and costs less than full double-glazing and may be more acceptable if you live in a listed building or conservation area and are required to have a certain type of window.

Know how much energy you use

It is important to keep an eye on your bills and to know what your energy is costing you. It can be easy just to pay a bill if it seems reasonable, or to continue to pay by direct debit without checking whether the amount is correct. Where possible, bills should be based on actual readings rather than estimates to make sure you are not paying too little or too much.

If you are thinking of changing energy suppliers you will need to know what your energy consumption and tariffs are now before you can start the process.

The Government is aiming for all households to have a **smart meter** installed by 2020.

Smart meters record exactly how much gas or electricity you use and automatically send regular readings to your energy company. This will mean you will get accurate bills and will not have to take meter readings any more. Smart meters will have a monitor so you can see how much energy you are using at any time.

Energy suppliers are already visiting people at home to assess what needs to be done in their home to install a smart meter. Your supplier should always let you know that they are coming to your home; if you have any doubts about the engineer's identity, do not let them in.

To find out more about getting a smart meter, contact your energy supplier or visit **www.smartenergygb.org**.

Energy Suppliers, charges and services

There is a wide and sometimes bewildering choice of companies which would like to supply you with energy. You may be able to save money on your bills by changing your energy supplier, or by getting a better deal from your current energy supplier.

You will still use the same meters and have the same gas pipes and electric cables, all that will change will be who provides your electricity and gas and bills you for your supply.

Our sister charity Age UK produces a factsheet called “Getting the best energy deal” which takes you through the process of how to switch provider and the main points to think about when making a decision. Call the Age Scotland helpline for advice or download a copy of the leaflet from the **Age UK** website **www.ageuk.org.uk**.

To find out the best energy deal for you, you need to:

- Look at your most recent bills and work out how much you are paying for your gas and electricity. Make sure the bill is based on meter readings, not an estimate.
- Find out what fuel tariff you are paying - it will be on your bill.
- Decide how you wish to pay your bills – lower prices are often available to people who pay by direct debit or manage their account online.
- Decide whether you wish to get gas and electricity from the same supplier and perhaps get a “dual fuel” reduction – but do check whether dual fuel is the best deal for you based on your own energy consumption.
- Call a price comparison service or visit their website. A good fuel comparison website will calculate which gas and electricity suppliers can offer you the cheapest deal (check whether prices include VAT or a standing charge). Not every website will list every tariff.
- Check the fine print of any special offers or discounts. How long will these run for? Are there any extra or hidden charges? Is the payment method right for you?

Ofgem (the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets) has a list of price comparison websites which follow a code of practice. You can find information on their website **www.ofgem.gov.uk**.

Ofgem requires utility companies to offer customers just 4 tariffs each for gas and electricity and to send out bills which are clear about costs and the amount of energy used. Suppliers also have to let their customers know which of their tariffs offers best value to the customer according to their own energy usage. If customers want to change tariff, it is up to them to contact the supplier to arrange this.

After making a contract with an energy supplier, you have a right to be sent written confirmation of what you have agreed, and you have seven days (or more if the company says so in their information) from the date you received the written confirmation, to cancel the contract.

The **Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline 03454 04 05 06** can help with individual complaints if something goes wrong.

Oil supplies

Many people in rural areas use oil to heat their homes. There is good advice about how to make best use of oil-fired heating on the website **www.oilsave.org.uk** where you can also find information about oil fuel suppliers, heating technicians and keeping your oil tank secure. If you do not have internet access call their technical helpline on **01473 626 298**.

If you use oil to heat your home, see if there is an oil club in your area. These let you join others to negotiate a better price with oil suppliers, saving you up to 10% a year. Find your nearest one on the **Citizens Advice website** at **www.citizensadvice.org.uk/oilclubs.htm**.

Services from your energy supplier

Your gas or electricity energy 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 and you join their priority service register.

Depending on your circumstances these services can include:

- Energy efficiency advice.
- A free annual gas safety check.
- Priority in getting your energy supply restored after power cuts.
- Advance notice of any planned interruptions to your fuel supply if this will affect medical equipment.
- A password scheme protecting you against bogus callers.
- A regular meter-reading service.
- Advice about specialist controls which can make electrical equipment easier to use if you have a disability (including controls which are easy to grip and plugs which have handles).
- Sending your bill to a nominated friend or family member to help you check them.
- Supplying bills in large print, audio or braille.

Warm Home Discount

You may be entitled to the Warm Home Discount of £140 off your electricity bill during the winter months if your electricity supplier is part of the scheme. The eligibility criteria differs between suppliers but if you receive Pension Credit, certain disability benefits or have a low income, you should contact your energy supplier to see if you are eligible. Each supplier has a limit of how many people they can give the discount to so, if you think you may be eligible, contact them as soon as possible. If you receive Pension Credit with a Guarantee element and your energy supplier is part of the scheme you should automatically receive the Warm Home Discount and should receive a letter letting you know this.

Have the income you are entitled to

Cold weather payments are paid automatically by the Department for Work and Pensions for each week when the average temperature recorded (or forecast) for your relevant local weather station is zero degrees Celsius or less for seven days in a row. The payment is currently £25 for each qualifying week.

People who qualify include most people who receive Pension Credit, and some people who receive means-tested working age benefits.

A **Winter fuel payment** is an annual lump sum tax-free payment to help with winter heating costs. It is usually paid automatically, but people need to make a claim if they are not claiming social security benefits and have not received a payment before.

You are entitled to a payment in winter 2017-2018 if you were born before 5 August 1953. There will be a different cut-off date for each year.

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, it will be shared between you.

You can call the **Winter Fuel Payment Helpline** on **03459 15 15 15** or see **www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment**.

Social security benefits like Pension Credit can help people to meet their day-to-day living costs including keeping on top of fuel bills. Around 1/3 of people who should be receiving Pension Credit are not claiming the help they are entitled to. If you are not clear about how the social security system works and what you are entitled to see our *Benefits Maze* or call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222**.

What to do in an emergency

Electricity safety

If there is a power cut or you suspect you have a problem with wires outside your home, call the emergency number given by your supplier or

Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution 0800 300 999

Scottish Power Energy Networks 0800 092 9290

If you have a problem with the wiring inside your home or with any of your electrical appliances, you will need to find a qualified electrician to help you.

If you need to employ a qualified electrician contact the **The National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting** (NICEIC), which can provide you with approved electricians in your area, call **0870 013 0382** or see their website **www.niceic.com**.

Your local Care and Repair Service may be able to help you to find a reliable local electrician, and in some areas local councils have set up Trusted Trader schemes.

Call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** or Care and Repair Scotland on **0141 221 9879**, **www.careandrepairsotland.co.uk**, for details of your local Care and Repair service.

Gas safety

If you suspect you have a gas leak:

- Phone the **National Gas Emergency Service** on **0800 111 999**.
- Do not create a flame or operate electrical switches.
- Put out flames if you can do this without putting yourself at risk.
- Open doors and windows.
- Keep people away from the area and turn off the gas at the control valve.

The operator who takes your call will give you on the spot safety advice. The National Grid aims 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 to employ a gas engineer to fix your appliances, only use one who is on the **Gas Safe Register**. You can contact them for details of registered gas engineers in your local area. Call **0800 408 5500** or see their website **www.gassaferegister.co.uk**.

Oil fuel safety

There is good advice about how to make safe use of oil fired heating on the website **www.oilsave.org.uk** where you can also find information about fuel suppliers, heating technicians and keeping your oil tank secure. If you do not have internet access call their technical helpline on **01473 626 298**.

Water safety

Know where your water stopcock is too and check that it is easy to turn. If water pipes freeze and burst you need to be able to turn off the water at the main stopcock.

Fire safety

Contact the **Scottish Fire and Rescue** service for advice about fire safety – call them on **0800 0731 999** for a free home safety visit.

Carbon monoxide safety

Carbon Monoxide poisoning causes around 50 deaths a year in the UK, and causes many people to need 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 and 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.
- See your 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 the **Gas Emergency Helpline 0800 111 999**.
- Get a Gas Safe registered engineer to inspect your gas appliances and flues to see if there is a problem.

For peace of mind you could get a carbon monoxide alarm in your home, either from a DIY store or there may be a scheme operated by your local council or fuel supplier which could help with this.

Be scam aware

Many well-known energy suppliers no longer carry out doorstep selling.

If a sales person calls uninvited at your home to try to sell you gas or electricity, wanting to sell you energy efficiency measures, or saying they are from a government scheme you could:

- Ask the person for identification.
- Get the company's number from the phone book or online and ring to check that the sales person is who they say they are.
- Do not let the sales person into your house until you have checked their identity.
- Ask them to call back at another time when a friend or family member can be with you.
- Do not sign anything straight away - leave yourself 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 call 999 for the police if you are being threatened; if you feel you are not in any way at risk but wish to report a suspicious incident call your local police station by dialling 101.

You may have a visit from an engineer to fit a Smart meter, the time and date should be agreed with you in advance.

To report an issue that you have encountered to Trading Standards, contact the **Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline** on **03454 04 05 06**.

Winter survival kit

Make sure you have supplies of essential items in case the weather takes a turn for the worse:

- Keep simple cold, flu and sore throat remedies in the house. Your pharmacist can make suggestions and also advise you 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 pick-up 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.



Staying Well

As well as keeping warm in winter, there is a lot you can do to look after yourself:

Eat well – When it is cold it is easy to fall into eating habits which don't provide the combination of foods that you need to stay as healthy as possible. Hot meals and drinks help to keep you warm, so eat at least one hot meal each day and have hot drinks during the day and before you go to bed.

Include a good range of foods in your diet – try to base the balance of your food on the Eat Well plate - and aim for five portions of fruit and vegetables each day, so that you're getting plenty of nutrients and vitamins.

Eating a varied, balanced diet is one of the best ways to contribute to good health. A healthy diet can help reduce cholesterol and blood pressure as well as prevent weight gain and Type 2 diabetes.

It's important to eat enough, especially in winter. Age Scotland's *Eat Well* guide contains information including what balance of foods to aim for, how food can affect your mood and practical tips on understanding food labelling and what to keep in your store cupboard.

Consider taking a vitamin D supplement – even if you eat well, you may not always have enough vitamin D. Our bodies create vitamin D from sunlight when we are outdoors. We need it for healthy bones, teeth and muscles. During the winter months in Scotland the sun is not strong enough for our bodies to make vitamin D, and it is difficult to get the amount we need from food alone. You might want to speak to your GP to discuss taking a supplement to boost your levels in winter.

Keep warm – It is essential that you keep your home warm. Low temperatures increase the risk of flu and other respiratory problems and can raise blood pressure. Blood pressure takes longer to return to normal in older people who have been out in the cold, increasing the risk of heart attacks and strokes. The colder your home, the higher the risk to your health.

Keep your bedroom window closed at night when the weather is cold. The coldest time of the day is just before dawn. Breathing in cold air raises the risk of chest infections.

Keep moving - Staying active is not only essential for your general wellbeing and fitness – it also generates heat and helps to keep you warm. When you are indoors, try not to sit still for more than an hour. Get up and walk around and spread out any chores through the day.

If walking is difficult you can do chair-based exercises while sitting or holding on to the back of a chair. Even moving your arms and legs and wiggling your toes can help you keep warm.

Regular physical activity can lower the risk of Type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancer, heart disease and stroke and can improve your mood.

Taking part in physical activity you enjoy is a great way to get out and about, build social networks and meet new people.

Protect yourself – make sure you have the annual flu jab and the ‘pneumo’ (or pneumococcal) jab is a one-off jab that helps protect you against pneumonia, meningitis and septicaemia. Ask your GP about it if you’re over 65 and haven’t had one.

Stay positive - It is not unusual to feel down in winter – particularly when the days are short and nights are long. Try to keep to your usual routine and if you cannot get out to visit friends or family give them a call instead.

Do something 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 to get out and about locally and for good company.

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

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 you to feel mentally fit and well. If you are worried about taking exercise, have a chat to your GP about what would be safe for you. You may want to get out for a walk and a chat or prefer to find indoor exercise like dancing or bowling – call Age Scotland’s helpline and we can help you to find out what’s on in your community.

Stay connected – Many older people find that they are lonely; this has been recognised as a serious issue by the Scottish Government as it affects peoples’ everyday lives and health.

100,000 older people in Scotland say they feel lonely most or all of the time.

In winter it can be hard to get out to shops and appointments and even harder to visit family and friends. If you can’t get out, you can call Age Scotland’s helpline for a chat and we can see if there is anything near your home which you could get out to and enjoy. There may be opportunities to go to a lunch club or men’s shed, sing, volunteer to help other people or learn to get online so you can email, skype your family or get a better deal on your bills.

Age Scotland’s helpline offers information, advice and friendship, call **0800 12 44 222**.

Who can help?

The Age Scotland helpline is the confidential, free-phone helpline for older people in Scotland. It provides information, friendship and advice to older people and those seeking advice on how best to support older friends and family members.

Tel: **0800 12 44 222**

Home Energy Scotland can give you expert information and advice about:

- energy issues
- help which may be available locally or from your energy supplier
- social security benefits
- changing energy suppliers and
- the energy efficiency of your home

Tel: **0808 808 2282**

www.homeenergyscotland.org.uk

Your local **Citizens Advice Bureau** (CAB) can help you access independent help and support. You can find your local CAB by calling Citizens Advice Direct or visiting the Citizens Advice Scotland website and entering your post code.

Tel: **0808 800 9060**

www.cas.org.uk/bureaux

Citizens Advice Consumer Service provides free, confidential and impartial advice on consumer issues. Trained advisers can give you consumer advice over the phone and online.

Tel: **03454 04 05 06** (Monday-Friday 9 am to 5 pm)

www.adviceguide.org.uk/scotland

Care and Repair Scotland

Offers advice and assistance to help people repair, improve or adapt their homes.

Tel: **0141 221 9879**

www.careandrepairsotland.co.uk

Gas Safe Register

Official list of gas engineers who are registered to work on boilers, cookers, fires and other gas appliances.

Tel: **0800 408 5500**

Textphone: **0800 408 0606**

www.gassaferegister.co.uk



0333 323 2400
info@agescotland.org.uk
www.agescotland.org.uk

Age Scotland helpline
0800 12 44 222

Age Scotland Enterprises
0800 456 1137 (Edinburgh)
0800 500 3159 (Glasgow)



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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. Registration Number 153343. Charity Number SC010100.