

Warm homes

Your guide to
staying warm at
home this winter



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It is important to be warm and comfortable in your home. Low temperatures can make existing health issues worse. The colder your home is, the greater the risk of you becoming ill.

To stay safe and well, your home should be heated to at least 18°C/64°F. Living areas should be warmer, at around 21°C/70°F.

Keeping your home warm

You can make some simple changes to your home that will ensure you are warmer and more comfortable and your energy bills are lower.

Most homes rented or purchased since 2008, have an Energy Performance Certificate. The certificate lets you know how energy efficient your home is and suggests improvements that could reduce your heating costs.

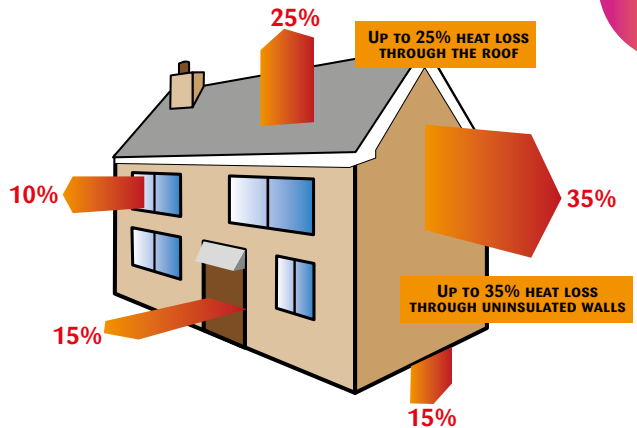
Access existing reports online or find a qualified energy assessor to produce one for your home:

➔ www.epcregister.com

Insulate

Insulation prevents heat being lost from your home. Insulating your home well, means it will stay warmer for longer in cold weather and be cheaper to heat.

For advice on suitable insulation for your home, speak to a local registered installer.



Find a contractor via the National Insulation Association:

☎ 01525 383313 ➔ www.nia-uk.org

Warm Homes

There are different types of insulation available to you depending on how your home has been built:



Loft insulation

Most homes can benefit from loft insulation. The recommended depth for traditional loft insulation is 270mm/10.5 inches. If you have a loft conversion, attic or roof room insulation is available which insulates at the rafters instead.



Wall insulation

Walls are your biggest source of heat loss. Different types of insulation are available depending on whether you have cavity or solid walls.



Pipe lagging

Insulating your pipes can help you to avoid burst pipes and leaks. This is especially important for pipes in the loft, as insulated lofts are colder because the heat is kept where it is needed, in the home below.



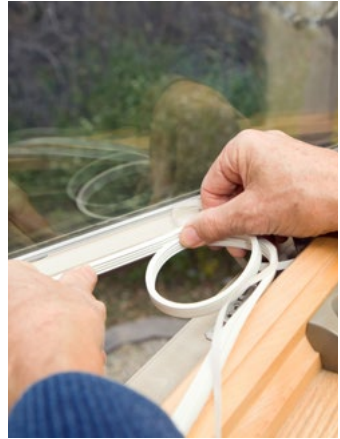
Underfloor insulation

Older properties may have some rooms with suspended timber floors. They are often draughty underneath and insulating can avoid heat being lost below.

Reduce draughts

Reducing draughts can really help to maintain the temperature in your home.

- Close your curtains at dusk
- Keep windows closed at night
- Use draught excluders
- Fit draught-proofing strips around door and window frames, letterboxes and keyholes
- Use a chimney balloon to reduce draughts via your chimney if you have open fireplaces



If you are over 55, the Age UK handyerson service can provide help with small jobs like draught proofing.

Age UK handyerson service 📞 0116 299 2233

Grants and funding

'ECO' funding

You may be eligible for a grant to fund energy efficiency improvements such as insulation and boiler replacement through a government scheme called Energy Company Obligation or 'ECO' funding.

Find out more by contacting your energy supplier or speaking to an installer.

Alternatively visit www.ofgem.gov.uk and search for 'eco supplier contact details'.

Flexible eligibility

Your local authority may also decide you are eligible for a grant based on criteria such as household income, property type or long-term health conditions.

The Warm Homes service can tell you if you qualify for help under a local grants scheme.

Warm Homes service 📞 0116 305 4286

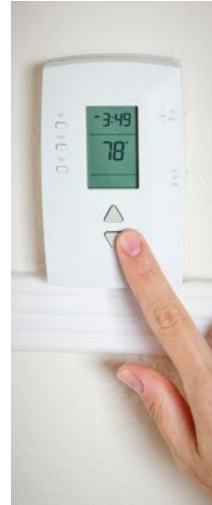
Alternatively, there is a handy online tool to check entitlement www.gov.uk/energy-grants-calculator

Heating your home

Using your heating controls

Getting to know your heating controls can really help you get the most from your heating system and avoid wasted energy.

- You can use the timer to ensure your home is warm when you get up in the morning
- Your thermostat can help ensure your home stays at a stable temperature
- Radiators can be controlled individually so you only pay to heat the rooms you are using



Maintaining your heating system

Your central heating system should be kept in good working order. This will ensure it keeps you warm, operates safely and heats your home efficiently so you don't waste money.

It is recommended that you have your central heating serviced annually. If you live in rented accommodation, your landlord must make sure heating appliances are serviced by law.

Always make sure you use a fully qualified heating engineer or accredited electrician.

These organisations can help you find someone qualified locally:

Gas appliances

Gas Safe ☎0800 408 5500 ➡ www.gassaferegister.co.uk

Oil appliances

OFTEC ☎01473 626 298 ➡ www.oftec.org

Solid fuel appliances

HETAS ☎01684 278 170 ➡ www.hetas.co.uk

Electrical appliances

ELECSA ☎0333 321 8221 ➡ www.elecsa.co.uk

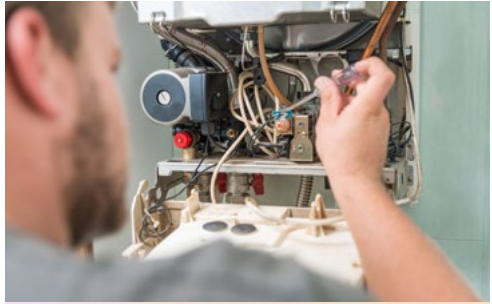
NICEIC ☎0333 015 6625 ➡ www.niceic.com

Upgrading your boiler

Older boilers are often less efficient than more modern boilers. This means they are more costly to run.

As boilers get older, they can also be more difficult to maintain and replacement parts may be harder to find.

If you want to upgrade your boiler, make sure you use a registered engineer. Find one using the contact details above.



Did you know?

In a standard three bedroom, semi-detached house, an A-grade energy efficient boiler will cost £300 a year less to run, than an older G-grade boiler according to the Energy Saving Trust.

Avoid freezing pipes

In extremely cold weather pipes can freeze. This can affect your central heating system, cause leaks and even stop it working.

Modern boilers have a condensate pipe (often a white plastic pipe) which drains water from your boiler. This can freeze at the point where it meets the drain outside.

Large or insulated pipes are less likely to freeze in cold weather. It also helps to ensure your drains do not become blocked with snow or ice.

If your pipes do freeze, pour warm (not hot) water over the pipes and allow time for the ice to melt before attempting to reset your boiler. Ask your gas engineer about avoiding this problem when having your appliances serviced.

Money matters

Maximise your income


A benefit entitlement check will help you find out if you're getting all the benefits you should. Some benefits may entitle you to discounts on your energy bills or help with home energy efficiency improvements.

Certain benefits relate to your health or care needs and will not look at your income or savings, so it is always worth checking to ensure you don't miss out.

Citizens Advice have local offices across Leicestershire which offer drop in advice appointments.

 **0300 330 1025**  **www.citizensadviceleicestershire.org**

The GOV.UK portal provides an approved calculator to check your benefit entitlement online:

 **www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators**

Age UK Leicestershire & Rutland provides a free Benefits Advice Service for the over 55s.

 **0116 299 2278**  **www.ageuk.org.uk/leics**

Gas and electricity meters

It is important to provide your supplier with meter readings to keep your energy bills accurate.

If you don't, your energy supplier will have to estimate your energy usage. Over long periods of time this can lead to jumps in your energy bills, if you have used more energy than predicted.

Smart meters are free to install and can help you keep track of your spending. They also make sure you are paying for the energy you use so you won't rack up costly back payments, or overpay.

If you don't have a smart meter already, you can contact your energy supplier to ask whether they can upgrade you.

Find out more:  **www.smartenergygb.org**

Switch energy supplier

Switching energy supplier may save you money. Local households who have switched recently have saved an average of £233 pounds a year.

Switching supplier is easier than you think, and there are plenty of free, impartial services who can arrange the whole process for you. Ideally you need your most recent energy statement to hand.

uSwitch is an OFGEM accredited comparison website. They can also help you over the telephone.

Visit ➔ www.uswitch.com or call ☎ **0800 68 88 244**

Alternatively visit ➔ www.ofgem.gov.uk and search for 'accredited comparison sites' for a full list of services.



The banner features the Fosse Energy logo at the top, which includes a stylized leaf icon. Below the logo, the text 'Switch and save at fosseenergy.co.uk' is prominently displayed. The background of the banner shows a silhouette of a town with various rooflines. At the bottom left is the Leicestershire County Council logo, and at the bottom right is the Leicester City Council logo. In the center, there is small text providing details about Fosse Energy's partnership and registration information.

fosse ENERGY

Switch and save at fosseenergy.co.uk

Fosse Energy is a partnership between Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and Robin Hood Energy Limited, registered in England and Wales, Company Number: 08053212. Registered Office: Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG. VAT Number: 204 8309 29

Remember to compare your quote to other companies before switching.

There are currently over 60 energy suppliers on the market and it can be difficult to know the reputation of companies you are unfamiliar with. To help you decide on a supplier switching services, consumer group Which? and charity Citizens Advice compile customer feedback ratings for energy suppliers, so you can feel confident in your choice:

➔ www.which.co.uk and search for 'energy survey results'

➔ www.citizensadvice.org.uk and search for 'compare domestic energy suppliers'

Warm Home Discount

If you're struggling to pay your bills, you may be eligible for a one-off payment towards your energy bills. The payment varies each year, for winter 2018/19 it was a payment of £140. You can apply each year the scheme runs.

The Warm Home Discount scheme is open to people on certain benefits or with a low-income. For more information, or to find out if you are eligible, contact your energy supplier.

Details of participating suppliers can be found here:

➔ www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme

Problems paying bills

If you cannot pay your energy bills, contact your energy supplier as soon as you can to discuss your options. They will help you to set up a payment plan which can spread the cost.

There are also trust and hardship funds available to help people clear arrears. Your energy supplier will be able to tell you if you are eligible and how to apply.

If you are still experiencing problems, contact your local Citizens Advice. They can help you to fill in forms to apply for grants and funding, check you are receiving all the benefits you are eligible for and offer debt advice.

Leicestershire Citizens Advice on ☎ **0300 330 1025**

StepChange are a national debt charity. They provide help with debt management plans and can even access support to freeze or write off multiple debts to help you keep on top of your finances.

➔ www.stepchange.org ☎ **0800 138 1111**

Severn Trent Water operates several schemes to help people struggling to pay their water bills including a trust fund, the 'Big Difference' scheme and Water Sure.

➔ www.sttf.org.uk ☎ **0121 355 7766**

Heating Oil and LPG (Liquified Petroleum Gas)

The following organisations provide advice on a variety of topics including servicing, buying guides, fuel theft and security and also have supplier search tools. Save money by comparing quotations.

Oilsave: ➔ www.oilsave.org.uk

Liquid Gas UK: ➔ www.liquidgasuk.org

A number of suppliers offer monthly payment plans to avoid large upfront payments for fuel deliveries.

Staying safe

Carbon monoxide alarms

Carbon monoxide is a dangerous gas that you cannot see or smell. Breathing it in can quickly make you unwell and even cause death. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include nausea, dizziness, tiredness, headaches and loss of consciousness.

It is recommended that you install a carbon monoxide detector in every room with a gas, oil or solid fuel heating appliance. They can be purchased at most DIY stores. If you live in rented accommodation, your landlord must supply these where there is solid fuel heating.

If your carbon monoxide alarm sounds, switch off any appliances, open doors and windows, leave the property and call the gas emergency number

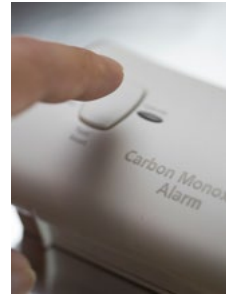
Gas emergency

If you smell gas, or suspect a gas leak, ensure there is ventilation and leave the property immediately. Do not touch any electrical appliances including light switches.

Seek assistance straight away by calling the gas emergency number.

Gas emergency number

☎ **0800 111 999**



Locking cooker valves

If you care for someone suffering with dementia or autism and are concerned about gas safety, contact your local gas network operator Cadent to enquire about free locking cooker valves.

 0345 835 1111  www.cadentgas.com

Help during power cuts

Some people are eligible to extra assistance during power cuts, these include people:

- with a long-term health condition or communication needs
- who use medical equipment or have adaptations to their home
- who keep medication in the fridge


There are other benefits associated with joining the register such as free annual gas safety checks, regular meter reads, password schemes at the door and protection from disconnection.

Join the free priority service register by telephoning **Western Power Distribution on 105** or complete an online form  www.westernpower.co.uk/customers-and-community/priority-services


Heating crisis

If you experience a heating crisis and need help to heat your home safely, you can contact First Contact Plus who can identify any support available and refer you to the Warm Homes team. Heaters are available across Leicestershire and First Contact Plus can signpost you to access one locally.



First Contact Plus  0116 305 4286
Mon-Thurs 8:30am-5pm and Fri 8:30-4:30pm

However, if you have an urgent issue, such as a burst pipe, you should contact Gas Safe to find an out of hours engineer. Your home insurer may be able to arrange this if you need to claim for any damage repairs.

Gas Safe –  0800 408 5500

Damp, mould and condensation

Damp and mould in the home have been linked to a range of health issues, so it is important to try to avoid it wherever possible.

Condensation is the most common cause of damp problems. There are things you can do to reduce condensation in your home:

- **Keep the temperature inside your home above 15°C**

Under-heating or not insulating your home leads to cold surfaces where condensation settles.

- **Remove excess moisture from your home**

You can do this by making sure there is adequate ventilation so that air can circulate freely. Opening window vents, wiping wet windows and using extractor fans in bathrooms and kitchens and dehumidifying tablets in other rooms can all help to remove moisture.



- **Avoid excess moisture**

Do this by keeping lids on pans, closing internal doors when cooking or showering and only boiling as much water as you need.

If possible, try not to dry your washing in the house. If you do, use an airer instead of drying your clothes on a radiator.

If damp is caused by a problem with the building you live in, get advice from a professional contractor registered with the Property Care Association:

 **0844 375 4301**  **www.property-care.org**

The Centre for Sustainable Energy has further information and advice on home damp and mould issues:

 **www.cse.org.uk/advice-leaflets**

Additional information

View our Warm Homes advice pages at

➔ www.firstcontactplus.org.uk - Click on 'Your Home'

The Energy Saving Trust can provide you with up to date information on a range of topics that will help you to save money and stay warm

➔ www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

The Centre for Sustainable Energy can help you with a wide range of energy saving issues

➔ www.cse.org.uk/advice/advice-and-support

Citizens Advice can help both tenants and landlords to understand their responsibilities, and sort out issues around property maintenance.

Leicestershire Citizens Advice on ☎ **0300 330 1025**

Citizens Advice Charnwood ☎ **03444 111 444**



More top tips for keeping your home warm

Use heat reflective panels behind your radiators

These can be purchased at most DIY stores and are most effective for radiators on external walls.

Ensure the heating is only switched on when required

This is more cost effective than leaving your heating on low all day when you are not at home.

Swap to energy efficient lightbulbs

LED (light-emitting-diode) lightbulbs won't keep you warm, but they will reduce your electricity bills. Ask at your local DIY store, if you are not sure what type of bulb you need.



Warm homes



Need more help?

The Warm Homes service provides free, impartial advice and support on how you can improve your home and health. This can include:

- Understanding your living conditions to help you save money on energy.
- Looking at your energy suppliers and tariffs to make sure you are getting the best deals
- Making sure you are getting any grants and benefits you are entitled to
- Identify measures to improve the energy efficiency of your home



The Warm Homes Service can be accessed via First Contact Plus

Call: ☎ **0116 305 4286**

Visit: ➡ www.firstcontactplus.org.uk