



Action for Warm Homes  
NORTHERN IRELAND

supported by



November 2021

# NEWSLETTER

In our [May 2021 Newsletter](#) we warned of tough times ahead, however, no one predicted the perfect storm that we are now facing heading in the mouth of winter. The ending of the Job Retention Scheme and at the same time the ending of the £20 per week benefits uplift and most recently the relentless increases to the cost of energy, which are set to put an annual gas bill of up to £1000, will undoubtedly deepen and widen the extent of fuel poverty in Northern Ireland.

In our 2021 -26 strategy we outline that every person should be able to enjoy a home that is warm and safe, but we know that this will be denied to thousands of homes in the coming weeks and months where we have been warned to expect further increases to energy costs.

This crisis calls for an urgent intervention from government to tackle the hardest hit families with guaranteed support across Northern Ireland. As such we have been calling on the Department for Communities (DfC), who holds responsibility for fuel poverty, to establish a taskforce to call to account all the key players including the Department for Health and the Industry to outline and plan for what support they can provide and how it can be provided. We also want to see the new fuel poverty strategy develop as never has it been more evident that our current strategy is not fit for purpose and Northern Ireland also needs to see the new Energy Strategy for the Department for the Economy (DfE) which was promised by the end of the year.

We have also established a social media campaign to forewarn householders and organisations to try to gear up for these increases and also work with organisations like you to do everything we can to protect vulnerable homes. Be under no illusion, the cold kills and our most recent excess winter deaths figure, adjusted for Covid- 19, indicated that over 900 people died and according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 30% of these deaths are directly attributable to people living in cold damp homes. That is a modern day scandal.

We hope the Newsletter can provide you with some useful information in these tough times ahead and please contact us if you wish to work with us on extending our key messages in the coming months.

Warm wishes

Ms. Pat Austin  
Director, NEA NI

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# keeping warm with your High Street Voucher

The 'perfect storm' of higher energy prices, reduced incomes, and leaky, inefficient housing could put many households in Northern Ireland at increased risk of fuel poverty this coming winter. As wholesale energy prices continue to rise there is a risk that consumers in Northern Ireland will face further price hikes in the coming months. These increases come at a time when many household budgets are already stretched thin.

With that in mind, Fuel Poverty Charity National Energy Action (NEA), have listed five top tips that you can spend your High Street scheme 'Spend Local' card on to help reduce your heating and energy bills.

## #1 — Draught Proof Your Home

Did you know the average home wastes around £25 per year due the draughts alone! Thankfully there are a number of low-cost measures you can carry out to reduce draughts in your home and save money.

### Doors

- Pick up some fabric draught excluders for your doors. These can be purchased from between £7.50 - £10. If you are feeling creative, you can even have a go at making your own. All you need is a large pair of woolly socks stuffed with popcorn kernels and pillow stuffing and then tie at each end.
- You can also get some door brushes and/or foam strips around edges. These can be bought for around £5 per door.
- Did you know keyhole covers can help reduce drafts? These can be purchased for as little as £3 each.
- You would be surprised how much of a draft you can get through your letterbox. Investing in a letterbox flap or brush (approximately £5) could help reduce this.



### Windows

- Window frames can be a common source of drafts. You can buy draught-proofing strips to stick around the window frame and fill in the gaps. These are available for around £5.

### Chimney

- If you don't use your fireplace, you could be wasting approx. £18 per year from heat escaping through your chimney! Investing in a Chimney Balloon for as little as £15-£20 could help you save money year on year.



## #2 — Invest in Energy Efficient Lighting

Lighting and appliances make up around 15% of all energy use in your home. Investing in energy efficient lighting can be a very easy way to reduce your energy bills.

Switching from halogen bulbs to more energy efficiency LEDs could help save between £2 - £3 per bulb per year. Just think how quickly that can add up throughout your home. You can get a 4 pack of bulbs for as little as £3.99. Making sure to turn off lights you don't need could save around £17 per year.

### #3 — Improve you Heating Controls

It's estimated that switching up your heating controls to a modern device could help you save as much as 20% off your heating bills, so it's easy to see how it can pay for itself before long.

There are a few different options you can consider to help make sure you aren't using energy when you don't need it.

- You can buy timer switches (£5) for your electrical appliances. These allow you to set when your lights, phone chargers, tv or other electrical appliances switch on and off.
- If you don't already have Thermostatic Radiator Valves on your radiators these can be purchased for around £9.99 and are a great way to reduce wasted heat. TRVs help to control the air temperature of a space by automatically adjusting the amount of hot water that enters the radiator.



### #4 — Consider investing in a slow cooker

According to the Energy Saving Trust, cooking accounts for 13.8% of electricity used in UK homes, while freezing and cooling food consumes another 16.8%. Combined, that's over 30% of your total household energy use coming from these two activities alone.

An average-sized slow cooker will use about 1.3 kWh of electricity per meal cooked, which breaks down to less than 1p per hour at an average energy tariff.

Additional benefits of using a slow cooker include:

- A smaller amount of heat is applied over a longer period.
- You can leave your food to cook while you're at work, saving prep time in the evenings.
- There are fewer dishes to wash up, as slow cookers are one-pot meals. This helps save water and heat.
- You can make extra servings of your meals to freeze or refrigerate for later, saving energy over time.
- Some models include a timer to automatically stop cooking at a set time to avoid overcooking and using unnecessary energy.

### #5 — Use your voucher to top up your prepayment meter

If you have a prepayment meter for your gas or electricity you can use your high street voucher to top up your meter at a local pay point terminal, providing the vendor has a chip and pin machine.

As wholesale fuel prices continue to rise internationally there is a significant risk that energy prices in Northern Ireland will be increased again in the coming months. You can use your high street voucher to make sure you have credit on your meter for the coming winter.

There are a number of other low costs measures that can help you save money on your energy bills.

You can contact NI Energy Advice who offer free independent and impartial energy advice, including advice about energy grants and schemes and other sources of help.

Visit: <https://nihe.gov.uk/Community/NI-Energy-Advice>.

## #6 — If you are eligible for a Spend Local prepaid Card, but feel as though you don't need it, please consider a donation in kind to help those struggling to stay warm this winter.

We know that around one in five households in Northern Ireland struggle with Fuel Poverty.

NEA are concerned that the 'perfect storm' of higher energy prices, reduced incomes, and leaky, inefficient housing could put many households in Northern Ireland at increased risk of fuel poverty this coming winter. As wholesale energy prices continue to rise there is a risk that consumers in Northern Ireland will face further price hikes in the coming months. These increases come at a time when many household budgets are already stretched thin. The winding down of the furlough scheme and the withdrawal of uplifts to Universal Credit will put further stress on many families in Northern Ireland.

NEA need your support to help mitigate the worst impacts of the coming winter.

By donating the equivalent of your Spend Local Card to NEA, we can:

- Provide life-changing energy efficiency advice.
- Help to provide essential winter items to those in need through a hardship fund.
- Offer assistance to those struggling with fuel debt.
- Make vital referrals to help vulnerable customers access extra support.
- Provide benefits advice and supporting people with applications.

To make a donation we simply ask that you use your voucher to cover some of your regular monthly expenditure, such as a weekly food shop, and then donate the equivalent savings to NEA by visiting: <https://www.nea.org.uk/support-us/donate-your-ni-voucher-scheme>.

With your support NEA can provide a lifeline to those in need this winter.

### The Cold Hard Facts

- Every winter thousands of people are faced with living in properties which are dangerous or unfit for colder seasons. 22% of households in Northern Ireland still live in fuel poverty, meaning they live below the poverty line but also have much higher bills due to poor levels of energy efficiency.
- Independent analysis suggests that, during winter months, families in cold, leaky homes are facing heating bills on average of £124 per month, compared with £76 per month for those in well-insulated homes (a £50 per month difference).
- Around 68% of households in Northern Ireland are reliant on Home Heating Oil to heat their homes; an unregulated fuel in terms of price and consumer protection.
- The 2019- 2020 UK Fuel Poverty Monitor, found that COVID-19 had created difficult conditions for fuel poor households, driven by an increase in energy use, due to more people spending more time at home, and a reduction in income, as many jobs were either lost or placed on furlough.



## The Fuel Poverty Coalition NI launches a new Manifesto for Warmth

In light of the challenges presented by the unprecedented energy price increases, the Fuel Poverty Coalition (FPC) Northern Ireland has launched a new 'Manifesto for Warmth', which details 7 key asks to help eradicate Fuel Poverty in Northern Ireland. This can be found on the Coalition's website at: [A Manifesto for Warmth \(2021\)](#).

The Manifesto has been created on the back of Fuel Poverty Coalition (FPC) Northern Ireland concerns that a dangerous combination of higher energy prices, reduced incomes, and leaky, inefficient housing could put many households in Northern Ireland at risk of fuel poverty this winter.

The Coalition's fears stem from the significant increase in wholesale energy prices, which will likely result in consumers seeing an increase in their energy bills. According to the Consumer Council NI's Home Heating Oil price survey, the average price for 500 Litres of Oil in Northern Ireland is £268.05, this is significantly up on the £144.87 this time last year. Gas prices have also risen dramatically with some households of Northern Ireland facing a dramatic 35% hike in their tariff price.

These increases come at a time when many household budgets are already stretched thin. The winding down of the furlough scheme and the likely withdrawal of uplifts to Universal Credit put further stress on many families in Northern Ireland.

Based on the 2016 House Condition Survey (HCS), Northern Ireland has a rate of fuel poverty at 22%. It is also estimated that there are approximately 43,800 households in extreme fuel poverty, which means they need to spend over 15% of their total income to heat their homes.

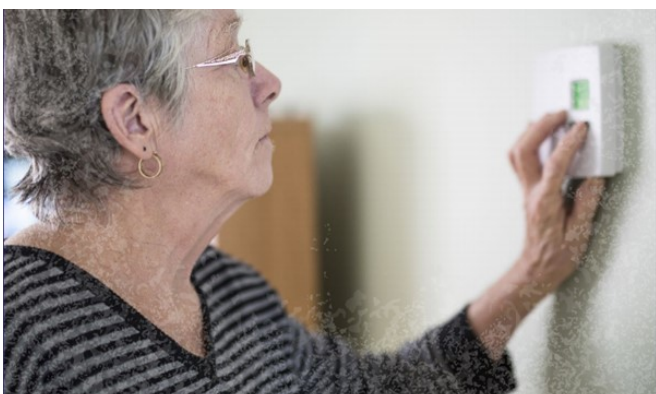
## To help eradicate Fuel Poverty in Northern Ireland the coalition has identified the 7 key asks.

- 1) Energy Efficiency is the number one priority to enable everyone to reduce their use of carbon fuels. The Government must resource a comprehensive and accessible energy efficiency programme, based on a Whole House Solution and the 'Worst First principle'.
- 2) Ensure that sufficient funding is provided for energy efficiency schemes that help those who need the most support. This must include a particular focus on the private rented sector.
- 3) Ensure that the Fuel Poverty Strategy is an integral part of the emerging Energy Strategy so that our energy policy delivers an affordable, secure and sustainable energy system for all households in Northern Ireland.
- 4) Take action to Save lives by implementing the recommended guidelines (NICE NG6) on tackling winter deaths.
- 5) Provide extra support and assistance to transition those reliant on heating oil towards energy efficiency and new heating technologies.
- 6) Ensure all households have access to high quality information. Independent and meaningful information will be key to enabling people to act. Helping householders throughout the process is needed.
- 7) Work in collaboration across all agendas, departments, and agencies to ensure a 'Just transition' to decarbonisation, which maximises the benefits for health and wellbeing and leads to tangible outcomes.



The Fuel Poverty Coalition NI was established in 2010 in response to the increasingly serious levels of fuel poverty in Northern Ireland. The Coalition's aim is to drive forward the fuel poverty agenda in Northern Ireland in terms of both policy and practical initiatives. Members are united by the fact that they wish to highlight the urgent action needed to eradicate fuel poverty in Northern Ireland.

Currently, the Coalition has a membership base of over 160 members from across Northern Ireland; representing businesses, environmental groups, trade unions, the health sector, local councils, consumer groups,



housing associations, rural support networks, the voluntary and community sector, young person's groups, older person's groups and faith groups.

The most recent Excess Winter Deaths (EWD) figures for 2019-20, provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) show the five-year moving average of EWD was 904 in 2017-18 (based on years 2015-16 to 2019-20).



# YOUR HOME ENERGY CHECKLIST



Follow these steps to help you manage your energy bills and keep your home warm.

## Take a meter reading

Take regular meter readings and submit them to your energy supplier as this will help you keep an eye on your energy use and keep your bills accurate.

If you receive a bill and it has an 'E' marked against the meter reading, then this means it is 'estimated' by your supplier. You may not be paying the right amount for your energy. Having several estimated readings can sometimes lead to large, unexpected bills.

Meters are read from left to right. Don't include any numbers that are red or in a red box.

## Contact your supplier to discuss your energy debt

If you are in debt to your energy supplier and struggling to get on top of it, then speak to your supplier as soon as possible. If they know there is a problem, they can work with you to find a solution.

Ask to set up a payment plan and be realistic about what you can afford to repay. You don't want to leave yourself short for other essential bills.

## Maximise your income

Make sure you are claiming the correct benefits. This could increase your income as well as make you eligible for other types of assistance. Take advice from

### Advice NI

Freephone Advice Helpline: 0800 915 4604

Email: [advice@adviceni.net](mailto:advice@adviceni.net)

## Make the Call Service

The service makes sure you're getting all the benefits, services and supports you're entitled to.

Freephone (network charges may apply):

0800 232 1271

Email: [makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk](mailto:makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk)

## Check if you can receive other discounts and payments

If you were born on or before a specific date (this date changes each year) you could get between £100 and £300 to help you pay your heating bills. This is known as a 'Winter Fuel Payment'. It is paid automatically between November and December if you have claimed before or are in receipt of some other benefits. Others will need to apply for it. Call the **Winter Fuel Payment Centre** on **0800 7310160**.

In addition, some households could be eligible for a **Cold Weather Payment** of £25 per qualifying week. This is paid automatically to those on certain benefits when the average temperature in their area is recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees Celsius or below for seven consecutive days. You'll get £25 for each seven-day period of very cold weather between 1 November and 31 March.

## Register for Priority Service

You can sign up to a **Customer Care Register** to receive extra help from your energy supplier as well as from your distribution network operators (the companies that operate and maintain your gas and electricity supplies).

You can receive the services available if you:

- are of pensionable age
- are disabled or chronically sick
- have a hearing or visual impairment or additional communication needs

Each energy supplier and network operator maintain its own register. A wide range of support is available including:

- Information provided in accessible formats.
- Advance notice of planned power cuts.
- Identification scheme, password protection and nominee scheme for a family member or carer on behalf of the customer.
- Priority support in an emergency.
- Free meter move for consumers with disabilities or are of pensionable age on request.
- Free gas safety check or boiler service.
- Meter reading services.

Contact your gas/electricity supplier and distribution network operator for more information and to register. Details of your distribution network operator can be found on your energy bill.

## Check to see if you are getting the best deal for your energy

You could save hundreds of pounds a year on your bills by switching supplier or changing tariffs with your current supplier.

Use a price comparison site listed below. Have a copy of your most recent bill or annual statement to hand as this should tell you how much energy you have used in the past year.

### Consumer Council

- [www.consumerCouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk)
- Phone: 028 9025 1600
- Email: [info@consumerCouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@consumerCouncil.org.uk)

### Power2Switch

- [www.powertoswitch.co.uk](http://www.powertoswitch.co.uk)
- Email: [hello@powertoswitch.co.uk](mailto:hello@powertoswitch.co.uk)

### Enirgy

- [www.enirgy.info](http://www.enirgy.info)

## Home Heating Oil

More than two-thirds (about 68%) of households in Northern Ireland are dependent on oil as their main heat source.

Oil is normally cheaper when you purchase a larger quantity, however, this is not always viable for those who cannot afford the larger volumes.

Oil differs from natural gas and electricity is usually delivered in bulk. There are many payment methods, and a large number of suppliers provide flexible savings plans. You can check with your supplier what methods are available, see below:

### Paying in advance

- Paying for bulk buy – most suppliers will accept a direct debit or card payment or can have an account set up if you regularly use the same supplier.

### Budgeting options

- Many suppliers can set up a regular direct debit plan spread throughout the year, often called a home heat plan.
- PayPoint – the majority of suppliers will accept PayPoint as this enables the customer to budget by topping up credit on a smart card at a PayPoint location throughout NI, which is usually located at convenience stores. The minimum payment is £10.00.
- Saving stamps are available from certain Councils; check to see if they administer a saving stamp scheme.
- ***Oil stamps are like cash so they need to be kept safe and cannot be refunded if lost.***

You can get more information from the Consumer Council on weekly changes in the price of home heating oil: [www.consumerCouncil.org.uk/policy-research/home-heating-oil](http://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk/policy-research/home-heating-oil).

### Oil buying clubs

Oil buying clubs or 'brokering' schemes involve bulk buying in cluster areas, for example a street or local community. There are a number of clubs around Northern Ireland. Oil can be ordered through NI Energy Advice Oil Buying Clubs:

- NI Energy Advice take care of all aspects of the delivery.
- Provide monthly advice on oil costs and the best time to buy heating oil.
- To find a club near you, contact us at:  
Tel: 028 9598 2068 or 028 9598 3316  
Text: 07939 843716  
Email your [oilbuyingclubs@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:oilbuyingclubs@nihe.gov.uk)

## Use your heating and hot water controls

Make sure you are using your boiler and heating controls correctly and use the programmer to set up the system to match your heating and hot water needs.

For example, setting your heating to come on half an hour before you get up in the morning and half an hour before you go to bed. If you are out during the day set a heating pattern that matches your needs.

Use a room thermostat to control the temperature in your home. Ideally this should be set between 18°C and 21°C in cold weather but some people may need it a little higher for comfort.

Remember not to leave electric hot water immersion heaters on for longer than you need as this wastes energy.

## Use night storage heaters correctly

Some homes have night storage heaters. These store heat overnight when electricity is cheaper, which is then released throughout the next day. Homes with storage heaters should be on an Economy 7 or Economy 10 tariff.

If you are not using your storage heaters correctly you could be faced with a large bill. Look online at [nea.org.uk/advice](http://nea.org.uk/advice) for more advice on how to use your storage heater.

## Make your home energy efficient

Preventing draughts can be a cheap way of making your home warmer. Draught-proofing products are available at DIY stores.

Close curtains at dusk to keep the heat in and use thermal underlay beneath carpets.

Loft and cavity wall insulation can also make a big difference to bills and comfort, as can replacing an old boiler.

You may be eligible for free or discounted insulation or boiler replacements.

NI Energy Advice offers free independent and impartial energy advice to domestic householders in Northern

Ireland – including advice about energy grants and other sources of help:

Freephone: 0800 111 4455

Email: [nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk)

Website: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Community/NI-Energy-Advice](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Community/NI-Energy-Advice)

## Stay Safe

**Carbon Monoxide** is a deadly gas that cannot be seen, smelt or tasted. It can be produced by faulty fuel burning appliances in your home such as a gas boiler or gas fire/heater where there is poor ventilation.

**Take the following steps to protect yourself and your family:**




1. **Make sure that fuel burning appliances such as fires, boilers and gas cookers are regularly serviced by a qualified engineer.**

For gas appliances, engineers must be Gas Safe registered. It is also recommended that engineers working on oil or solid fuel appliances are registered with a trade body such as OFTEC or HETAS. Ask your engineer for proof of their registration.

2. **Install an audible Carbon Monoxide alarm.**

These can be bought from DIY stores, supermarkets and high street shops; they cost around £15 and could save lives.

3. **Know the danger signs. These are:**

-  Gas flames burning orange or yellow instead of the normal blue.
-  Soot stains on or above the appliance.
-  Coal or wood fires that burn slowly or go out.

If you rent your home, then by law landlords have to carry out an annual safety check of gas appliances in the home and provide you with a Gas Safety Certificate. If you haven't already seen the certificate, ask your landlord for a copy.

Contact your gas supplier to ask about registering with their Customer Services Register.

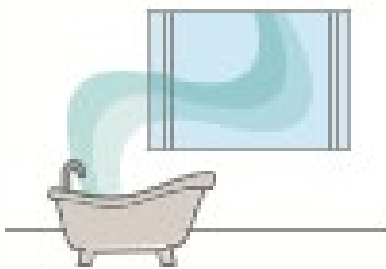
For further information on carbon monoxide safety go to [co-bealarmed.co.uk](http://co-bealarmed.co.uk).

If you smell gas, want to report a gas leak or require gas emergency services, there's a **free, 24-hour National Gas Emergency Helpline you can call 0800 002 001.**

## Avoid damp and condensation

When it is cold, condensation can be a big problem in many homes. **Try the following:**

- Keep temperatures in all rooms above 15°C. This will reduce condensation forming on outside walls.
- Insulate your home.
- Keep your home ventilated. Make sure vents and air bricks are not covered or obstructed.
- Try not to dry washing in the house. If you do, use an airer and don't dry clothes on radiators. Opening windows slightly will allow moisture to escape but be aware of security.
- Open window trickle vents during the day or when going out.
- Wipe down windows/mirrors/tiles/shower with an absorbent cloth.
- Open windows after bathing or washing and leave them open for a short while to release steam if it is safe to do so.



## Belfast Warm and Well Project

Belfast Warm and Well Project is coordinated by National Energy Action (NEA) and is supported by Community Planning Partners from across Belfast.

The project is available to vulnerable people who are finding it difficult to keep their home warm. Vulnerable refers to a number of different groups including:

- People aged 65 years or older;
- People living with a disability or a long term physical or mental health condition;
- Pregnant women;

- Households with a young child/children (from new-born to school age); and
- People on a low income.

Signs that a person may be finding it difficult to keep their home warm could be, for example:

- The home is cold – you may have to keep your coat on when inside;
- There is condensation on the windows; or
- There are signs of damp on the walls or ceilings.

Belfast Warm and Well, will be coordinated by National Energy Action (NEA) who will work with local community and voluntary groups, to provide helpful independent and confidential advice and practical support.

If you or someone you know is vulnerable and finding it difficult to keep your home warm, contact NEA on 028 9023 9909 or [warmandwell@nea.org.uk](mailto:warmandwell@nea.org.uk) to see if they can help.

# NEA TRAINING SERVICES



## NEA/City and Guilds Level 3 Award in Energy Awareness 6281-01

This training course is designed for people who wish to gain or further their knowledge of domestic energy efficiency and in particular, is aimed at those who are in a position to provide energy advice. Course participants come from a range of organisations including local councils, voluntary organisations, energy companies and providers, and housing associations.

### Course Delivery Options:

- **Face to Face** — 3 days of training and 1 day of examination and leads to the Level 3 City and Guilds 6281-01 qualification. *Based on guidance from Government regarding the COVID-19 situation NEA has suspended all face-to-face training and exams until further notice.*
- **Supported E-learn** — Delegates will be provided access to the online course for four weeks and can study online at a time and location that is convenient to them.
  - ◇ Weekly webinars and tutor support will be provided throughout; and
  - ◇ Remote online assessment will be arranged after the 4 weeks.

## Fuel Poverty and Health in Northern Ireland — CPD ACCREDITED

The 2.5hr course looks at the causes and impacts of fuel poverty with a focus on the health impacts. It aims to help delegates identify those likely to be at risk from fuel poverty and signpost to assistance.

### Course Delivery Options

- **Face to Face** — *Based on guidance from Government regarding the COVID-19 situation NEA has suspended all face-to-face training and exams until further notice.*
- **Webinar** — Training will be delivered live via Zoom (video conferencing facility) to small groups to ensure a good level of interaction and support for learners. Participants will require a device with a camera and sound. Full instructions on how to join the webinar will be provided.
- **E-learn** — Delegates will be provided access to the online course for 2 weeks and can study online at a time and location that is convenient to them.

## Introduction to Domestic Energy Efficiency in Northern Ireland — CPD ACCREDITED

This e-learn course aims to make delegates aware of how householders may be able to use their energy more efficiently and reduce possible waste whilst still maintaining a warm and comfortable home.

Delegates will be provided access to the online course for two weeks and be able to study online at a time and location that is convenient to them.







The independent  
advice network,  
providing advice  
to those who  
need it

## Do you need advice?

The independent advice network provides  
free advice and information

FREEPHONE

# 0800 915 4604

### Benefits



### Debt & Money Advice



### Business Debt



### Tax Credits & HMRC Products



### EU Settlement Scheme



### Mobile Advice Service



Funded by  
Department for  
**Communities**

An Roinn  
**Pobal**

Department for  
**Communities**

[www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)

Email: [advice@adviceni.net](mailto:advice@adviceni.net)

For further information or to find your local advice centre visit [www.adviceni.net](http://www.adviceni.net)

  @AdviceNI

# Give your home energy a check up



Like other financial goods and services, energy consumers can shop around in Northern Ireland.

The Consumer Council offers a range of energy tools on our website which can help electricity, gas and oil consumers check to see if they can save money on their energy bills.

## Home Heating Oil

The weekly [oil survey tool](#) details the average oil prices in local areas throughout Northern Ireland. Consumers can click on the map to see the average price for their own area and also see the selection of oil suppliers delivering within their area. Consumers can ask their supplier for the best price or ring around to find the cheapest price, remember many of the suppliers deliver beyond their own areas.

## Energy Efficiency in the Home

Households now have multiple electrical appliances in the home from ovens to hairdryers, to play stations! The Consumer Council [single appliance](#) and [common appliance tools](#) enable consumers to compare prices of electrical goods' running costs. The tools show how much appliances cost over the course of an hour or 24 hour period. It can be surprising how leaving appliances on standby can add up and high kilowatt appliances such as fan ovens might make you try the microwave or slow cooker for a cheaper alternative. All you need is your current electricity tariff rate. Please note to use the tool your device requires excel.

## Electricity Comparison Tools

With six electricity suppliers and 27 different tariffs it can be overwhelming trying to decide which supplier or tariff best suits your needs. The [comparison tool](#) and [comparison table](#) is a quick reference to see if any savings can be made. Consumers should have a look at their most recent bill statement to check what tariff they are currently using. Your bill should also indicate whether you are on a discount scheme and not on the **Standard Rate**. Consumers can contact their supplier and ask if they are on a discount scheme and then compare the unit price to other companies using our tools. The consumer council will happily answer any queries on bills and tariffs if you are not sure ring the consumer protection team on 0800 121 6022.

## Natural Gas

Natural gas has been available in a number of areas for over 20 years and the network has widened to almost half the population. There are two suppliers in Northern Ireland but consumers need to check if they live in an area served by both if they want to switch. The greater Belfast area serves the city of Belfast Larne and Newtownabbey, Lisburn Newtownards and North Down so only these areas can switch. At present there have been a number of price rises so you can check the consumer council gas comparison [tool](#) and [table](#) for the current prices.

It should be noted that we can only publish the **current** prices. Consumers should also be aware when switching that if their new supplier subsequently increases prices the bill payer could be subject to an exit fee if they want to switch again so always read the small print.

# Useful contacts

## Age NI

080 8808 7575

## Advice NI

028 9064 5919

## Consumer Council NI

0800 121 6022

## Engage with Age

028 9073 5696

## Housing Rights Service

028 9024 5640

## NIE Networks

### Customer Helpline

0345 764 3643

## Northern Ireland Water

0345 744 0088

## NI Energy Advice

0800 111 4455

[nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk)

## Volunteer Now

028 9023 2020

## Welfare Reform Helpline

0808 802 0020



Action for Warm Homes  
Northern Ireland

# Contact NEA NI

Pat Austin

Director

Jamie Miller

Policy & Campaigns Officer

Nichola MacDougall

Training Officer

Hugh McVeigh

Project Coordinator

Jenny Gibson

Benefits Advisor

Stephanie Ward

Business Support Officer

Noel Rice

NEA NI Trustee

David Crothers ↘

Mimi McAlinden → NEA NI Advisory Group

Douglas McIlldoon ↗

## National Energy Action (NEA NI)

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