

The little book of energy

How to save energy and
reduce your bills



H HOME
HEAT
HELPLINE
0800 33 66 99

Keep Warm  Keep Well



Kym Marsh,
Coronation St actress

'It wasn't so long ago that I was a single mum living on benefits with two young kids so I remember how hard it can be to keep your family warm when every penny counts.

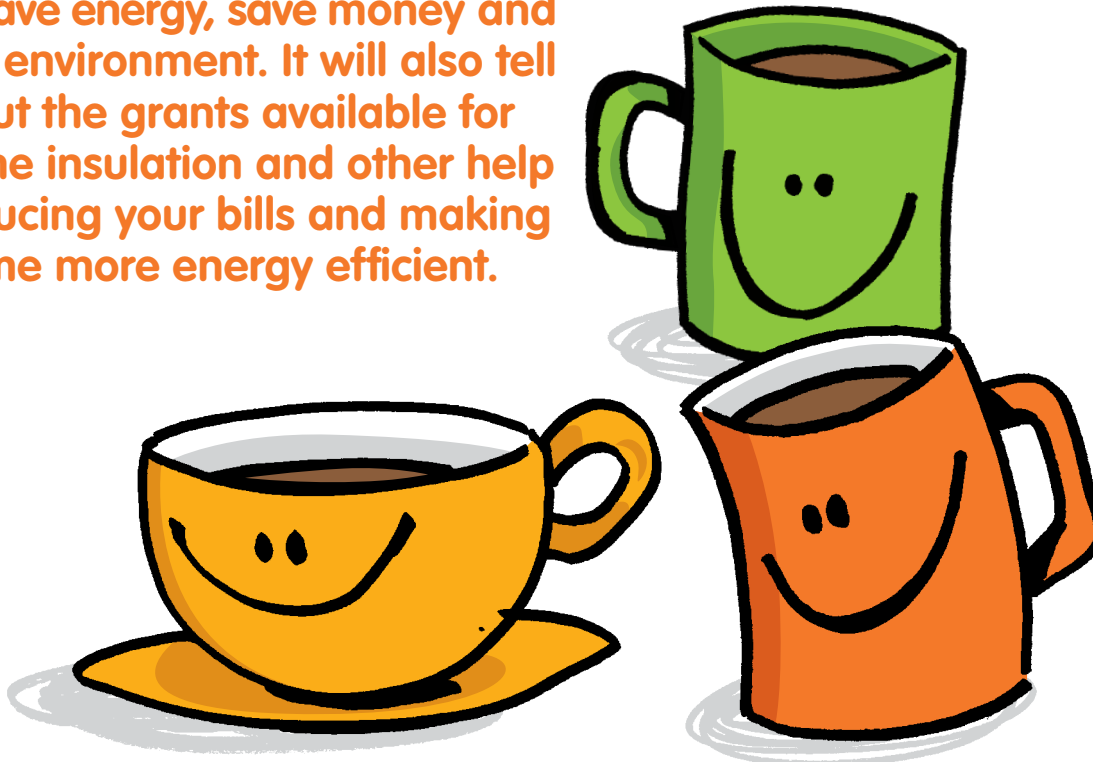
But this doesn't have to be the situation for families across the UK. Had I known about the Home Heat Helpline I would have picked up the phone immediately – which is why I encourage you to give them a call.'

Contents

- 2 Introduction**
- 4 The Home Heat Helpline**
 - Who are we?
 - What we do
 - Are you eligible for help?
 - The Home Heat Helpline gets results
- 10 Case Study: Irene Dixon**
- 12 Saving Energy**
 - Use less, Save more!
- 14 Take Charge**
 - Setting the Thermostat
 - Your Boiler
 - Insulation
- 18 Case Study: Kizzy Sheehan**
- 20 Hints, Tips and Advice**
 - Hot water
 - Radiators or Heaters
 - In the Kitchen
 - Keep the cold out and the warmth in
 - Light bulbs
 - And finally...
- 26 Case Study: Judith Cotterill**
- 28 Useful Contacts**

Introduction

Welcome to the Home Heat Helpline's guide to saving energy and reducing your bills. This guide will tell you about the simple steps we can all take to save energy, save money and help the environment. It will also tell you about the grants available for free home insulation and other help with reducing your bills and making your home more energy efficient.



Many of us are worried about the cost of our gas and electricity these days. The era of cheap energy is a thing of the past but at the same time we are using more and more energy.

Most of us know there are things we can do to save money on bills, but we're often uncertain about exactly what they are, how to go about them and whether we can afford to make these changes to our homes and lives.

This guide will tell you the simple steps you need to help cut the cost of your bills straightaway. For the elderly and people getting by on low incomes or benefits, energy costs are an even bigger issue. Many struggle through or go without when they really don't need to because they don't know where to turn for help.

The best place to start is the Home Heat Helpline. It's a free phone service that you can call yourself or on behalf of someone you care for, so why not get in touch today? We'll give you easy to understand, simple advice and we'll put you in contact with schemes and organisations that could make a real difference.

The Home Heat Helpline

The Home Heat Helpline provides 'fuel poor' and vulnerable customers with direct access to all the help and support that's available.

Who are we?

The Home Heat Helpline **0800 33 66 99** is a free phone service set up to tackle fuel poverty and help vulnerable energy customers worried about their bills. We help people access further information, schemes and services that will help them manage their energy costs and grants for home improvements that can reduce energy consumption in the future. The Helpline is primarily for people of pensionable age, families on low incomes and those with disabilities or long-term health conditions. If you're uncertain whether or not you qualify why not give us a call to find out?

The Home Heat Helpline provides 'fuel poor' and vulnerable customers with direct access to all the help and support that is available.

The Home Heat Helpline recognises that those most in need of help are sometimes those least able to access it. You don't have to be the bill payer to contact us. You can call on behalf of a relative, friend, client or someone you care about.

What we do

The Home Heat Helpline's Glasgow-based team of expert advisers will give you access to a range of services provided by all the major energy companies, including:

- Advice on reduced or 'social' tariffs which offer customers more affordable prices for their gas and electricity.
- Grants for free home insulation with no means testing for the over 70s.
- The Priority Service Register for customers with disabilities and special needs – among the services on offer are bills in Braille, large print and audio formats; meters moved to more convenient location, gas appliance safety checks and safety passwords so you know when a caller is from the gas or electricity company.
- Flexible payment options for customers in fuel debt.
- Benefits entitlement checks to see if you're missing out.

The disconnection safety net is also in place to ensure that no vulnerable customer will be knowingly disconnected, even if they are unable to pay their bill.

Claiming these benefits is easier than you might think. We'll tell you if you're likely to qualify and put you in contact with the right people to take it forward.

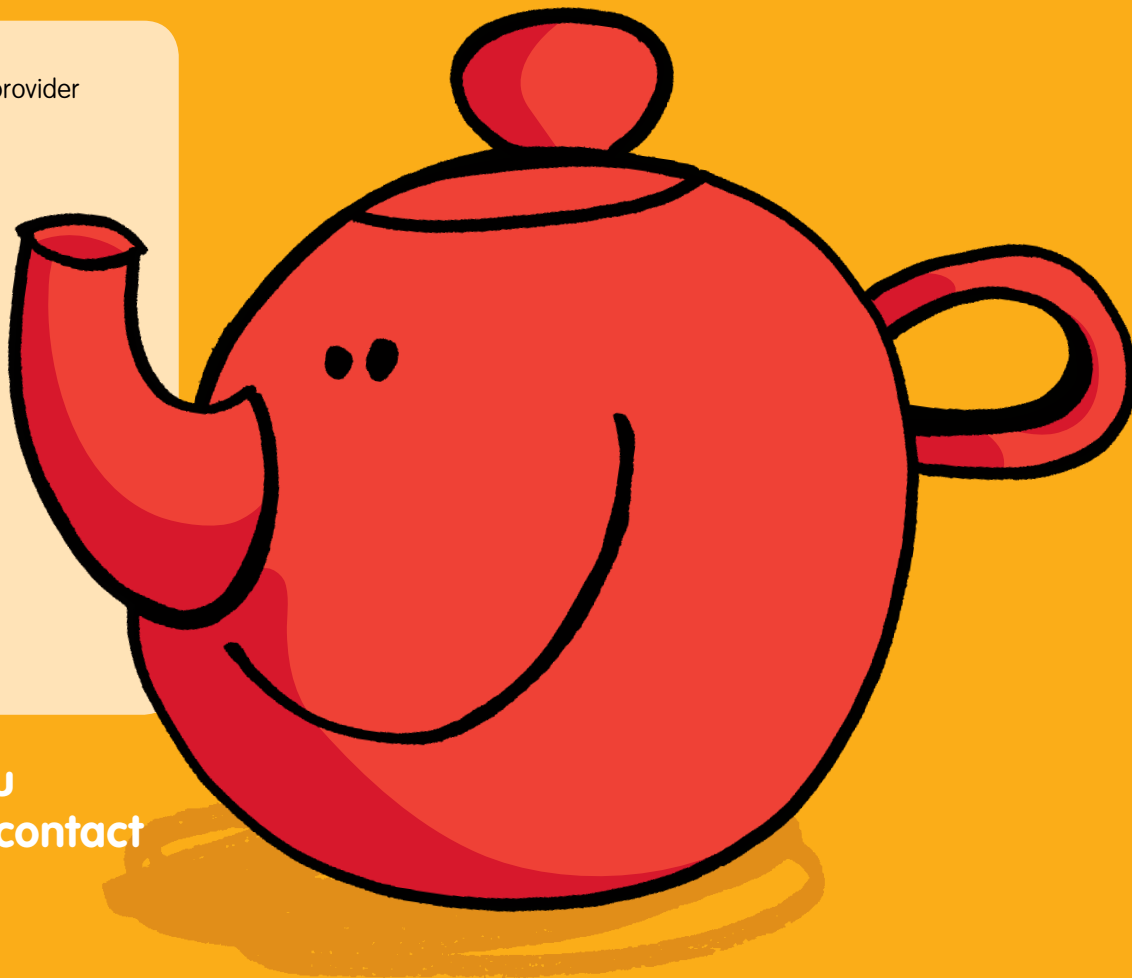
Are you eligible for help?

You may qualify for extra help from your energy provider if you're:

- Of pensionable age
- Disabled
- A family on low income
- Living with long-term health conditions
- Living on benefits

Each energy company uses a different system to decide who they can help. The most common way they do it is based on benefits including:

- Pension Credit
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit
- DLA (Disability Living Allowance)
- Attendance Allowance
- Child Tax Credit (earning less than £16,040)



If you're unsure whether you qualify for help or not then contact the Home Heat Helpline on 0800 33 66 99 to find out.

The Home Heat Helpline gets results

Since its creation, the Home Heat Helpline has received over 150,000 calls from across Britain. Nearly half of all callers reported that they had reduced their energy bills after calling us and many more were able to access benefits and grants after we'd spoken to them.

The Home Heat Helpline has also launched an online service where people can leave their contact details and receive a call back from an adviser at a time that suits them. The online service is available at www.homeheathelpline.org.uk and also features more information on what we do and some videos of people we've helped.

As well as providing direct help through grants and assistance for those most in need, the Home Heat Helpline also acts as a central point where you can find out about all the other support services that are available, including:


- Warm Front, a government funded service providing free insulation and replacement heating systems. This scheme is called the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) in Wales and the Energy Assistance Package in Scotland
- Energy Saving Trust Advice Centres
- Benefits teams at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Home Improvement Agencies such as Care & Repair

Nearly half of all callers reported that they had reduced their energy bills after calling us and many more were able to access benefits and grants after we'd spoken to them.



Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson
Winner of 16 Paralympic medals

It's important that people know where to get the advice they need to keep warm. The Home Heat Helpline is a free service for people wanting to be more efficient, and if you have an elderly relative or care for someone with a disability, you can even make the call on their behalf.



‘That money will really come in useful for items that I would not otherwise have been able to afford.’

Irene Dixon
Bridgend

I am registered disabled and suffer from arthritis so it's important that my husband and I keep the house as warm as possible during the winter months.

I've been receiving help from Care and Repair Wales, which supports elderly people. My carer advised me to call the Home Heat Helpline, to make sure that I was paying the correct amount for my fuel bills.

The person I spoke to at the helpline was very helpful and advised me about free insulation and reduced tariffs. She also carried out a full benefits check for me to make sure I was

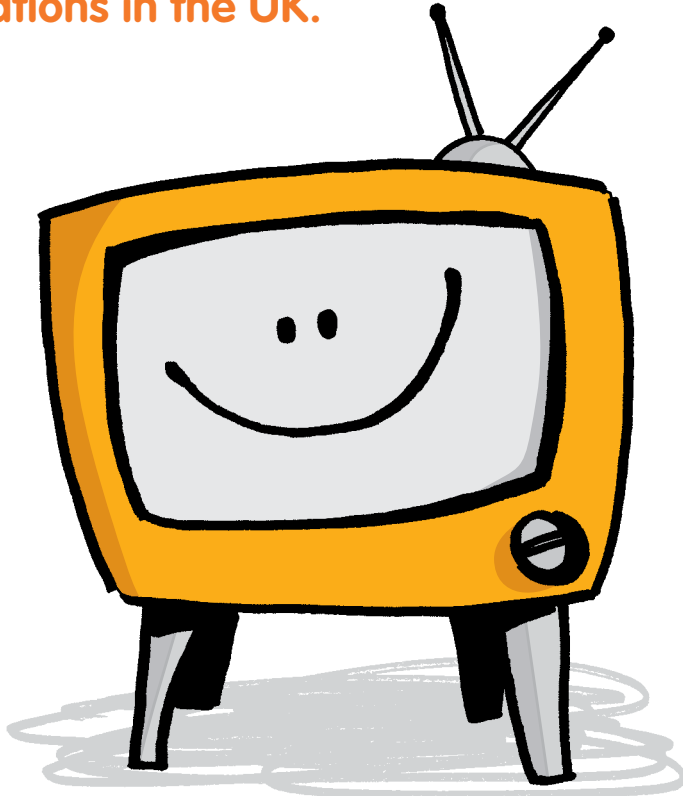
receiving all the benefits I'm entitled to. She said that my supplier might be able to give me a rebate of £85 off my bill, so I was put directly though to my supplier to discuss it.

A few days later I received a letter from my supplier, confirming that I would be receiving the £85 off my bill. That money will really come in useful for items that I would not otherwise have been able to afford.

The help and advice given to me by the Home Heat Helpline was really useful and I would definitely recommend it to any friends or relatives who may be in a similar position. It's a freephone number, so it's worth calling to check you're not missing out on anything you are entitled to.

Saving Energy

If we all turned off our TVs instead of keeping them on stand-by, we could shut down a couple of power stations in the UK.



Use less, Save more!

The days of cheap energy are over – so reducing our energy use is vital.

We can all take control of this situation by changing how we use energy in our homes. We don't have to live in the dark or stop using the heating. It's all about being more energy efficient. The positives are that by reducing our bills and saving cash, we're also helping the planet.

In Britain, our homes are responsible for over a quarter of the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions that harm our environment. Simple actions can considerably reduce our energy consumption and our bills, and help reduce climate change. The less energy we use, the less CO₂ is released, which benefits us all. And it's easy too. Most of the things we can do are common sense simple solutions.

Small changes that we can make each day can produce huge results. If we all turned off our TVs and other gadgets instead of keeping them on stand-by, for example, we could shut down a couple of power stations in the UK, with huge reductions in CO₂ emissions.

Turn lights off when you don't need them on, reduce the temperature of your washing machine, and don't use your dishwasher until it's fully loaded. Small actions like these can produce big results – it's all about knowing what we can do to have an immediate effect without compromising our quality of life.

Insulating our homes can make an even greater difference and, for those of us on low incomes, these solutions can be free, so there's no reason not to do it. For others, insulation is often available at reduced prices because it's subsidised by the major energy companies. And once it's done it'll carry on saving money in years to come.

Take Charge

Heating is the best place to start saving money. With two thirds of our energy bills spent on keeping warm in winter, getting it right could save hundreds of pounds a year.



Setting the Thermostat

Many of us keep our homes so warm we can wander round in short sleeves even on the coldest winter day. If you're used to having your home at 23°C or higher, try turning the thermostat down to 21°C in stages of one degree over a period of two to three weeks.

Consider fitting individual radiator or heater thermostats in bedrooms – it only costs a small amount of money and will help you set the heating to the right level in each room. It's also a good idea to switch off radiators in rooms you are not using and keep internal doors shut. Keep bedroom doors and the doors of little-used rooms tight shut. Otherwise you could be burning energy just to keep a spare room warm.

The elderly, disabled and families with young children need to take extra care in keeping warm in winter. Older people and those with disabilities or long-term health problems need more warmth but 18°C in the bedroom and 21°C elsewhere is a good place to start.

Even newborn babies actually shouldn't be kept too warm. A bedroom temperature of 16-20°C and a bathroom temperature of 21°C are fine.

Turning your thermostat down by only one degree centigrade can cut the cost of your heating by 10 per cent.

Many of us can get lazy when it comes to our boiler controls and thermostats. Instead of using timer settings we leave our heating on constantly and rely on the main thermostat to turn the temperature on and off.

It makes sense to set the heating to come on half an hour before we get up and to go off half an hour before bedtime. And if your home is properly insulated you'll use those heating controls even less. Well-insulated homes retain heat, and cool more slowly which means you don't need the heating on for so long.



Richard Wilson OBE
Star of TV show *One Foot in the Grave* and *Merlin*

I'm worried people are not getting the support they are entitled to on energy bills – whether it's pensioners, single parents or people with disabilities there are special rates, free insulation and wider help out there all for the taking. But people need to know what's available – that's why I am asking everyone who thinks they may qualify for support to call the free Home Heat Helpline today.

Your Boiler

If your boiler is more than 15 years old it should be replaced. Grants are available to help with the cost of getting a new one – ring the Home Heat Helpline on **0800 33 66 99** for advice.

Even energy efficient modern condensing boilers need some regular care and attention to stay at peak efficiency. Every six weeks check the system is at the correct pressure.

The boiler handbook will advise you – if you've mislaid it, instruction manuals are often available on manufacturers' websites.

It's important to get your boiler checked annually to make sure that you're not at risk from carbon monoxide poisoning. You can arrange this with your energy company or by contacting the Gas Safe Register of qualified engineers on **0800 408 5500** or visit **www.GasSafeRegister.co.uk** (The Gas Safe Register replaced CORGI as the register of qualified gas installers in April 2009).

If you rent your home then your landlord (whether they're a company, housing association or a private individual) must carry out a safety check on all gas appliances once a year. For more information on carbon monoxide risks see **www.co-bealarmed.com**

Insulation

Having enough insulation in your home can save you money throughout the year. If you have cavity walls you could cut your winter bills by up to 15 per cent by having them insulated. It's a quick and easy process.

Next check your loft insulation. Homes more than ten years old often have four to six inches of insulation, but modern standards call for a depth of at least 270mm (about ten inches). This too has the potential to cut your bills by up to 15 per cent.

Most energy companies give grants of around 50 per cent to almost everyone in Britain to have cavity wall and loft insulation installed.

Everyone over the age of 70 is entitled to free insulation from their energy company. Families on low incomes, people with disabilities and those with long-term health conditions may also qualify. Ring the Home Heat Helpline on **0800 33 66 99** to see if you're entitled – or if you know or care for someone who could benefit, you can call us on their behalf.

Setting the temperature levels correctly and having insulation sorted can help reduce heating bills by up to 40 per cent. But your energy savings don't have to stop there.

If you have cavity walls you could cut your winter bills by up to 15 per cent by having them insulated. It's a quick and easy process.





'It was nice to talk to someone who understood. It's changed our lives.'

Kizzy Sheehan
Leeds

Before I spoke to the Home Heat Helpline I didn't know where to turn to or what to do. My bills were out of control and I was getting into serious debt with the energy company. I ignored it for a long time, and then when I tried to do something about it I had a really frustrating time.

I've got three young kids – Sophie, who's at school, Tyler and Doante – and right now

I'm bringing them up on my own. It's a struggle to get by and I know a lot of young people like me find it hard to ask for help. As a single mum you feel like you're being judged and I wanted to prove that I could survive.

I would definitely say to other people to ring the Home Heat Helpline – especially younger people. The longer you leave it the harder it's going to get. It's only a phone call and it's not going to cost you anything, so why not?

Hints, Tips and Advice

1 Hot water

Keep your cool. Many people have their hot water temperature set too high. A temperature of 60°C is ample whether it comes from a combi-boiler or a hot water tank. Many systems don't offer such precise control, but you can always invest in a thermometer, run the hot water until it gets as hot as it can and fine tune accordingly.

A dripping hot tap is money down the drain and can waste as much as a bathtub full every couple of days.



For those with immersion heaters, don't turn it on until 45 minutes before you need hot water. Keeping a full tank hot all day can cost as much as a penny a minute.

Make sure your hot water tank is lagged with at least 75mm of insulation. Most have this now sprayed on by the manufacturer but a bare copper one wastes a staggering 75 per cent of the money you're spending on heating the water.

2 Radiators or Heaters

Use it – don't lose it. Make sure your radiators and heaters are not blocked by furniture or covered by curtains. If you have a radiator with a curtain draped over it, most of the heat will literally disappear out of the window. It's also possible to fit radiator foil behind radiators to reflect the heat back into the room, which will save energy.

If you have a radiator with a curtain draped over it, most of the heat will literally fly out the window.

3 In the Kitchen
Keep your freezer full. Did you know an empty freezer uses more power than a full one? As much as a third of your electricity bill goes on keeping frozen food frozen and running your fridge.

Economise by washing clothes at 30°C. Washing at 60°C costs roughly twice as much because you're using more energy to heat the water. Advances in detergents mean clothes can be cleaned just as well at lower temperatures.

Those 'half load' options on dishwashers and washing machines still use almost as much of the energy, water and detergent as a full load. It's always best to do a full load instead.

Allowing food to defrost in the fridge overnight cuts the fridge's energy consumption and uses less energy than defrosting in the microwave. But do check the packaging on ready meals and vegetables as some are best cooked from frozen.

Use the kettle to heat water for vegetables and de-scale it regularly. Only boiling as much water as you need in the kettle can save you money, but make sure you cover the filaments of electric kettles.



Use the kettle to heat water for vegetables and de-scale it regularly.

4 Keep the cold out and the warmth in
Draughts can be the bane of older houses, but ventilation is necessary to keep gas or open fires, gas heaters, cookers and boilers operating safely. Never block air vents or grilles even if you feel a draught coming through them.

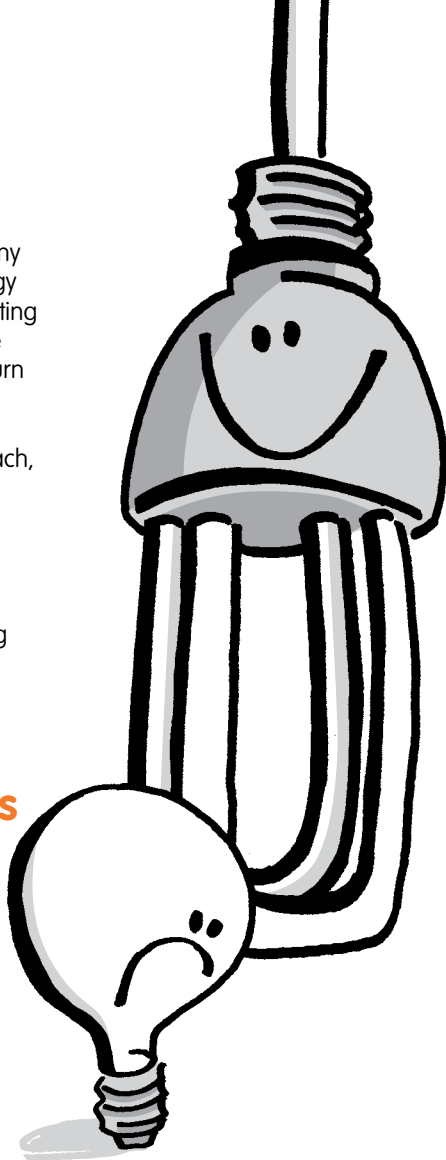
Instead, you can use draught-proofing kits available from DIY stores to block draughts around external doors and windows – and don't forget the letterbox!

If you're not using your chimney, you can get a chimney balloon fitted or have the top of your chimney capped, which can save you a huge amount of heat. Never light a fire with these devices in place. For further advice, contact a member of the National Association of Chimney Sweeps via www.chimneyworks.co.uk or by calling **01785 811 732**

5 Light bulbs
Let there be light. Many of us now have energy efficient light bulbs sitting in drawers or cupboards while we wait for the older type to burn out. These new light bulbs use up to 80 per cent less energy and can cost as little as 50p each, so it makes sense to replace them straightaway.

It's an urban myth that it takes more energy to switch on fluorescent tube or strip lighting than it uses in a day. If you're not using the room, then turn off the lights.

Traditional bulbs use 80% more energy than low energy light bulbs.



6 And finally...
Appliances left on standby can use as much as three quarters of the energy they use when they are fully switched on. The average house normally has at least eight appliances on standby wasting you money that you could easily save.

When you come to replace an appliance, check the energy efficiency rating. Over the life of a washing machine or fridge-freezer, buying an energy efficient 'A+' or 'A++' rated model could save you its purchase price in reduced energy bills.

Appliances left on standby can use as much as three quarters of the energy they use when they are fully switched on.





'I'm saving about £15 a month now, which will make a huge difference to me.'

Judith Cotterill,
Warwickshire

It was so nice when I called the Home Heat Helpline to actually speak to a real person who was glad to help instead of some voice telling me to press button something or other and wait in a queue for ten minutes.

I've had ME for the last 18 years now. Five years ago it became more severe and I had to give up work. I'm completely housebound and because of my lack of mobility and vertigo problems I receive Disability Living Allowance. I get by as best as I can on a modest budget.

It's absolutely vital to me that I keep warm as the cold can make my illness much worse. When I started to hear about the big price increases for fuel on the radio I began to get a little worried so when I saw the Home Heat Helpline number in the phonebook I thought I'd give them a call.

Useful Contacts

Age UK Advice	0800 169 65 65
Age Scotland Advice	0800 169 28 28
The Benefit Enquiry Line	0800 055 66 88
(Jobcentre Plus)	
Consumer Direct.....	08454 04 05 06
Energy Saving Trust Advice Centres	0800 512 012
(Free and Independent Advice)	
First Stop.....	0800 377 7070
(Advice for Older People)	
Gingerbread Single Parent Helpline	0808 802 0925
Shelter's free housing advice helpline	0808 800 4444

There are government funded grants to replace heating systems or install insulation. These schemes are known as:

- Warm Front (in England)..... **0800 316 2805**
 - HEES (in Wales)
 - Energy Assistance Package (in Scotland)
- (This service is accessed through the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centres)

For advice on keeping well in winter please visit the NHS Choices website: **www.nhs.uk/winterhealth**

The Home Heat Helpline is run by the Energy Retail Association and funded by the six major electricity and gas suppliers in Great Britain.

www.homeheathelpline.org.uk
www.nhs.uk/winterhealth