

Keeping Warm This Winter

Feel warmer at home with these simple, free or low cost tips

Wiltshire Wildlife Community Energy

1. Reduce heat loss

➢ The cheapest, easiest way to stop cold air coming in and keep heat in your home is to get rid of draughts

Check by feeling where cold air is coming in and warm air is escaping:		Checked
Doors & windows	- Block gaps at the bottom of doors and around windows using rolled-up towels or fill tights with clothes or dry rice - Use keyhole and letterbox covers and brush draft-excluders behind your letterbox and under front and back doors - Reduce air leaks around your windows and external doors using rubber draught proofing or foam strips (~£2 per m) - Sealant around windows goes over time and may need replacing – redo with silicone sealant	✓
Chimneys	- If you're not using a chimney, plug the hole with an inflatable chimney balloon or make a DIY one with balls of newspaper in an old pillow case or bag. *Take it out in summer so the air can circulate*	
Loft hatches	- Don't forget to insulate the loft hatch using modern polystyrene with fire retardant or fibrous insulation board - Use rubber draught proofing or foam strips around the edges of the hatch frame	
Floorboards & skirting boards	- Fill gaps with flexible fillers such as clear or brown silicone mastic, decorators' caulk or similar products - Using a rug on top of floorboards will make your home feel warmer and use thermal underlay under carpet	

- Extractor fan in your kitchen or bathroom to take damp, smelly air out? Check it has a cover on the outside to stop draughts coming in.
- Fill in any cracks in walls, around windows and gaps around fittings – you can use foam, putty, even tissue and cement or a hard-setting decorators' wall-filler on external walls. **Don't block up working air vents**.

➢ Use curtains to stop warm air escaping

- Close curtains when it's getting dark and tuck them behind radiators.
- Use thicker blinds and curtains, such as lined or thermal curtains if you can - ready-made thermal curtains cost from £15 new. You could sew thermal linings to your existing curtains using a simple tacking stich or attach them with Velcro. Shutters on windows can also help keep the heat in. A thick curtain across the inside of a front or back door can help stop heat being lost.

➢ Secondary glazing can reduce heat being lost through your windows

If you have single-glazed windows in your bedroom or living room, putting a second layer of cling-film traps a small layer of air which helps stop heat escaping - shrink it to fit your window frame using a hairdryer. Buy specialist secondary glazing film from £7 which will last longer.

You can get a layer of glass or plastic 'secondary glazing' made to fit inside your window frames as a cheaper alternative to double-glazing.

2. Increase warmth

If you are mainly in one room during the day you could use a room heater instead of the central heating. To heat a room for a few hours or more use a convector heater, for a quick blast of directional heat use a radiant heater.

This table from the Centre for Sustainable Energy's 'Room Heater' Advice sheet shows how much different electric heaters cost to run on the highest setting - heaters with a thermostat will turn off when they reach the set temperature, so they cost less over several hours.

A hot water bottle, thick cosy layers or a wool, thermal or heated blanket can all help you keep warm.

Running cost (per hour*) for different electric heaters

Bar fire	Convector heater	Oil-filled radiator	Fan heater	Halogen heater
Typical power rating 2kW 	Typical power rating 2kW 	Typical power rating 1.5kW 	Typical power rating 2kW 	Typical power rating 1.2kW 
Single-rate meter: 49p Economy 7 (night): 25p (day): 56p	Single-rate meter: 49p Economy 7 (night): 25p (day): 56p	Single-rate meter: 36p Economy 7 (night): 19p (day): 43p	Single-rate meter: 49p Economy 7 (night): 30p (day): 71p	Single-rate meter: 30p Economy 7 (night): 15p (day): 33p

*Running costs assumptions: Single-rate meter, 24p/kWh; Economy 7 (night), 12p/kWh; Economy 7 (day), 29p/kWh. To calculate this yourself times the heat output of your electric heater by your electric kWh unit cost.

➢ Radiators

- Furniture such as sofas or beds in front of radiators absorb the heat and stop the warm air circulating - move them!
- Don't cover radiators or dry clothes on them – dry them on an airer in the bathroom or with a dehumidifier to help remove the moisture.
- If your radiators take a long time to heat up, feel cold at the top or gurgle, 'bleed' them to get rid of air trapped inside. It's straightforward but you need a 'radiator valve key' costing about £1, an old towel to soak up water and a small bowl – see this guide for how to do it www.britishgas.co.uk/the-source/fix-it-yourself/how-to-bleed-a-radiator.html

➢ Reducing damp, condensation and mould

Damp air is created at home, mainly in kitchens and bathrooms, and costs more to heat. You need ways for it to escape so it doesn't cause problems such as mould in cold areas. Keep doors closed when you're cooking or showering and use extractor fans for 20 minutes after (they cost about 1p hour to run). Keep lids on saucepans and you can turn down the hob temperature and save money.

Leave a gap between furniture and the walls to let air circulate. Wipe down windows with condensation using a wiper blade or towel.

3. Keep costs down

➢ Heating - understanding your heating controls will help you use your heating system efficiently

What kind of heating do you have? Central heating? Night storage heaters? Electric convector heaters? Know how to use your type of heating effectively. The Centre for Sustainable Energy has help sheets for using heating controls on different systems including electric storage heaters which work best with a cheap 'off-peak' night rate tariff e.g. Economy 7 – www.cse.org.uk/my-home/.

Rooms:

- Many people are using their heating less. For central heating, set it to come on for 30 mins to warm up your home before you get up and turn it off 30 minutes before you leave the house or go to bed as the house will stay warm for a while. Most heating systems are cheaper to set to come on using a timer, or turn on when you need it, instead of leaving it on at a low temperature all day.

- If you can, turn your thermostat down by 1°C and put a warmer jumper on to cut your bill by £90 on average – 18°C in living areas should be enough for healthy adults, 21°C to 23°C for people who are very young, old or ill.

- If you have a gas, 'combi' boiler - one that does your heating and hot water so you don't have a separate tank to heat your hot water – the temperature for the water to the radiators is often set too high by default. You should have an option to turn it down on the front of your boiler to 60°C to save 6% or more energy and up to £65 year (you could even try 55°C) – check your boiler manual or see this online tool for how to do this: www.moneysavingboilerchallenge.com

- Your boiler will save energy and you'll cut costs, if you have thermostat dials on your radiators. Set ones in rooms you don't use much or just at certain times of day, to low but on or above the frost setting so the temperature doesn't drop below freezing.

- You could also turn off the pre-heat function (which pre-heats the water in your pipes to a certain temperature) especially if you're out all day – check your boiler manual.

Water:

- If you have a separate tank to heat up and store your hot water, use the controls or timer to heat it up once or twice a day (make sure it's heating up at night if you're on a cheap night rate tariff) - leaving it on all day will cost much more.

- Modern tanks are insulated on the inside but if yours isn't, use a British Standard Kitemark 'jacket' that's at least 80mm thick.

- Keep the warm in and use foam tubes to insulate pipes from the tank as a cheap way to reduce heat and energy loss by up to 75%.

➢ In the Kitchen

Cooking in a microwave is cheaper than in an oven, for example cooking a jacket potato in a microwave uses 25% energy compared to in an oven. A slow cooker is an energy efficient way to cook as it runs on low power, but may take several hours to cook – try batch cooking large amounts of the same meal, keeping some to eat another day, and make the most of the energy you're using.

Microwave	700 – 1,400 W	19 - 38p hour	Air fryer	1,400 – 1,800 W	16 – 32p hour
Grill/Oven	1,800 – 3,000 W	24 – 57p hour	Slow cooker	100 – 300 W	3 – 8p hour
Hob (per ring)	1,000 – 2,000 W	14 - 54p hour			

- Simmer rather than boil food when you're cooking to save money.
- Use a bowl in the sink for washing up to use less hot water.
- Don't overfill the kettle when you're boiling water – or could you boil more and use a thermos flask to keep it warmer for later?
- Put your fridge freezer where air can circulate and not near a radiator or a cooker where it'll have to work harder and cost more to run.

➢ Try changing how you do your clothes washing

Wash more clothes in a load and try a cooler setting at 30ºC to not waste energy and use less water and you could save £6 year (and use 57% less electricity) – your clothes will last longer too. It's a full load if you can still get your hand into the machine drum sideways, not flat. Could you do one less load a week? Use the Eco mode on washing machines and dishwashers to use less energy and less water.

Try drying your clothes on an airer by a slightly open window to let the damp out or use a dehumidifier near the airer to remove damp.

➢ Lights

Replace old light bulbs with energy efficient LED ones which use about half the energy of the spiral lightbulbs (and up to 90% less than old style bulbs) and give the same level of light, they also don't need replacing as often. Replacing halogen spotlights to LEDs could save you £45 a year.

It's better to turn lights off, no matter for how long - you could save £8 year doing this.

Use appliances that are energy efficient - this website explains how to check www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/home-appliances/. Avoid leaving devices on standby and unplug gadgets such as set-top boxes or games consoles so they don't add to your bill when not being used.

➢ In the Bathroom

- Towel dry your hair to reduce how long you need to use a hairdryer.
- If you can take a shower instead of a bath it could save around £30 a year on heating water.
- Electric showers guzzle energy – set a timer to try for a 4 minute shower! Cutting a minute off your shower could save £45 on energy bills (and you'd save more on water bills if you're on a meter).
- Using a water-saving shower head could save £65 year on average by reducing combined heating and water bills.
- See this handy guide for an idea of how much electricity different appliances at home use - a 10-minute shower will cost you 42p and an hour of tumble drying 68p - www.cse.org.uk/advice/how-much-electricity-am-i-using/

➢ Contact your energy supplier

- Take readings from your electricity or gas meter every 3 months and give them to your supplier so you get charged for what you're using – not what they estimate you're using. Make sure you're on the cheapest rate or tariff. Check if it's worth switching here www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/are-there-any-cheap-fixed-energy-deals-currently-worth-it/ and using an accredited price comparison website www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/switching-energy-supplier
- If you are in debt, you can make a plan with them. If you cannot afford the repayments your supplier has suggested you can ask for more time to pay – see the Ofgem Affordability Principles.
- If you have a health condition or have children under 5 at home, ask if you should be on their **Priority Services Register** – so that you get extra help, including if there's a power cut.

Increase your income and get help with debt

Find out about help available with your energy bills here www.nea.org.uk/get-help/additional-help/, including information on the Warm Home Discount Scheme and energy efficiency grants. Check www.turn2us.org.uk/ for benefits and other types of support you may be entitled to.

If you would like to speak to someone or do not have access to the internet, please call: **Citizens Advice Wiltshire** on **0808 278 7995, Citizens Advice Swindon** on **0808 278 7813, Age UK Wiltshire** on **0808 196 2424,** or **Warm and Safe Wiltshire** on **0800 038 5722** – they also have help sheets on specific energy topics on their website www.cse.org.uk/my-home/advice-projects/warm-and-safe-wiltshire/.

National Debtline – www.nationaldebtline.org/ or call Freephone **0808 808 4000** Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm and Saturday 9:30am to 1pm.

Step Change - online debt advice service www.stepchange.org/setting-expectations.aspx or speak to an advisor Tel: **0800 138 1111** Monday to Friday from 8am to 8pm and Saturday 9am to 2pm.

Tips to go further

Boiler check - Your boiler needs servicing ideally every 12 months to make sure it's running efficiently and safely, at a cost of between £60 and £120. If your boiler isn't working well, it will work harder and cost more to heat your home.

If you have a radiator on an outside or solid wall you can use **foil radiator panels** behind your radiators to reflect heat into the room. A pack of 2 sheets from Radflek www.radflek.com will fit 2 to 4 radiators and cost £19.99, or make some short-term ones using kitchen foil and card.

If your radiators don't have thermostatic valves so you can set them higher or lower, getting them installed could save £35 year.

Complete any maintenance which affects your home's energy loss such as a missing roof tile or broken door.

Insulation – don't lose out, 25% of heat is lost through the roof. Have loft insulation between 220mm and 270mm thick (different materials require different depths) to save between £20 and £35 per year on your heating bills. If your loft is easy to access, you could do it yourself using rolls of mineral wool that lie between the joists. Loft insulation for a terraced house costs around £300 to DIY and £900.

About 33% heat is lost through uninsulated walls. If your home was built after the 1920s, it probably has cavity walls. An installer can drill holes and inject insulating material such as polystyrene beads into the cavity to keep the heat in. This can cost £1,100 to £4,300, depending on the size of your home and save between £120 and £420 year. Use an installer registered by The Cavity Wall Insulation Self Certification scheme. Homes built since the 1990s usually already have cavity wall insulation - find out more www.cse.org.uk/advice/cavity-wall-insulation

If you receive certain benefits or your household income meets set criteria, you may qualify for free or grant-funded loft and cavity wall insulation or replacement boiler if yours is old or broken - contact Warm and Safe Wiltshire who can check if you're eligibile and refer you for a survey www.gov.uk/government/collections/find-energy-grants-for-you-home-help-to-heat.

You can insulate the ground floor which involves laying insulation on top of concrete floors, or mineral wool between the joists under suspended timber floors. Costing between £1,400 and £2,500 depending on the floor type and size of your home, it can save between £45 and £120 year.

If you live in a council or housing association home, social landlords have new responsibilities about damp or mould in your home, for details see https://housinghub.campaign.gov.uk/make-things-right/new-law/.

Estimated heat loss and costs are from The Energy Saving Trust, National Energy Action and Centre for Sustainable Energy unless otherwise indicated