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1 The current energy situation

Switching energy supplier or tariff has historically been a way to save money on bills, but energy price rises since 2021 have led to fewer deals being on offer than usual. This is starting to change as prices stabilise, so you may start to see more switching deals being advertised.

It may, however, be difficult to find a cheaper deal than your current tariff, or one you can easily switch to. Opting for a fixed-price tariff gives more certainty over bills but, depending on the market, may increase your costs overall.

Please note the remainder of this factsheet is subject to above. You should always seek impartial advice before switching, for example from the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline or Energy Advice Scotland. If you are struggling with the cost of energy and other essentials, see factsheet 1 *Help with heating costs*. In **Wales**, see factsheet 1w *Help with heating costs in Wales*.

The energy price cap

The energy price cap seeks to provide protection for households by setting a maximum amount that suppliers can charge per unit of energy. Bills are based on your actual energy usage, so you may pay more or less than the average price cap level. It is reviewed by Ofgem every three months, so is subject to change. To check the current price cap level, see the Ofgem website www.ofgem.gov.uk/energy-price-cap-explained

2 Introduction

This factsheet explains how to look for the best deal on your energy bills by switching *tariff* or supplier. Your tariff is the specific deal or plan you are on. If you have never switched or not switched for a while, you may be on *standard variable tariff*. Prior to the energy crisis this was often the most expensive tariff, but it may currently be the cheapest. Most other tariffs are fixed term, expiring after a year or two but these may be more expensive overall.

Who 'supplies' my energy?

Your home is connected to a network of pipes and cables that transport energy from where it is generated. Energy is delivered to your home by a *network operator* operators if you use both mains gas and electricity. Different network operators cover different geographical areas, so you cannot choose who delivers your energy.

You do not pay energy bills to your network operator. These are paid to *energy supplier* and you may have different suppliers for gas and electricity. Energy suppliers buy gas and electricity and sell it to you. You can choose who supplies your energy, meaning you can shop around for the best deal.

The distinction is important because network operators and energy suppliers have different functions. Contact your gas or electricity network operator if your supply is interrupted and your energy supplier if you want to talk about bills or are threatened with disconnection. Find out who your network operator is by contacting the Energy Networks Association.

Vulnerable customers

Energy suppliers and network operators have registers of customers who need extra support because they are in a vulnerable situation. This can

5.5 Green tariffs

Green tariffs either claim that some, or all, of the energy you buy comes from renewable sources, or contribute to environmental schemes. Check the tariff to see whether it is using 100% renewable energy, or a mix.

5.6 Feed-in tariffs

A feed-in tariff offers guaranteed cash payments to households who produce their own electricity at home using renewable technologies such as solar panels or wind turbines. You are paid for the energy you generate and for any surplus energy you export to the grid.

See the Energy Saving Trust website:

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/renewable-energy/electricity/solar-panels/smart-export-guarantee-and-feed-tariffs In **Scotland**, call Home Energy Scotland on 0808 808 2282.

6 How to find a deal and switch

The recent rise in energy prices means fewer tariffs have been on offer but switching deals are being advertised again now. It is important to

seek imarT/F1 1rETQq92 reW*nBT/F1 12 Tf1 0 0 1 56.664 485.35 Tm0 g0 G[s7/F1 9.96 Tf1 0 0 1 479

For some deals, you start the switching process by clicking a link on the website. This means the website contacts the supplier on your behalf to arrange the switch. For others, you must contact the supplier yourself.

Many of the best offers are found online. If you do not have access to a computer, your local library may offer free internet access. If you use a public computer, be careful with personal information. Do not leave your computer unattended and check nobody is watching over your shoulder.

6.2 Ofgem-accredited websites

www.energylinx.co.uk

Tel: 0800 849 741 0741 0741

If you enter into an energy contract, the supplier must send you a written copy or confirmation of your agreement within a reasonable period. You should read this carefully to check everything you agreed is included and the deal is appropriate for you. Speak to an adviser immediately if you have any concerns, as you have limited time to cancel.

6.4 Door-to-door sales

Few energy suppliers sell contracts on the doorstep. If a salesperson calls at your home trying to sell gas or electricity, follow these guidelines:

Ask them for **identification** all salespeople must carry this.

If you are in **any doubt**, check they are who they say they are. Ask which company they are from and get the company telephone number from directory enquiries. Do not get it from the caller.

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7.1 The Energy Switch Guarantee

The trade association *Energy Switch Guarantee* This is a list of switching commitments that participating suppliers agree to adhere to. They are regularly checked for compliance.

ask them if they have signed up. A full list of participating suppliers is at www.energy-uk.org.uk/our-work/energy-switch-guarantee/

The commitments are:

- 1 All suppliers use the same wires and pipes, so supply is not interrupted.
- 2 The switching service is free.
- 3 The switch takes no more than five working days from the date your new supplier receives your completed application.
- 4 Your new supplier will not need to visit your home to complete the switch unless you agree otherwise.
- 5 Your new supplier arranges the switch, including contacting your current supplier to let them know you are leaving.
- 6 Your new supplier sends details of your new supply agreement for you to check and you have 14 days to change your mind. If you cancel in this time, you stay with your current supplier.
- 7 Your new and current suppliers work together to make sure you are not charged twice for the same energy.
- 8 If there are problems making the switch, your new supplier contacts you as soon as possible and is responsible for putting the matter right.
- 9 Your current supplier sends a final bill no later than six weeks after the switch.
- 10 If your current supplier owes you money, this is refunded no later than 14 days after sending you the final bill.

Some commitments are legal requirements or Ofgem licence conditions so apply to all suppliers, not just those signed up to the Guarantee. For example, the 14- *cooling-off period* obligation to complete a switch within five working days is an Ofgem licence condition.

Picking a supplier who has signed up should give you confidence that switching will be hassle-free and any problems will be resolved promptly.

Compensation for problems with switching

If your new supplier takes longer than five working days to switch you, you are entitled to £30 compensation.

You are also entitled to £30 compensation if your old supplier fails to refund a credit balance within 10 working days of your final bill.

If not compensated within 10 working days, you get a further £30.

8 Collective switching

If you do not want to shop around for an energy deal, you could try collective switching. This is where a third-party organisation, such as a charity, trade union, or local authority, negotiates with suppliers on behalf of a large group of customers. To do this, you must register your interest with a scheme and provide details of how much you pay for gas and electricity.

Check before registering if

12 Frequently asked questions

12.1 Can I switch if I rent my property?

Your supplier cannot prevent you from switching if you are a prepayment customer and have arrears of less than £500 for gas and £500 for electricity.

12.5 I live in a remote area – can I switch?

Some remote parts of the UK are supported by a single energy supplier and there is no option other than to remain with them. However, you can look at other ways of reducing your energy bills, such as ensuring your home is energy efficient.

You might consider alternative sources of energy, for example, green or renewable energy. For information on financial help with installing low carbon heating systems, see factsheet 1 *Help with heating costs*. In Wales, see factsheet 1w, *Help with heating costs in Wales*.

12.6 I live in a park home – can I switch?

If you have your own contract with an energy supplier, you should be able to switch without restriction. However, you should check your pitch agreement first to see if it says anything about informing the site owner or switching back at a later date. Seek advice if the agreement contains any terms prohibiting you from switching.

Most park home residents do not have individual contracts with suppliers and pay the site owner for their energy instead. If you are in this position, your options are more limited. You may be able to convince the site owner to shop around for a better deal, but this is at their discretion. You have one.

There is a limit on how much a site owner can charge you for gas or

Useful organisations

Citizens Advice

England or Wales www.citizensadvice.org.uk, Scotland www.cas.org.uk
In England telephone 0800 144 8848
In Wales telephone 0800 702 2020
In Scotland telephone 0800 028 1456

National network of advice centres offering free, confidential, independent advice, face to face or by telephone.

Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline (England and Wales)

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/if-you-need-more-help-about-a-consumer-issue/
Telephone helpline 0808 223 1133 Mon-Fri 9am-5pm
Welsh telephone helpline 0808 223 1144 Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

Citrus Switch

www.citrusenergy.co.uk/citrus-switch/
Telephone 0800 221 8089 (freephone)

A telephone service designed to make switching energy supplier easy.

Energy Advice Scotland

www.energyadvice.scot/
Telephone 0808 196 8660

Provide advice and information if you have an energy enquiry or want to complain about your supplier or have problems with your energy bills.

Energy Networks Association

www.energynetworks.org/
Telephone 020 4599 7700, for emergencies 0800 111 999 (gas or carbon monoxide leak) or 105 (electricity emergency or power cut)

Industry body for gas and electricity transmission and distribution network operators. C

Energy Saving Trust

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

Telephone 0808 808 2282 (Scotland only)

Offers independent and impartial advice on saving energy and cutting bills. Their telephone advice service is only available in Scotland, via the Home Energy Scotland helpline (see below). In England and Wales visit www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency

Energy UK

www.energy-uk.org.uk/

Telephone 020 7930 9390

The trade association for the UK energy industry with over 100 members.

GOV.UK

www.gov.uk

Government website with information on the Warm Home Discount scheme and other energy issues.

Home Energy Scotland

www.homeenergyscotland.org/

Telephone 0808 808 2282

Scottish Government funded advice service that provides information and advice on saving energy and reducing energy bills.

The Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem)

www.ofgem.gov.uk/

Telephone 020 7901 7295

Regulator for gas and electricity markets, including suppliers and network operators.

Age UK

Age UK provides advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK Advice line, publications and online. Call Age UK Advice to find out whether there is a local Age UK near you, and to order free copies of our information guides and factsheets.

Age UK Advice

www.ageuk.org.uk

0800 169 65 65

Lines are open seven days a week from 8.00am to 7.00pm

In Wales contact

Age Cymru Advice

www.agecymru.org.uk

0300 303 4498

In Northern Ireland contact

Age NI

www.ageni.org

0808 808 7575

In Scotland contact

Age Scotland

www.agescotland.org.uk

0800 124 4222

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