



10th January 2021

Worried about higher energy costs and suppliers going bust? Citizens Advice across Oxfordshire share some tips.

The cost of wholesale gas, which we use to heat most of our homes and to generate much of our electricity, has increased by 250% in the past year, and 70% since last August. It is also set to increase again in April, when the regulator reviews the cap on prices. Citizens Advice is asking the Government to **provide emergency grant support**, to help people particularly affected by the rising cost of living.

How you can reduce your energy bills

There are ways to reduce how much electricity and gas you use. For example, you can:

- draught-proof your windows and doors
- use your tumble dryer less– if you have one, try to dry your clothes outside or by an open window instead
- run your washing machine at 30 degrees and make sure you wash a full load when you can
- use LED or other energy-efficient light bulbs
- turn off plug sockets at the wall if you're not using them
- close your curtains in the evening to keep in heat when it's cold
- make sure your fridge is set between 3 and 5 degrees and defrost your freezer regularly
- replace a showerhead to use less water and spend less time in the shower
- boil only the amount of water you need in your kettle.

If your energy supplier has gone bust

You'll still have gas and electricity if your energy supplier goes out of business. The energy regulator, Ofgem, will move you to a new supplier. This should happen within a few weeks. Wait for your new supplier to contact you. They'll explain what will happen with your account. Contact your new supplier if you don't hear from them within two weeks.

Citizens Advice across Oxfordshire is here to help

Citizens Advice can help you understand your energy bills, support you if you want to switch and calculate the savings you might make. If you've fallen behind on bill payments, the charity can advise on ways to reduce your debt by budgeting or trying a new payment scheme.

Teresa Archer, Chief Officer at Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire said:

"We know this is an extremely worrying time for many. With the loss of the £20 per week Universal Credit uplift and energy companies predicting significant increases, we encourage

those people who are in debt or are struggling to budget to get in touch so we can help them through these challenging times.”

Chris O’Hare, Chief Officer at Citizens Advice Oxford added:

“It’s so often those with the least who bear the brunt of these crises. With the fuel price hike, we are seeing working families in Oxford having to choose between food or heating, and older people, coping with health issues, who are struggling to heat their homes as the temperatures fall.”

CAWO can also check your benefit entitlements and help you to claim them if you're eligible. There are several helpful schemes like the [Priority Services Register](#) and the [Warm Home Discount](#) which saves £140 a year if you are eligible.

Consumer Service if you are having problems

The Citizens Advice [consumer service](#), a free advice helpline for people having consumer problems is a vital part of the charity’s work as the consumer advocate for energy. If you’re in need of specialist support, you’ll be referred to the Extra Help Unit.

Contact Citizen Advice for advice on www.caox.org.uk