



Cymru

STAY WARM FOR LESS: FAMILY GUIDE TO CUTTING HEATING COSTS AND STAYING SAFE THIS WINTER

Home-Start Cymru provides essential support to families, ensuring they have access to practical and emotional support as well as financial advice, energy-saving guidance, and home safety measures, including carbon monoxide detectors.

Through its network of volunteers and expert staff, Home Start Cymru works closely with families across Wales to **improve well-being and create a secure home environment.**

Supported by Wales & West Utilities we have designed this information booklet to help families stay warm and safe during the winter months.

The initiative provides practical solutions to reduce heating costs, improve energy efficiency, and access financial assistance.

This guide offers valuable information on available support, including energy funding, benefit entitlements, and free safety resources.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRACTICAL WAYS TO CUT HEATING COSTS - PAGES 3-7
**ENERGY-SAVING TIPS SPECIFICALLY FOR FAMILIES WITH
BABIES & TODDLERS - PAGES 8-10**
**SMART WAYS TO KEEP A RENTED HOME WARM & EFFICIENT -
PAGE 11-12**
CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY - PAGE 13
PRIORITY SERVICES REGISTER (PSR) - PAGE 14
CHECK YOUR BENEFIT ENTITLEMENTS - PAGE 15
ACCESS ENERGY FUNDING - PAGE 16
SAVE MONEY WITH TARIFF SWITCHING - PAGE 17
QUICK ACCESS GUIDE FOR FAMILIES - PAGES 18-19

Improve Energy Efficiency

Making small adjustments at home can help you save energy and reduce bills. Simple behavioural changes and cost-effective improvements can make a big difference:

Additional Tips to Stay Warm & Save Energy:

1. Batch Cooking & Efficient Meal Planning

Why it helps: Cooking in batches reduces oven and hob use, saving gas and electricity. It also cuts food waste, which helps with overall household budgeting.

How to do it:

- Plan meals in advance to avoid using the oven multiple times a day.
- Cook in bulk and freeze portions to reheat in the microwave (which is more energy-efficient than using the oven).
- Use slow cookers and air fryers, which use less energy than traditional ovens.
- Keep lids on pots while cooking to retain heat and reduce cooking time.

Radiator Reflectors & Furniture Placement

Why it helps: Heat can be lost if radiators are placed against external walls. Reflectors bounce heat back into the room, reducing wasted energy.

How to do it:

- Install radiator reflector panels behind radiators to push heat into the room instead of being absorbed by walls.
- Move furniture away from radiators—a sofa or bed in front of a radiator absorbs heat, making the room colder and leading to higher energy use.

Use Zoned Heating & Smart Thermostats

Why it helps: Heating all rooms at the same time wastes energy, especially if some rooms are unused.

How to do it:

- If possible, only heat rooms that are in use—keep doors closed to trap warmth.
- Encourage children to spend more time in communal areas like the living room, so fewer rooms need to be heated.
- If eligible, apply for grants for smart thermostats, which can regulate temperatures per room and lower heating costs.

Insulating Hot Water Pipes & Using a Shower Timer

Why it helps: Water loses heat while traveling through uninsulated pipes, making boilers work harder. Showers use significant energy and water, increasing costs.

How to do it:

- Wrap exposed pipes with cheap foam insulation to keep water hotter for longer.
- Encourage children to use a shower timer (many water companies provide free ones) to reduce hot water use.
- If you have a hot water tank, insulate it with a tank jacket to keep water warm longer and reduce reheating.

Layering & Bedtime Warmth Hacks

Why it helps: Many families turn up the heating at night to keep children warm, but small changes can help them stay warm without extra heating costs.

How to do it:

- Dress in layers (thermal vests, socks, and hoodies retain body heat better than turning the heating up).
- Tuck curtains behind radiators in the evening to prevent heat escaping through windows.
- Use hot water bottles or microwaveable wheat bags instead of heating whole rooms overnight.
- If children struggle with cold nights, layer blankets instead of using a thicker duvet—layers trap heat more efficiently.

Free Energy Audits & Local Council Support

Why it helps: Some councils and energy providers offer free home energy checks that help identify where energy is being wasted.

How to do it:

- Contact your local council or energy provider to see if they offer a free home energy assessment.
- Some charities offer free home insulation, boiler checks, and LED lightbulbs—ask Citizens Advice or Home-Start Cymru for guidance.
- Apply for boiler upgrade schemes or grants if your heating system is old and inefficient.

Smart Plug Timers for Electronics

Why it helps: Many appliances still use energy when turned off (standby mode). Smart plug timers automatically switch off devices to prevent energy waste.

How to do it:

- Set up smart plug timers to turn off TVs, game consoles, and WiFi routers overnight.
- Use socket timers to ensure children's night lights or electric blankets switch off automatically.
- Encourage children to unplug chargers when devices are fully charged—phone chargers still use energy when left plugged in.

Low-Energy Laundry Habits

Why it helps: Washing and drying clothes consume large amounts of energy—adjusting laundry habits can cut costs significantly.

How to do it:

- Reduce washing machine use by waiting for full loads instead of washing small loads frequently.
- Use a laundry rack instead of a tumble dryer—tumble drying is one of the biggest energy drains in a home.
- If using a tumble dryer, add a dry towel inside—this reduces drying time by absorbing excess moisture.

Solar-Powered Outdoor Lights & Battery Use

Why it helps: Families often use nightlights, garden lights, or security lights that consume unnecessary electricity.

How to do it:

- Use solar-powered garden lights instead of electric-powered security lights.
- Swap plug-in nightlights for battery-operated LED nightlights.
- Consider rechargeable batteries for children's toys instead of single-use ones.

Using Libraries & Community Warm Hubs

Why it helps: Instead of using heating at home, families can spend time in warm community spaces, reducing home energy use.

How to do it:

- Many libraries and community centres offer warm spaces, books, and activities for families, helping to lower heating costs.
- Some local charities provide free hot meals or snacks for families in warm hubs.
- Find local "warm banks" through your council's website.

ENERGY-SAVING TIPS SPECIFICALLY FOR FAMILIES WITH BABIES & TODDLERS

Families with young children use more energy due to heating, washing, and night-time needs.

Here are tailored ways to save money while keeping little ones warm and safe:

Keeping Babies Warm Without Overusing Heating

- **Layer Clothing Instead of Turning Up the Thermostat**

- Babies regulate temperature better in layers (vest + sleepsuit + sleeping bag) than a thick duvet.
- Use sleeping bags with TOG ratings to match the room temperature—this reduces the need for extra heating.
- Socks and mittens can prevent heat loss at night.

- **Safe Room Heating at Night**

- Avoid electric heaters, which can be expensive and unsafe around babies.
- If using a heater, set it on a timer so it doesn't run all night.
- Close bedroom doors to trap heat in baby's room.

Reduce Energy Costs from Baby Bottles & Feeding

- **Boil Water Efficiently**

- Instead of re-boiling water for each bottle, boil water once, store it in a flask, and use it throughout the day.
- If using a kettle, only boil the amount needed.

- **Use Insulated Bottles for Warm Milk**

- If your baby drinks warm milk, use a thermos flask to keep it warm instead of reheating multiple times (this does not apply to formula)

Washing Baby Clothes & Reusable Nappies Efficiently

- **Wash Clothes at Lower Temperatures**

- Babies go through multiple outfit changes daily—washing at 30°C saves energy.
- Use quick wash settings if clothes aren't heavily soiled.

- **Maximise Drying Efficiency**

- Hang clothes near a radiator but don't block it—this traps heat and makes radiators less effective.
- Use clothes airers with a fan underneath for faster drying without a tumble dryer.

ENERGY-SAVING TIPS SPECIFICALLY FOR FAMILIES WITH BABIES & TODDLERS

Energy-Saving Nightlights & Baby Monitors

- **Use Low-Energy Nightlights**
 - Choose battery-powered or plug-in LED nightlights, which use 90% less energy than traditional ones.
- **Turn Off Baby Monitors When Not Needed**
 - Many parents leave baby monitors on all the time—switching them off when baby is awake can save power.

Keeping Bath Time Warm & Cost-Effective

- **Trap Warm Air in the Bathroom**
 - Close the door before running the bath to trap steam and warmth.
 - If using a bath heater, switch it off as soon as the room is warm.
- **Reduce Water & Heating Costs**
 - Use a baby bath instead of filling the whole tub—this cuts water use significantly.
 - Reuse bath water for houseplants instead of letting it go to waste.

SMART WAYS TO KEEP A RENTED HOME WARM & EFFICIENT

If you're renting, making big energy efficiency upgrades (like insulation or double glazing) may not be possible. Here are simple, landlord-friendly ways to save energy:

Temporary Insulation for Windows & Doors

- **Use Bubble Wrap on Windows**

- If there are single-glazed windows, bubble wrap acts as insulation—simply spray water on the window and press the wrap in place.
- This helps keep heat inside, especially in winter.

- **Use Temporary Draught-Proofing Strips**

- Self-adhesive foam strips around windows and doors block cold air (cheap and removable).
- Use draft excluders or even rolled-up towels at the bottom of doors.

Portable & Low-Cost Heating Hacks for Renters

- **Use Heat Reflectors on Radiators**

- If radiators are on external walls, heat escapes outside. Adding foil behind radiators bounces heat back into the room, reducing heating needs.

- **Zone Heating to Only Warm Rooms in Use**

- Focus on heating the living room and bedrooms and close doors to unused rooms.
- Encourage children to spend more time in communal areas, reducing the need for heating multiple rooms.

SMART WAYS TO KEEP A RENTED HOME WARM & EFFICIENT

Low-Energy Lighting Solutions for Renters

- **Ask Your Landlord for LED Bulbs**
 - Some landlords provide energy-saving LED bulbs—they use 90% less energy than traditional bulbs.
- **Use Motion-Sensor Lights**
 - If your kids forget to turn off lights, consider using plug-in motion-sensor bulbs that automatically switch off when no movement is detected.

Renter-Friendly Ways to Reduce Water & Heating Bills

- **Ask Your Landlord for a Smart Meter**
 - Smart meters help you track usage and identify energy waste.
- **Install a Shower Timer & Low-Flow Shower Head**
 - Some water suppliers offer free energy-saving shower heads to reduce hot water use.
 - A four-minute shower can save £70 per year compared to longer showers.

Energy Supplier Help for Renters

- **Apply for Prepayment Meter Credit**
 - If on a prepayment meter, some energy suppliers offer emergency credit for struggling households.
- **Check if Your Landlord Qualifies for Free Energy Upgrades**
 - Some landlords can apply for government grants to upgrade heating, insulation, or windows—ask them to check schemes like the ECO4 grant.

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is a serious risk in homes with faulty gas appliances. Protect your family by learning how to stay safe.

What Are the Risks?

- Carbon monoxide is a silent, deadly gas with no smell, taste, or colour.
- Common symptoms of poisoning include headaches, dizziness, nausea, confusion, and shortness of breath.
- Prolonged exposure can lead to unconsciousness or death.

How to Stay Safe

- Get your boiler and gas appliances serviced annually.
- Ensure good ventilation in rooms with gas appliances.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector— Wales & West Utilities provides free carbon monoxide alarms for families to help keep you safe. Home Start Cymru can help you access a free one. [Fill out this form](#) for your free detector.

What if I live in Social Housing?

- Social housing properties are regularly monitored for safety and should already have CO alarms installed.
- However, CO alarms can become faulty, so regular testing is important.
- If you suspect a gas leak or faulty appliance, report it immediately.
- If your property does not have a CO alarm, call your Local Authority to report this.

PRIORITY SERVICES REGISTER (PSR)

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is a free service designed to offer additional support to vulnerable households, including the elderly, disabled, and those with medical conditions that rely on electricity for essential medical equipment.

Benefits Include:

- Priority reconnection during power cuts, ensuring those who are most vulnerable get help first.
- Free annual gas safety checks to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide leaks and other hazards.
- Accessible billing options, including large print, braille, and nominee schemes where a trusted person can manage your bills on your behalf.
- Advanced notice of planned power cuts for those reliant on electrical medical equipment.
- Extra support during emergencies, such as alternative heating or cooking facilities if your supply is disrupted.

Who Can Register for The PSR? Here are the eligible categories:

- Pensionable age
- Chronic/serious illness
- Disabled Mental Health Children under 5
- Developmental condition
- Dementia(s)/Cognitive impairment
- Unable to communicate in English
- Young adult household 18 and under

Home Start Cymru can assist you with PSR registration—contact us for help filling out the form. Signing up is free and can provide invaluable assistance during emergencies. The Priority Services Register (PSR) is a free service offering extra support for vulnerable households.

Benefits Include:

- Priority reconnection during power cuts.
- Free annual gas safety checks.
- Accessible billing options.

Home Start Cymru can assist you with PSR registration—contact us for help filling out the form if you need support.

CHECK YOUR BENEFIT ENTITLEMENTS

Financial support may be available to help with your bills. It is essential to check what you may be entitled to, as many benefits and support schemes are underclaimed. Benefits can help cover heating costs, rent, and essential household expenses.

Types of Benefits You May Be Eligible For:

- **Universal Credit** – Financial support for low-income households and those out of work.
- **Pension Credit** – Extra financial help for pensioners on low incomes.
- **Personal Independence Payment (PIP)** – Assistance for individuals with disabilities or long-term health conditions.
- **Child Benefit** – Support for families with dependent children.
- **Housing Benefit** – Help with rent costs for eligible low-income households.
- **Council Tax Reduction** – Assistance for those struggling to pay council tax bills.
- **Cold Weather Payment** – Extra support during very cold winter periods for eligible individuals.

How to Check Your Entitlement:

- **Turn2Us Benefit Calculator:** Identify benefits & local schemes.

[Use the Calculator](#) - Click Here

- **Turn2Us Advice Finder:** Find local advisors on financial support.

[Find Advisors](#) - Click here

- **Citizens Advice:** Speak to an advisor for help with applications and eligibility.

Many benefits require an application process, so it is advisable to check eligibility as soon as possible and seek guidance if needed. Financial support may be available to help with your bills.

ACCESS ENERGY FUNDING

Help is available for families who need assistance with their energy bills.

Various funding schemes can provide financial assistance:

- Grants and schemes are available for low-income and vulnerable households.
- Some suppliers offer grants to help clear energy debt.
- Government-backed programs, such as the Warm Home Discount, provide extra financial relief.
- Additional funding may be available through local councils or charitable organisations.

Find out what's available through Turn2Us or your energy provider.

Turn2Us Advice Finder: Find local advisors on financial support.

[Find Advisors](#) - Click here

SAVE MONEY WITH TARIFF SWITCHING

Many households are overpaying for energy. Switching to a better tariff can help you save money:

- Compare energy suppliers regularly to ensure you are on the best deal.
- Fixed tariffs often offer stable, lower prices compared to variable rates.
- Check if your energy provider offers social tariffs for low-income households.
- Use Ofgem-approved comparison websites to compare deals and switch easily:

- o **Ofgem Energy Compare**
- o [Uswitch](#)
- o **MoneySuperMarket**

Contact your current supplier to see if they can offer a better deal before switching. Many households are overpaying for energy. Switching to a better tariff can help you save money:

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- Use Ofgem-approved comparison websites to compare deals and switch easily.
- Contact your current supplier to see if they can offer a better deal before switching.

QUICK ACCESS GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

Get a Free Carbon Monoxide Alarm

Wales & West Utilities: Provides free carbon monoxide alarms for families to help keep you safe.

[Find Out More](#)

Check Your Benefit Entitlements

Turn2Us Benefit Calculator: Identify benefits & local schemes.

[Use the Calculator](#)

Turn2Us Advice Finder: Find local advisors on financial support.

[Find Advisors](#)

Maximise Government Support

If You're Homeless or at Risk
Gov.uk Support Finder: Search for local authority help. [Visit Gov.uk](#)

Shelter Cymru: Housing advice & support. Call 08000 495 495 or [visit Shelter Cymru](#).

Plan Your Budget Wisely

Free Budget Planner: Get a clear picture of your income & expenses.

[Use the Planner](#)

QUICK ACCESS GUIDE CONTINUED

Claim Winter Fuel Payments

For households with someone over State Pension age on a qualifying benefit.

[Check Eligibility](#)

Get Extra Help for Energy Bills Winter 24/25

Winter 2024/25 Extra Help Schemes are available for support.

[Explore Options](#)

Winter Fuel & Cold Weather Payments:

Check eligibility through benefit calculator.

[Learn More](#)

Get More Advice & Support

Citizens Advice: Find local services or talk online.

[Find Help](#)

National Helpline (Wales): 0800 702 2020

**For more advice, call
Home Start Cymru: 0333 880 0014
or visit: www.homestartcymru.org.uk**