



Press release

2nd August 2024

Amidst changes to Winter Fuel Payments, Citizens Advice North Somerset offers top tips on affording energy bills this winter

On Monday the Chancellor announced changes to the Winter Fuel Payment (WFP).

The WFP is an annual one-off payment to help pensioners pay for heating during the winter, introduced in 1997. Depending on your age and if you live with somebody else who's eligible, it could provide up to £300 towards your bills.

However, the new announcement means only those receiving Pension Credit or other means tested benefits will now be eligible for WFP.

The changes might be confusing and worrying to some people who have already factored WFP into their household budget.

That's why Sam Olliffe, Advice Services Manager of Citizens Advice North Somerset, is on hand to offer her top tips on affording energy bills this winter. Sam says:

"People might be worried about how this change will affect them, but there are other ways - depending on the type of energy you use and how you pay - that you can get energy bill support this winter.

"There are also steps those still entitled to the Winter Fuel Payment can take to make sure they don't miss out on this much-needed support. We know a third of people entitled to Pension Credit aren't claiming it, and it's more important than ever to apply for this benefit if you can."

There are also steps those still entitled to the Winter Fuel Payment can take to make sure they don't miss out on this much-needed support. We know a third of people entitled to Pension Credit aren't claiming it, and it's more important than ever to apply for this benefit if you can.

Pension Credit is a weekly benefit to boost your income and is based on how much money you have coming in. If you've reached State Pension age, you might be able to apply for it. Check the [Citizens Advice website](#) to see if you're eligible and get instructions on how to apply. If you, or

someone you know, needs help please visit our [local website](#) to complete our webform so we can get in touch, or pop into the Advice Shop in The Sovereign to make an appointment.

Our top tips for those looking for extra support this winter are:

Talk to your supplier

The first thing to do if you're struggling to pay your energy bills is speak to your supplier. They're responsible for helping you come to a solution, like setting up an affordable repayment plan if you've fallen behind on bills.

Fuel vouchers

If you have a prepayment meter and can't afford to top up, you might be able to get a fuel voucher. These come in the form of a code in a letter, text message or email and you can use them to top up your meter at some shops, or online if you have a smart meter.

[Your local council](#) might be able to help you get a fuel voucher. If you're not sure whether you can get one, [contact Citizens Advice](#).

Local energy grants

You might be able to find grants or schemes run by your local council that can help you pay your energy bills. These are usually for emergency situations, like if you've lost your job and can't afford to top up your meter.

You'll need to search for these on your local council's website, which you can find [on GOV.UK](#).

Other grants to help pay off energy debt

If you're behind with your energy bills, you might be able to get a grant to help you pay off your debt. This might be from your energy company or a charitable trust.

You'll need to get debt advice before applying and can do this through organisations like [Citizens Advice](#). You can also check which grants are available on the charity's [website](#).

Priority Services Register

You may be able to get extra non-financial help from your gas and electricity supplier by signing up to the Priority Services Register (PSR). You can sign up if you're either:

- of State Pension age
- disabled or have a long-term health condition
- or meet other criteria listed on [the PSR website](#)

If you're on the PSR, your energy supplier can:

- make your call a priority when you contact them
- give their engineers a password if they visit or contact you - so you know they're genuine
- move your prepayment meter if you struggle to get to it

See if you're eligible and how to sign up on Citizens Advice's [website](#).

For information and advice, contact Citizens Advice North Somerset by completing our [webform](#), or you can call our Adviceline on 0808 278 7973.