

GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TOWARDS INCREASED ENERGY COSTS

What assistance is the government providing?

The government has announced various packages of support, some of which relate specifically to energy use and others more broadly to help with the rising cost of living.

By far the biggest measure of support is the new cap of £2,500 from October. This is intended to be in place for two years and will shelter households from the large increases that would otherwise have occurred.

The **rebate on Council Tax bills of £150** for those living in properties rated A-D on the Council Tax banding should have already come through automatically if you pay by direct debit. If you pay by other means then you should have had contact from the council and also received this but if you haven't and think you qualify then contact the council.

There is also a **Cost of Living Payment worth £650** to those in receipt of certain benefits and that is being paid in two lump sums, with £326 being paid in July and the rest in the autumn. Full details of that and who is eligible are available on the government's website https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_content=EM_Brand&utm_campaign=CostofLiving_22

There are also **extra payments** for those qualifying for either disability or pensioner cost of living payments. In respect of **disability, that's an extra £150** which is due to be paid in September. For the pensioner cost of living payment this is in the form of a top-up to the normal **Winter Fuel Allowance** of £200 and should be worth an extra **£300** to most households depending on your age and your living circumstances. Again, all of the details are set out in the link above; this extra amount will be paid in November.

There will also be a **£400 discount on electricity bills** starting in October with equal payments spread over six months. Originally this was to be in the form of a loan but the government has now decided that it no longer needs to be repaid.

There's further discretionary funding of £144m for councils to help those in need of support but who don't qualify for the Council Tax rebate; that might include those on Income Support living in properties in bands E-H. Councils will need to work out how to distribute this and we will provide an update once we know more.

Is there any other government help available?

The **Warm Homes Discount** scheme is being raised to £150 and eligibility increased, although no details have yet emerged as to the changes. At the moment this payment is available to households in receipt of the Guaranteed Credit Element of Pension Credit and is paid as a discount on electricity bills between October and March. It's also available to others on low incomes who receive certain means tested benefits, but in those cases an application has to be made to your energy provider and they will decide who gets the

discount. If you think you may qualify because you receive means tested benefits it's important to contact your energy supplier and provide them with details.

Finally, the **Energy Company Obligation** is being extended to 2026 and the budget increased in order to fund energy saving measures for low income households. The scheme aims to improve the energy efficiency of homes occupied by low income groups and there's a list of qualifying benefits, but each energy company has slightly different criteria. Note that you must have the landlord's permission for any works if you rent your home. In a future article we will say more about the landlord's obligations on energy efficiency. There's more information about this assistance at <https://www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk/pages/energy-company-obligation>