

Warm Homes Newsletter

Issue 5

With the average home energy bill now being £2,500 per year, the Warm Homes Campaign from Durham County Council helps residents to have a warmer home and lower energy bills.

Managing Money Better

Need help with your energy bills and energy debts?

Free and impartial advice to help you save money on your energy bills and keep your home warm is available from us.

An experienced energy advisor from the councils Managing Money Better service can offer fuel debt advice and making sure you understand your heating system and controls. We can also advise on financial assistance available to help you to heat your home.

As several Energy Companies recently have gone bust, it's very important that you check your energy bills regularly and provide regular meter readings to your energy supplier. This is to ensure your payments are keeping up with your energy usage and you are not underpaying and falling into fuel debt with your Energy Company.

What to do if an energy company goes into insolvency

If the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) revokes an energy company's supply licence (usually because of insolvency), it can appoint a 'supplier of last resort' on a case-by-case basis to take over the supply of gas and/or electricity to the insolvent supplier's customers. See <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households> for guidance if an energy company has gone into insolvency and to find out what Ofgem has in place to assist customers of that company.

Free Gas Boiler Service

If you are an owner occupier with an income less than £31,000 and have health issues that are made worse by living in a cold, damp home, including a cardiovascular condition, a respiratory disease, limited mobility or immuno suppression, you could qualify for a free gas boiler service from Durham County Council. If you would like to find out if you qualify for a free boiler service contact the Council using the details shown on the back page of this newsletter.



Warm Homes



Grants for new heating and insulation

What is the Energy Company Obligation?

The Government Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) scheme provides low income households with grants for energy efficiency improvements.

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is a scheme that requires energy companies to help households who are struggling with their fuel bills. It is a government initiative that obligates energy companies to reduce carbon emissions and help the UK meet carbon reduction targets.

Included within ECO grants are non-condensing boiler replacement and Air Source Heat Pumps, Solar PV, Replacement Storage Heaters, Loft Insulation, Room in Roof Insulation, Cavity Wall Insulation and Internal Wall Insulation.

Solid Wall Insulation - An external wall insulation system is a thermally insulated, protective, decorative exterior cladding procedure involving the use of expanded polystyrene, mineral wool or foam topped off with a reinforced cement based, mineral or synthetic finish and plaster.

Internal Wall Insulation - Internal wall insulation is done by fitting rigid insulation boards to the wall, or by building a stud wall filled in with insulation material such as mineral wool fibre.

Non Condensing Boiler – How do I know if I have one? If you currently have a boiler installed in your home and aren't quite sure if it's a condensing boiler or not, there are a few things you can check with your current system or in your boiler manual.

When was it installed? If your boiler was installed in your home after April 2005, the regulations put into place at this time will mean your boiler will be a condensing one. All boilers manufactured after this time are condensing. Check the flue. If your boiler has a metal flue for excess gases, then your boiler will probably be non-condensing. Condensing flues are usually through an external wall or your roof.

Steam and drainpipe. If you can see the steam coming from the flue through an external wall (or roof), and if you also have a white plastic pipe leading to a drain, this will certainly be from a condensing boiler.

Solar PV - Solar Photovoltaic (PV) panels produce electricity from the energy emitted by the sun and in doing so they provide your home with carbon-free and bill-free electricity.



Replacement Storage Heaters – Radiators are built with heat retaining clay bricks that build up heat during the night and release heat as required during the day.

Loft Insulation - Insulating the roof space of your home is the simplest, most cost-effective way of saving energy and reducing your heating bills.

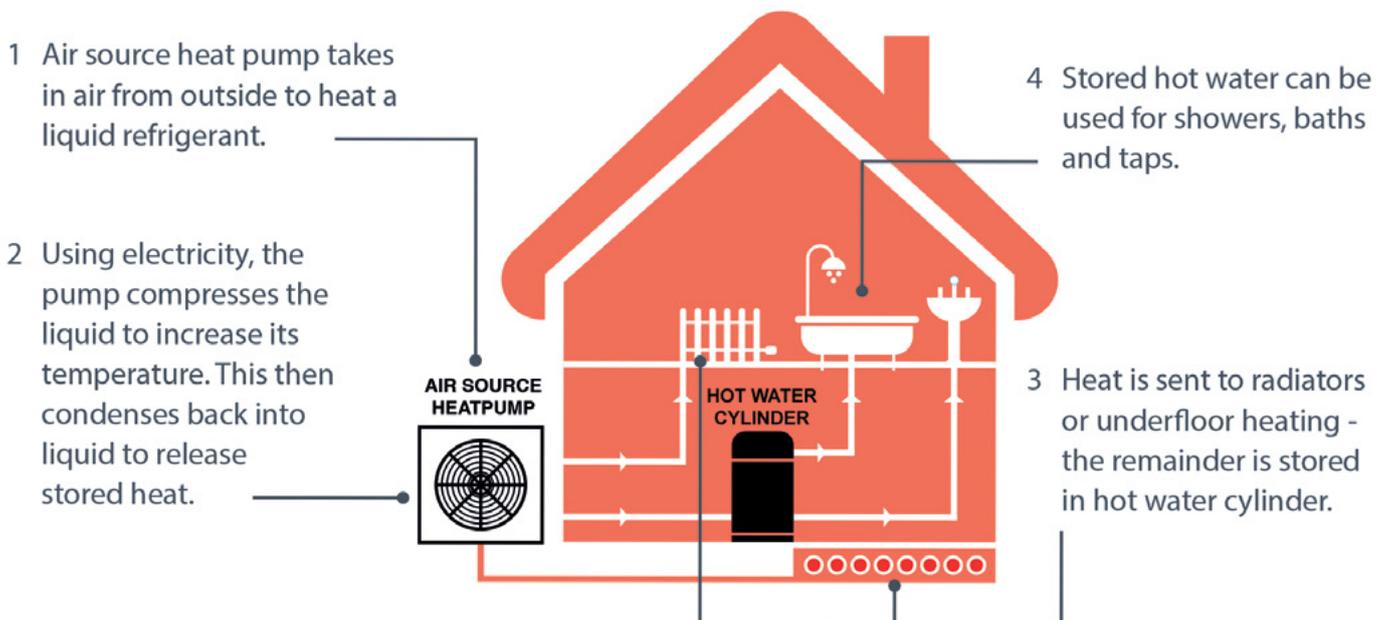


Room in Roof Insulation - By employing the latest insulation materials and methods, insulating existing attic rooms means that you can still use the roof space for storage or additional room space if needed while still trapping heat in the property and rooms below. A room in roof or attic room is simply defined by the presence of a fixed staircase to access the room.

Cavity Wall Insulation – The cavity can be filled with an insulating material by injecting foam or beads into the wall. This restricts any warmth passing between them, reducing the money you spend on heating.

Air Source Heat Pumps – a form of heating which extracts warmth from the air, even when it is very cold outside and used warmth to heat your home and provide you with hot water.

An air source heat pump works in a very similar way to gas central heating, with a unit attached to the side of your home converting the heat in the outside air to room heating and hot water.



Watch out for the silent killer

You can't see it, taste it, or smell it, but Carbon Monoxide (CO) can kill.

What is CO?

Carbon Monoxide is a poisonous gas that is produced when gas, oil, solid fuels and liquid petroleum gas (LPG) do not burn fully. It can occur when an appliance has been incorrectly fitted, badly repaired or poorly maintained.

Spotting the signs



Lazy yellow or orange flames (rather than crisp and blue) on a gas appliance



Pilot lights frequently blowing out



Dark staining or sooting around/on appliances



Increased condensation on windows



What should I do if I suspect CO poisoning?

1. Call the National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**
2. Turn off gas appliances immediately, open doors & windows and leave the property
3. See your doctor immediately or go to the hospital

Recognising the symptoms

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Breathlessness
- Collapse
- Loss of consciousness



Smell Gas?

Call the National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**

 northerngasnetworks.co.uk

Stay safe...

At home

- Install an **approved** audible CO alarm fitted to British Standard EN 50291
- Get your appliances serviced by a qualified engineer once a year.
 - **0800 408 5500** or visit Gas Safe Register **gassaferegister.co.uk** (gas appliances)
 - **01684 278170** or visit Heating Equipment Testing & Approval Schemes (HETAS) **hetas.co.uk** (solid fuel)
 - **01473 626 298** or visit Oil Firing Technical Association (OFTEC) **oftec.org** (oil appliances)

On the water

- In large boats, such as houseboats, it is important to make sure that any gasoline-powered engines on boats are checked regularly

Camping and barbecues

- Even when the flames have gone out smouldering coals can still kill. Never bring a barbecue or camping stove inside an enclosed area, such as a tent
- If you are heading on a boat trip or camping holiday, pack a CO alarm

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**we are
the network**

Some of Our Happy Customers

Mrs C said:

"I have had help from the Managing Money Better team for the past 3 years. She has always given good advice, been helpful and very patient with me. She is very understanding of my needs."

Mr and Mrs M said:

"We feel like a weight has been lifted off our shoulders, we have been without heating for a good few months and I have some health issues. The engineers who attended were helpful, kind and empathetic, we are grateful for warm homes support."

Mr D said:

"I am very impressed with you and your teams prompt and professional help. I really appreciate the care you have taken."



Mr B said:

"I have worked all of my life and never thought I would qualify for any help. I am extremely happy with the service and the information provided, I couldn't be happier and I am looking forward to being warmer this winter."



Helpful contacts

Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice County Durham are a local charity who provide debt and other advice to thousands of people every year. Their services are free, confidential and impartial, so if you're struggling with your Council Tax bill, or any other debts, they can provide guidance, money advice and debt solutions.

www.citizensadvicecd.org.uk

Tel: 0300 323 2000

Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm

Stop Loan Sharks

If you are a victim of a loan shark, Stop Loan Sharks can help you get a loan shark off your back. They offer online chat and call back services.

www.stoploansharks.co.uk

Tel: 0300 555 2222 any time, 24/7

Home Improvement Agency

The HIA provides advice, guidance and practical assistance to people who are older, disabled or on low incomes to repair, improve or adapt their homes, to enable them to maintain their independence in their chosen home.

www.durham.gov.uk/homeimprovementagency

Age UK County Durham

Age UK County Durham provide a free and impartial service to help people aged 50 and over across County Durham to maximise their income. A holistic approach ensures clients receive expert support throughout their claim journey, whilst also addressing other issues including aids/ adaptations, energy, care provision and client welfare.

Tel: 0191 374 6367

Email: your.rights@ageukcountydurham.org.uk

Community Money Advice County Durham

This project ran by Durham Christian Partnership offers a free, non-judgemental and confidential service for anyone struggling with financial issues, debt or managing their money. They offer appointments at a number of foodbank centres across the county, as well as offering advice by telephone, email, post or video call. In special circumstances they can arrange home visits.

www.durhamcp.org.uk/community-money-advice-county-durham

Tel: 0191 303 7514 to request a callback

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

MoneyHelper

The Government's MoneyHelper service provides clear money and pension guidance online and over the phone. Money help all in one place, that's free to use.

www.moneyhelper.org.uk

Tel: 0800 138 7777

Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm

Welfare Rights

We have specialist staff who can help you understand what benefits you may be entitled to, support you make a benefits claim, make an appeal against a benefit decision and provide representation at an appeal.

www.durham.gov.uk/welfarerights

Tel: 03000 268 968

Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm,

Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

Moving house or going through a crisis?

You may be able to get help from our Welfare Assistance Scheme. This can be to help you stay or get into housing, or with your daily living expenses.

www.durham.gov.uk/welfareassistance

Tel: 03000 267 900

Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm,

Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm



**THE
ENERGY
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Do you have cold related ill health?

Our warm and healthy homes scheme can help private households who have a cold related illness (including Long COVID and premature babies from 34 weeks to 9 months) and are having problems with their gas boiler*. You will need to complete our application form and also get it signed by a health or social care.

Warm Homes Discount

Energy companies must, by law, offer extra help to their most vulnerable customers during the winter months. If you're a pensioner, or you're on a low income, you could qualify for a rebate of £150 off your energy bill. Residents can contact us for advice on how to find out if they qualify for a Warm Homes Discount.

What is the Priority Services Register?

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is a service from your Energy Supplier to provide free support to people who may be vulnerable – perhaps because of their age, health or disability. It ensures individuals with special requirements have access to additional support from their energy supplier as and when they require it. This support varies by supplier and by an individual's circumstances and includes:

- Large-format or Braille bills
- Advanced notice of service interruption
- Priority in a power cut
- Quarterly meter readings

Contact us if you want to find out if you can register for the PSR.

NEA's Warm and Safe Homes Advice (WASH)

This is a free support service providing advice to householders in England and Wales on their energy bills and keeping warm and safe in their home. We can also help with benefits advice and income maximisation. 0800 3047159

How to contact us

To find out more about any of the above schemes contact us on **03000 268000** and ask for the Warm Homes Team or e-mail, warmhomes@durham.gov.uk or log onto www.durham.gov.uk/warmhomescampaign



**Your current boiler needs to be deemed as inefficient by a registered ECO Contractor, only customers who meet the eligibility requirements will qualify for the grant offer. Offer only applies to boiler and insulation measures recommended by a registered ECO Contractor appointed surveyor. The grant offer is subject to availability and may change or be withdrawal at any time. To qualify for a grant, households must be in receipt of one of the following; Pension, Tax Credits (Income thresholds apply), Income Related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Based Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support, State Pension Credit, Universal Credit (Income thresholds apply), Council Tax Reduction Benefit and/or Housing Benefit or have a total household income of less than £31,000. Durham County Council does not fund or manage the ECO programme.