

# MANAGING YOUR ENERGY BILLS

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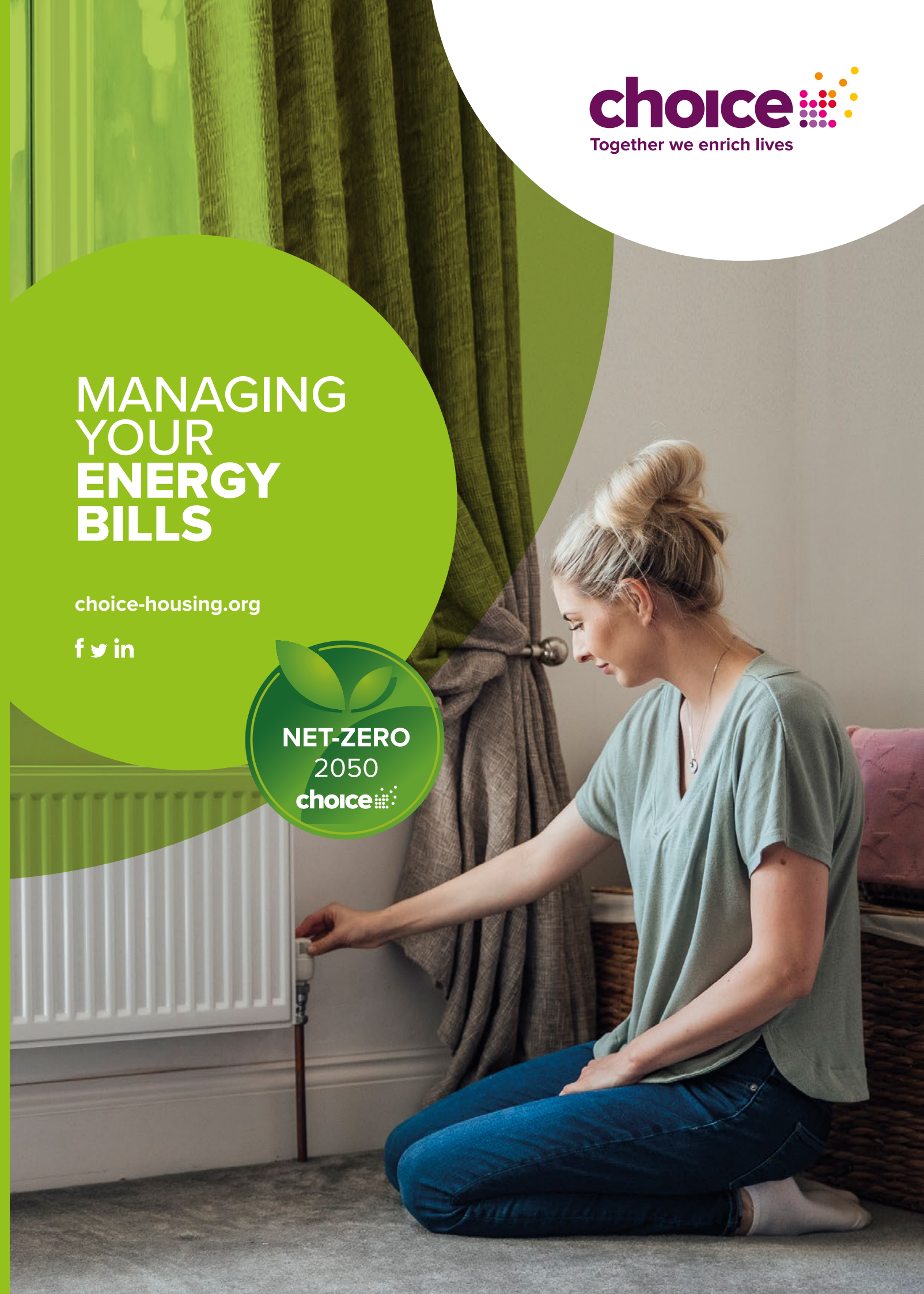
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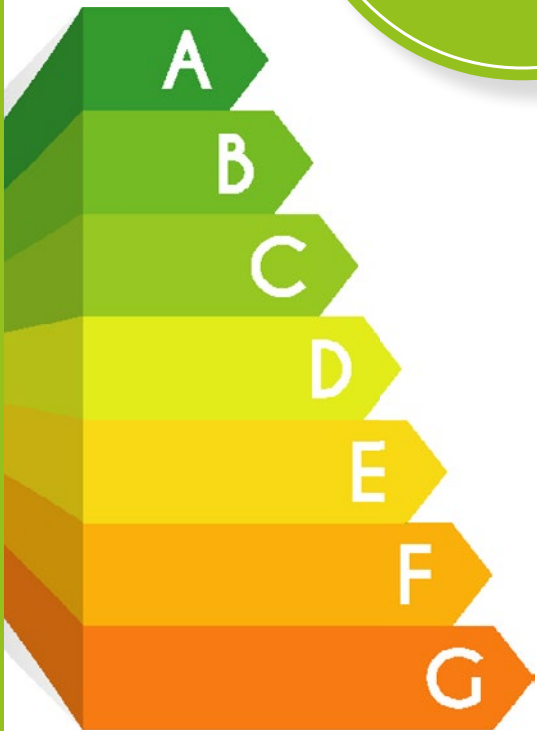
## WHY SAVE ENERGY?

### REDUCE ENERGY COSTS

When we reduce our usage we save money on our bills as there is a decrease in energy being supplied to the home.

If you would like extra advice on managing your heating systems or energy bills, please contact our Sustainability & Energy team

[energy@choice-housing.org](mailto:energy@choice-housing.org)  
T: 0300 111 2211



### REDUCE FUEL POVERTY

By reducing the amount of energy we use, ensuring we are paying the lowest available price for our energy, and by considering our household income, we can help to alleviate fuel poverty.

The UK Parliament defines fuel poverty as: **“households that must spend a high proportion of their household income to keep their home at a reasonable temperature. Fuel poverty is affected by three key factors: a household’s income, their fuel costs, and their energy consumption.”**

Furthermore, National Energy Action (NEA) defines fuel poverty as:

“When a household spends 10% of its income on keeping its home at a satisfactory heating level.”



### IMPROVED HEALTH AND COMFORT

Investing in energy efficiency can help improve comfort levels by making homes easier to heat and more affordable. This can have a positive impact on physical and mental health, helping to reduce cold related illnesses and excess winter deaths.

### ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

‘Production of electricity and home heating currently requires fossil fuels - coal, oil & natural gas. Burning fossil fuels produces harmful ‘greenhouse gases’ such as Carbon Dioxide which contribute to climate change. By reducing energy consumption from fossil fuels and increasing our usage of renewable energy sources, we can reduce our climate impact.



# UNDERSTANDING YOUR ENERGY BILLS

## WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ENERGY BILLS?

The two ways to pay for your energy, either:

- (1) Bill pay
- (2) Pay as you go (PAYG).

### Bill pay

These bills are sent to customers on a weekly, monthly or quarterly basis stating how much energy a customer has used in a specific period and how much this costs. These can be paid via direct debit, online / over the phone with your supplier, at a post office or a local paypoint.

### Pay as you go

These bills are paid upfront using top up cards at your local shop or using energy supplier apps. In each case a code is provided which must be entered to your meter.

## HOW TO READ YOUR ENERGY BILL

Energy suppliers will provide bills in physical and electronic formats. Where applicable PAYG customers can request a summary of consumption from their supplier.

### Energy bills include the following information:

- Your account number and a reference number
- Your details – This will include your name and address.
- The supply address – You should ensure this is correct on your energy bills.
- A reference number for your home, such as an 11 digit MPRN (Meter Point Reference Number).
- The meter serial number, which can be found on the front of your meter e.g. YH 01234

## HOW TO MONITOR YOUR ENERGY BILL

You can monitor your energy bill by reading the units used from previous bills and how it differs from bills going forward. Energy suppliers will sell energy at a rate of pence per unit. Each unit saved reduces your energy costs.

Energy is measured in the following units:

Electricity	kWh
Natural Gas	M <sup>3</sup>
Heating Oil	Litres



# HOW TO REDUCE BILLS: ELECTRICITY

**1** CHECK YOUR  
ELECTRICITY TARIFF IS  
THE CHEAPEST AVAILABLE

**2** PURCHASE ENERGY  
EFFICIENT APPLIANCES  
AND LIGHT BULBS

**3** FOLLOW THE  
ELECTRICITY  
SAVINGS TIPS

**4** AVOID USING PORTABLE  
ELECTRICITY HEATERS

**5** ALWAYS SWITCH OFF  
APPLIANCES RATHER  
THAN USING STANDBY

**1** CHECK YOUR  
ELECTRICITY TARIFF  
IS THE CHEAPEST AVAILABLE

## ELECTRICITY PRICES:

There are **five** home electricity suppliers in NI.

To compare your  
electricity price visit:  
[consumerCouncil.org.uk/  
energy-tables](https://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk/energy-tables)



**T: 0800 121 6022**

If you are not in a contract with your electricity  
supplier, you are free to switch to get a better deal.

Simply call or email the supplier you wish to switch  
to and they will organise the rest.

**PowerNI**  
03457 455 455  
[home@powerni.co.uk](mailto:home@powerni.co.uk)

**Budget Energy**  
0800 012 1177  
[talktous@budgetenergy.co.uk](mailto:talktous@budgetenergy.co.uk)

**Electric Ireland**  
0345 600 5335  
[customerservice@electricireland.com](mailto:customerservice@electricireland.com)

**SSE Airtricity**  
0345 601 9093  
[customerservice@sseairtricity.com](mailto:customerservice@sseairtricity.com)

**Click Energy**  
0800 107 0732  
[chat@clickenergyni.com](mailto:chat@clickenergyni.com)

## MANAGING CONSUMPTION:

Electricity is charged as a rate of pence  
per kilowatt hour (kWh). Less electricity  
consumption means lower bills.

You can monitor your consumption  
by taking regular meter readings.

Instructions on how to read meters:  
[citizensadvice.org.uk/  
consumer/energy/energy-supply/  
your-energy-meter/  
how-to-read-your-energy-meter](https://citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/your-energy-meter/how-to-read-your-energy-meter)



## PAY AS YOU GO

Electricity can be paid in  
advance using a 'pay as  
you go' prepay card. This  
means that you can only  
use as much electricity  
as you have paid for. This  
can help with budgeting.



## BILL PAY

Billed electricity is  
normally charged across  
four bills per year where  
customers get one bill  
every three months.  
'Bill pay' electricity rates  
are usually cheaper  
than 'pay as you go'. To  
manage these costs you  
can agree a weekly or  
monthly direct debit. This  
means that you will not be  
hit with an unexpected or  
large bill at the end of the  
three month period.



# HOW TO REDUCE BILLS: ELECTRICITY

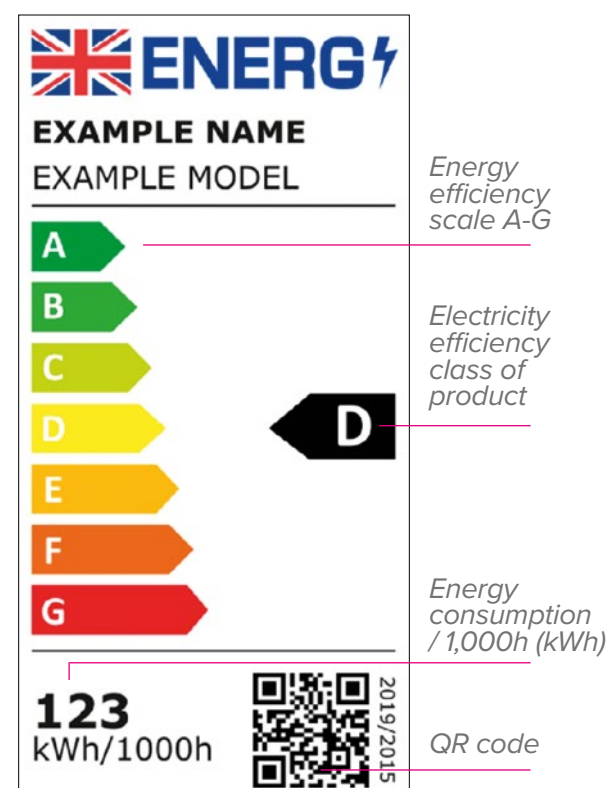
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## 2 PURCHASE ENERGY EFFICIENT APPLIANCES AND LIGHT BULBS

Electrical appliances and light bulbs come with an energy rating A-G. A is most efficient and G is least efficient. Less efficient appliances cost more to use as they require more electricity kilowatt hours (kWh) to operate.

Although efficient appliances can be more expensive the reduced operation cost means that they are better investments over their operational lifespan.

### EXAMPLE LABEL FOR LIGHT SOURCES



## 3 FOLLOW THE ELECTRICITY SAVINGS TIPS

Change the temperature settings on your fridge to 4°C and freezer to -18°C.

Ensure there is space for ventilation behind Fridges & Freezers - prevents overheating and appliances last longer!

Defrost your fridge and freezer regularly - every 2mm of ice on an appliance consumes 10% more energy.

When washing clothes reduce the temperature to eco mode / 30°C and use full loads.

Avoid using a tumble dryer where possible.

If practical, dry clothes outside and if drying clothes inside do so in a well-ventilated space.

When using a kettle only boil as much as you need and keep them descaled.

Consider recipes that reduce cooking time or use low energy appliances such as air fryers or microwaves.

Select the correct hob size to suit the size of pot being used and place a lid to prevent energy loss.

## 4 AVOID USING PORTABLE ELECTRIC HEATERS

Electric heaters such as fan, convector, halogen, infrared and oil filled radiators are high energy users and are not a cheaper way to heat your home. Avoid using these where possible.

Where a wet heating system is available such as boilers (gas or oil), or electric storage heaters / air source heat pumps, these should be used to heat your home.

Fan heaters / convector heaters / infrared heaters are 40-50% more expensive to use than your installed heating system.

If using a portable electricity heater is a necessity then an oil filled electric radiator is recommended.

## 5 ALWAYS SWITCH OFF APPLIANCES RATHER THAN USING STANDBY

Turn off appliances completely when not in use - **even small ones.**

Do not leave small appliances on standby, it is still using power!

Organise your appliance plugs by whether they can be switched off entirely or need to remain on.

Switch plugs off at the switch when not in use.

Switch mobile device chargers off at the plug when fully charged.





# HOW TO REDUCE BILLS: NATURAL GAS

## 1 CHECK YOUR GAS TARIFF IS THE CHEAPEST AVAILABLE

## 2 SET YOUR TIMECLOCK

## 4 USE YOUR THERMOSTATIC RADIATOR VALVES (TRV)

## 3 ADJUST YOUR THERMOSTAT DOWN

## 5 KEEP THE HEAT IN

## 1 CHECK YOUR GAS TARIFF IS THE CHEAPEST AVAILABLE

### GAS PRICES:

Make sure that you are getting the most competitive price from the suppliers in your area. Gas prices can change quite frequently so it is useful to check online for updated prices.

The websites below can be used to compare rates:

[consumercouncil.org.uk/  
comparison\\_tool/begin](https://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/comparison_tool/begin)

[consumercouncil.org.uk/  
energy-tables](https://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/energy-tables)

To check which supplier is available in your area visit link or refer to graphic:  
[naturalgasni.com](https://www.naturalgasni.com)

Some suppliers will also offer credit to remain with them or to change over supplier.



### NATURAL GAS NETWORK OPERATORS & SUPPLIERS



## 2 SET YOUR TIME CLOCK

Set your heating to come on **only** for the period you need it.

Set your time clock to start your heating **30 minutes before** you expect to need it.

Set your time clock to shut off at least **30 minutes before** bedtime or when you expect you will no longer need it.



## 3 ADJUST YOUR THERMOSTAT DOWN

Set your thermostat between 18-21°C.

Every degree you increase the temperature costs **10% more.**

## 4 USE YOUR THERMOSTATIC RADIATOR VALVES (TRV)

TRVs are used on radiators in rooms outside of the room where your thermostat is.



Each symbol on a TRV is a room temperature setting:	0 = Off	3 = 20°C
	* = 7°C	4 = 25°C
	1 = 10°C	5 = 30°C
	2 = 15°C	

Set your TRVs around **3** to match the **18-21°C** temperature setting on your thermostat. Set your TRVs lower in rooms you use less frequently (1 or 2), but do not set them below \* as this prevents pipes from freezing.

## 5 KEEP THE HEAT IN

Ensure that both external and internal doors remain closed in order to keep the heat in. A useful tool around the house would be to use draft preventers under doors. This reduces the airflow coming in and out of the room you are heating. Opening and closing your curtains at appropriate times during the day/evening will allow you to make the most of natural sunlight heating your home.

# HOW TO REDUCE BILLS: OIL

IF YOU BELIEVE THAT YOUR OIL TANK IS LEAKING  
**PLEASE REPORT THIS IMMEDIATELY TO CHOICE**

- CHECK YOUR OIL IS THE CHEAPEST AVAILABLE**
- PURCHASE LARGER AMOUNTS OF OIL**
- SET YOUR TIME CLOCK**
- ADJUST YOUR THERMOSTAT DOWN**
- USE YOUR THERMOSTATIC RADIATOR VALES**
- KEEP THE HEAT IN**

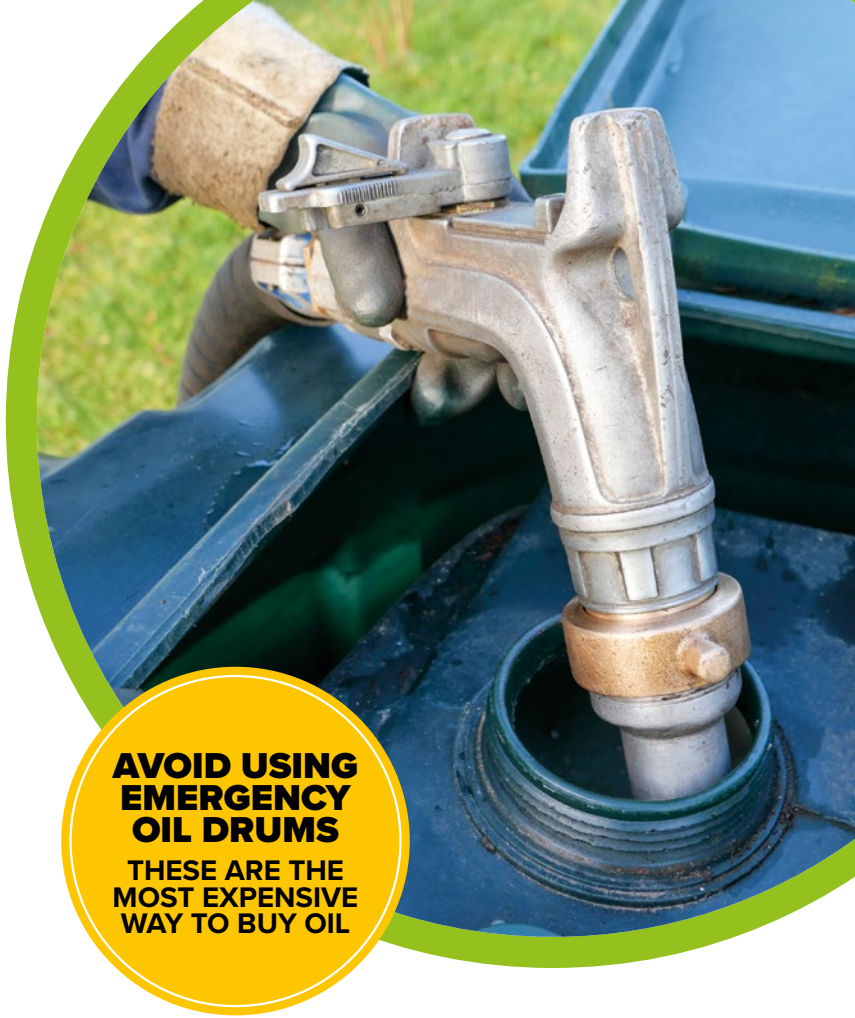
## 2 PURCHASE LARGER AMOUNTS OF OIL

Purchasing larger amounts of oil can save you money as most suppliers offer a discount for larger volumes of oil. Another useful way to reduce the cost per litre of oil is to join an oil buyers' clubs. This is when residents on the same area order large amounts of oil as a group in order to reduce costs.

Please follow the link to further research oil buying clubs in your area.



[nihe.gov.uk/  
community/  
ni-energy-advice/  
oil-buying-network](http://nihe.gov.uk/community/ni-energy-advice/oil-buying-network)

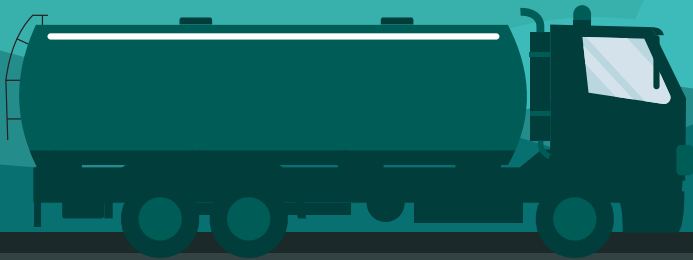


**AVOID USING EMERGENCY OIL DRUMS**  
THESE ARE THE MOST EXPENSIVE WAY TO BUY OIL

## 1 CHECK YOUR OIL IS THE CHEAPEST AVAILABLE

**OIL PRICES:**  
Make sure that you are getting the most competitive price from the suppliers in your area. Oil prices can change quite frequently so it would be useful to check online for updated prices.

The websites below can be used to compare rates:  
[consumercouncil.org.uk/  
homeheatingoilpricechecker/tool](http://consumercouncil.org.uk/homeheatingoilpricechecker/tool)  
[cheapestoil.co.uk/Heating-Oil-NI](http://cheapestoil.co.uk/Heating-Oil-NI)



## 3 SET YOUR TIME CLOCK

Set your heating to come on **only** for the period you need it.  
Set your time clock to start your heating **30 minutes before** you expect to need it.  
Set your time clock to shut off at least **30 minutes before** bedtime or when you expect you will no longer need it.

## 4 ADJUST YOUR THERMOSTAT DOWN

Set your thermostat between 18-21°C.

Every degree you increase the temperature **costs 10% more.**

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TRVs are used on radiators in rooms outside of the room where your thermostat is.

Each symbol on a TRV is a room temperature setting:	0 = Off	2 = 15°C
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Set your TRVs around **3 to match the 18-21°C** temperature setting on your thermostat. Set your TRVs lower in rooms you use less frequently (1 or 2), but do not set them below \* as this prevents pipes from freezing.

## 6 KEEP THE HEAT IN

Ensure that both external and internal doors remain closed in order to keep the heat in. A useful tool around the house would be to use draft preventers under doors. This reduces the airflow coming in and out of the room you are heating. Opening and closing your curtains at appropriate times during the day/evening will allow you to make the most of natural sunlight heating your home.



# HOW TO REDUCE HEATING BILLS: STORAGE HEATERS

## 1 HOW STORAGE HEATERS WORK

## 2 ADJUST YOUR INPUT DIAL

## 3 ADJUST YOUR OUTPUT DIAL

## 4 AVOID USING PORTABLE ELECTRICITY HEATERS

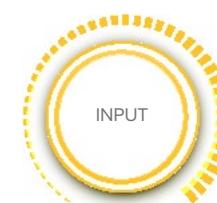
## 5 HEATING CONTROLS FOR NEWER ELECTRIC STORAGE HEATERS

### 1 HOW STORAGE HEATERS WORK

Storage heaters use electricity to heat your home. They are used in many homes as they are able to heat up overnight using the night time electricity tariff and slowly release heat through the day. With the Economy 7 (E7) tariff your electricity will be charged at two rates - a day rate and a night rate. You pay a cheaper rate for electricity for seven hours at night (off-peak) and a higher one in the day.

### 2 THE INPUT DIAL

The input controls how much electricity your heater stores at night time which determines how much heat you'll get during the day. The higher it is set, the more electricity it will use and the more the heat will be stored. How high you set the input dial depends on how cold you think it's going to be the next day.



### 3 THE OUTPUT DIAL

The output dial controls the release of heat – the higher it is set, the quicker heat emits from the heater. If it's set on minimum, the heater will still release out the heat that's been stored overnight – it will just do it more slowly.



**USER INSTRUCTIONS**  
MODERN ELECTRIC STORAGE HEATER



[dimplex.co.uk/support/guides](https://dimplex.co.uk/support/guides)

### 4 AVOID USING PORTABLE ELECTRIC HEATERS

Electric heaters such as fan, convector, halogen, infrared and oil filled radiators are high energy users and are not a cheaper way to heat your home. Avoid using these where possible. If using a portable electricity heater is a necessity then an oil filled electric radiator is recommended.



### 5 HEATING CONTROLS FOR NEWER ELECTRIC STORAGE HEATERS

After 2018 modern storage heaters generally come with improved controls, including an automatic charge control, thermostat and programmer. These controls work together to ensure that once the programme is set, the heater can control itself without you needing to make any adjustments, unless you want to change the programme. We recommend that temperature is set between 18-21 Degrees and set time for 30 mins before required.



# HOW TO REDUCE HEATING BILLS: AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP (ASHP)

**1 CHECK YOUR ELECTRICITY TARIFF IS THE CHEAPEST AVAILABLE**

**2 WHAT IS AN AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP?**

**3 HEAT DISTRIBUTION - UNDER FLOOR HEATING / RADIATOR**

**4 ADJUST YOUR THERMOSTAT DOWN**

**5 USE YOUR THERMOSTATIC RADIATOR VALVES (TRV)**

**6 KEEP THE HEAT IN**

**1 CHECK YOUR ELECTRICITY TARIFF IS THE CHEAPEST AVAILABLE**

## ELECTRICITY PRICES:

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To compare your electricity price visit:  
[consumercouncil.org.uk/energy-tables](http://consumercouncil.org.uk/energy-tables)



**T: 0800 121 6022**

If you are not in a contract with your electricity supplier, you are free to switch to get a better deal.

Simply call or email the supplier you wish to switch to and they will organise the rest.

**PowerNI**  
03457 455 455  
[home@powerni.co.uk](mailto:home@powerni.co.uk)

**Budget Energy**  
0800 012 1177  
[talktous@budgetenergy.co.uk](mailto:talktous@budgetenergy.co.uk)

**Electric Ireland**  
0345 600 5335  
[customerservice@electricireland.com](mailto:customerservice@electricireland.com)

**SSE Airtricity**  
0345 601 9093  
[customerservice@sseairtricity.com](mailto:customerservice@sseairtricity.com)

**Click Energy**  
0800 107 0732  
[chat@clickenergyni.com](mailto:chat@clickenergyni.com)

## MANAGING CONSUMPTION:

Electricity is charged as a rate of pence per kilowatt hour (kWh). Less electricity consumption means lower bills. You can monitor your consumption by taking regular meter readings.

Instructions on how to read meters:  
[citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/your-energy-meter/how-to-read-your-energy-meter](http://citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/your-energy-meter/how-to-read-your-energy-meter)



**Pay as you go:** Electricity can be paid in advance using a 'pay as you go' prepay card. This means that you can only use as much electricity as you have paid for. This can help with budgeting.

**Bill pay:** Billed electricity is normally charged across four bills where customers get one bill every three months. 'Bill pay' electricity rates are usually cheaper than 'pay as you go'. To manage these costs you can agree a weekly or monthly direct debit. This means that you will not be hit with an unexpected or large bill at the end of the three month period.

## BUDGETING:

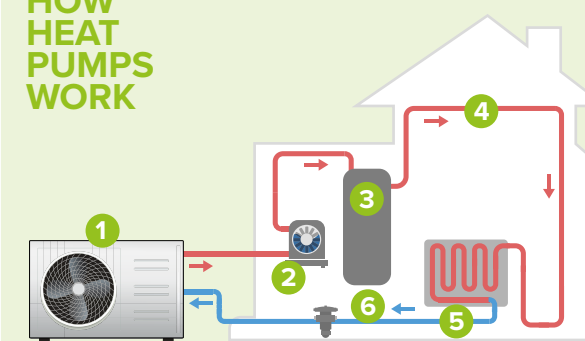
Electricity costs can be a challenge for tenants using an Air Source Heat Pump as they rely on electricity to power their heating, as well as all other electrical appliances and lighting.

It is therefore recommended that tenants using an ASHP adopt a **'bill pay'** agreement with their supplier where they pay by weekly direct debit instead of a 'pay as you go' arrangement.

This will ensure that energy bills are paid in a manageable way, e.g. £20-30 per week, the ASHP is able to operate effectively (see point 2) and the meter will not shut off and prevent other appliances operating, such as lights, fridge, cooker, etc.



## HOW HEAT PUMPS WORK



**1** An outdoor unit takes in heat from the ambient air and transfers it to a coolant.

**2** A compressor increases the temperature of the coolant further.

**3** The coolant transfers the heat to a hot water reserve tank via a heat exchanger.

**4** Hot water from the tank is circulated to radiators and water supplies in the house.

**5** It then falls in temperature as the heat is transferred into the home.

**6** The coolant is cooled by the water and transferred back to the outdoor unit to be heated again.

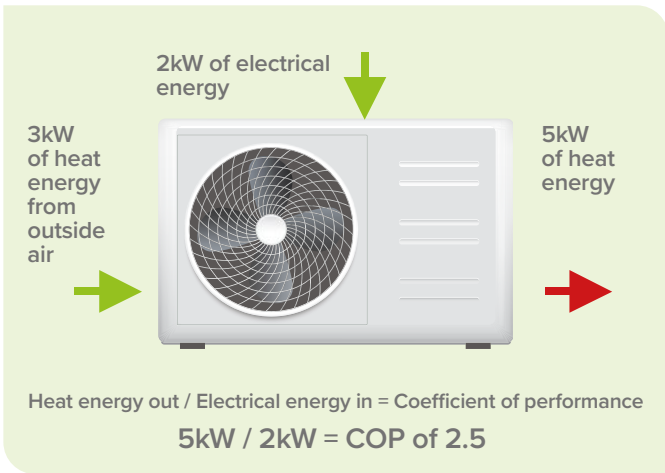
# HOW TO REDUCE HEATING BILLS: AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP (ASHP)

CONTINUED...

## 2 WHAT IS AN AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP

An air source heat pump, sometimes referred to as an air-to-water source heat pump transfers heat from the outside air to water inside a property. The heated water is pumped around the home via radiators or underfloor pipework to distribute heat. ASHPs also heat water stored in a hot water cylinder for hot taps, showers and baths. Instead of using oil/gas an ASHP uses electricity which means that it can produce heat with lower Carbon emissions.

- An ASHP uses electricity which is on average three times more expensive per unit than oil/gas. To achieve value for money, ASHPs are designed to create between 2-4 units of heating per 1 unit of electricity used – see diagram below.
- The conversion of external heat energy and electrical energy to internal heat energy is referred to as the ‘coefficient of performance’ or COP.
- As electricity is 3 times more expensive per unit than oil/gas, an ASHP must average a COP of 3 to achieve value for money.



**Note: COP** ‘coefficient of performance’

The COP will be dictated by the external air temperature, i.e. the warmer the air is outside the less electricity will be required to provide adequate heat inside the home. Likewise, cooler external temperatures require more electrical energy to provide adequate heat inside the home. This means that ASHPs are more expensive to operate in winter than summer as their COP is lower. However, over a complete year the COP should average at least 3 where ASHPs are installed correctly.

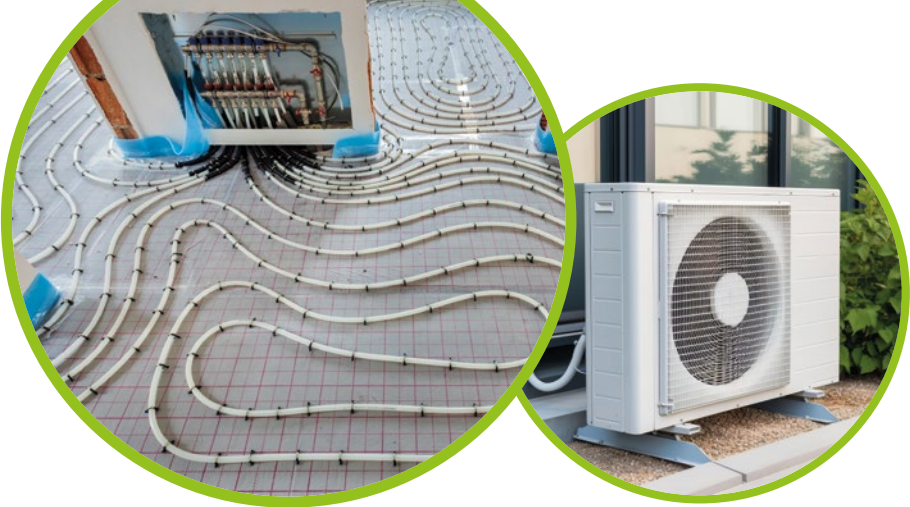
ASHPs generally operate at a low flow temperature between 30-40 degrees Celsius compared to a conventional gas/oil heating system which operates high flow temperatures between 60-70 degrees Celsius.



[heatgeek.com/  
category/  
consumer-advice/](https://heatgeek.com/category/consumer-advice/)

For more advice on getting the most out of your heat pump, visit: [heatgeek.com](https://heatgeek.com)

As an ASHP operates at low flow temperatures, it requires a longer period of time achieve the desired internal temperature compared to an oil/gas system. It is recommended that ASHP users set their thermostat internal temperature between 18-21 degrees Celsius and allow the ASHP to maintain this temperature throughout the day. It is beneficial to leave the ASHP running for extended periods of the day to maintain a suitable temperature rather than expect it to boost over smaller periods which is common practice with oil/gas heating systems. Where an ASHP maintains the internal temperature the system will shut off and on automatically meaning energy is only used when required to achieve the desired internal temperature.



## 3 HEAT DISTRIBUTION – UNDERFLOOR AND RADIATORS

ASHPs can operate with traditional radiators. With this arrangement the heating is controlled in the same way as a typical oil or gas boiler, i.e. a time clock, room thermostat(s) and TRVs.

If there are no radiators present in your property and you have a ASHP installed, it is likely that your property uses underfloor heating. Underfloor heating is controlled using a time clock and an individual room thermostat in each room. Adjust accordingly to reduce your bills.

## 4 ADJUST YOUR THERMOSTAT DOWN

Set your thermostat between 18-21°C.

Every degree you increase the temperature costs 10% more.

## 5 USE YOUR THERMOSTATIC RADIATOR VALVES (TRV)

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## 6 KEEP THE HEAT IN

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If you need advice on setting your heat pump please contact Choice's Sustainability & Energy Team

[energy@choice-housing.org](mailto:energy@choice-housing.org)  
**T: 0300 111 2211**





# HOW TO REDUCE HEATING BILLS: HOT WATER

## 1 HOT WATER: TANK

## 2 HOT WATER: COMBI BOILER

## 3 HOT WATER: ENERGY SAVING TIPS



## 1 HOT WATER: TANK

If you require hot water remember to check if you are also turning on the central heating. For example if you only need hot water for dishes or a shower you will not need to turn on the central heating. If you have a programmer you should be able to choose hot water and/or central heating. If applicable ensure that your Hot water tank is well insulated as the hot water should remain above 60 degrees for several hours after being heated (depending on insulation thickness). Some more tips include

- If you have a hot water tank set the thermostat to 60-65°C.
- Ensure you don't use the immersion heater when possible. This uses a high amount of electricity which is expensive. Use your gas/oil/ASHP central heating system.

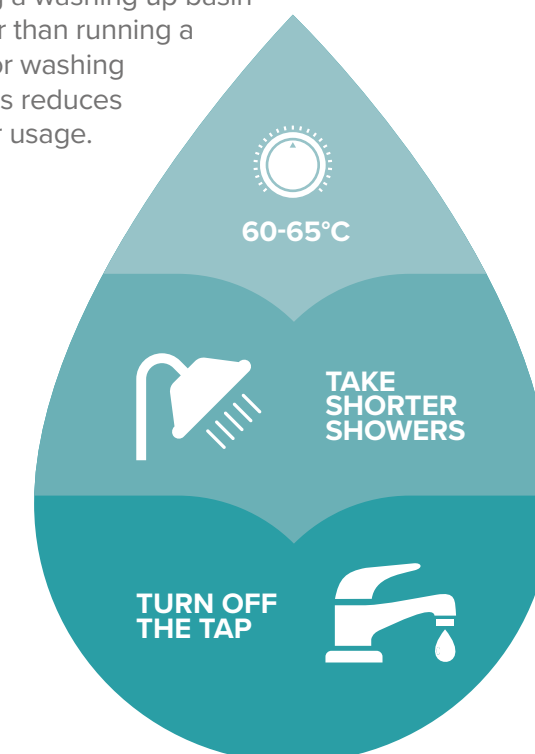
## 2 HOT WATER: COMBI BOILER

A combination boiler (almost always called a "combi boiler") is both your central heating boiler and water heater in a single, neat unit. One of their real benefits is that they heat the water directly from the mains, rather than by heating a tank of water.

There will be an option for hot water only on the programmer rather than central heating and hot water. This instant access to hot water eliminates the need of waiting for a hot water tank to fill.

## 3 HOT WATER: ENERGY SAVING TIPS

- As showers use less hot water than baths, showering is cheaper than baths.
- Be conscious of how long you are using the shower as more time costs more money.
- Replacing an inefficient shower head with a water efficient one will reduce hot water usage.
- Turn off the tap while putting on soap whilst washing hands.
- Using a washing up basin rather than running a tap for washing dishes reduces water usage.



# HOW COMMUNAL HEATING WORKS

## 1 HEAT NETWORK: OIL / GAS HEAT DISTRIBUTION

## 2 HEATING IN COMMUNAL AREAS

## 3 HEAT CHARGES EXPLAINED

## 4 REDUCING COMMUNAL HEATING CHARGES

## 5 HEAT METER CHARGES EXPLAINED

### 1 HEAT NETWORK: OIL / GAS HEAT DISTRIBUTION

A number of our schemes, particularly in sheltered accommodation, have centralised heating systems that provide heat and hot water to all the individual homes.

#### There are 2 main types

1. **Gas:** Large gas boilers will distribute heat via radiators or underfloor heating.
2. **Oil:** Large oil boilers will distribute heat via radiators or underfloor heating.

Each year our energy team review our communal or landlord energy contracts to ensure we are buying energy in a cost effective way.

### 2 HEATING IN COMMUNAL AREAS

Communal areas in schemes are corridors, stairways and common areas. Typically the communal areas will run off the same heat distribution network as your property's heating. Each year the energy team will conduct site visits to our scheme during the summer months to ensure the energy consumption is properly regulated.



### 3 HEAT CHARGES EXPLAINED

Heating charges are calculated using oil or gas bills to obtain a figure for the entire scheme that will then be equally divided up among tenants and charged on a weekly basis. The bill will consist of the total amount of gas/oil that has been consumed by the scheme.

Choice review the costs of heating your scheme annually and if the total cost of the oil/gas bill over the 12 months is not covered by the collective heating charges of the scheme, we will increase the amount you are charged. Likewise, if the collective heating charges across the scheme result in a surplus to Choice over a 12 month period, we will reduce your heating charges. Choice do not charge profit on your heating and the cost of maintaining these systems is included in your rent, not your heating charges.

### 4 REDUCING COMMUNAL HEATING CHARGES

Almost all of Choice's communal heating systems have controls in each property to manage the amount of heating delivered to your home. These consist of a time clock, room thermostat and TRVs. Please refer to the instructions in previous sections to understand how to operate these effectively. Reducing the cost of communal heating charges relies on all tenants doing their bit to reduce the overall usage at the scheme.

### 5 HEAT METER CHARGES EXPLAINED

Some of Choice's communal heating schemes have heat meters in each property. These are devices that measure the amount of heat used in your home, i.e. the amount of heated water that passes through your radiator system to provide heating.

Instead of splitting an overall oil/gas bill across the entire scheme evenly, Choice use the heat meter readings to apportion a percentage of the overall oil/gas cost to your property. If you live in a scheme with heat meters, you will pay a weekly direct debit where your balance is adjusted at the end of every 12 week period. Your balance is adjusted depending how much heat you used and how much your scheme was charged for oil/gas used in this 12 week period.

If you use more heat than is covered by your direct debit then you will be charged additional heating charges. If you use less heat than the value of your direct debit, you will receive a credit on your account.

Note, that hot water is not measured and so we charge a flat rate per property for this. Likewise a portion of the schemes bill is apportioned to your property to cover the cost of heating common areas which is again a flat rate.

Once the cost of hot water and the common area heating is deducted from the 12 week oil/gas bill, the remaining balance is then split amongst tenants as a percentage. Choice take your heat meter reading as a percentage of the total heat that was metered across the entire scheme. i.e. if your heat meter recorded that you used 2% of total amount of heat in the scheme, you will be charged 2% of the remaining balance after hot water and common area heating is deducted.



# HOW SOLAR PANELS WORK

## HOW SOLAR PANELS WORK

These systems convert sunlight to electricity for use within a home to help reduce electricity costs for the occupants. Our website has a simple Solar PV guide which can be downloaded to provide you with more information.

[choice-housing.org/news/2021/february/choice-housing-solar-photo-voltaic-pv-systems](https://choice-housing.org/news/2021/february/choice-housing-solar-photo-voltaic-pv-systems)



## HOW TO LOCATE YOUR METER

Meter locations are different in every property, however there are a few key places to check when trying to locate your meter.

1. Under the stairs
2. Beside switch board
3. In the utility room

## WHAT DOES YOUR METER TELL YOU?

Your meter will be able to tell how many kWh the system has generated over a period of time. You can track how much is generated by comparing the unit number to previous days/weeks. For example a sunny summer week will generate more power than a cloudy winter week.

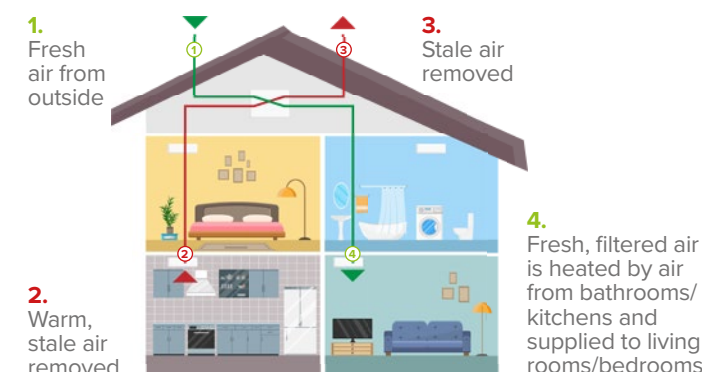
# HOW MVHR WORKS

## WHAT IS IT AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) is a whole home ventilation system that extracts stale air from the home and brings in fresh, filtered air. These systems have been installed in some of our most recently completed new homes to provide ventilation in an efficient manner, reducing the need to open windows.

If you have an MVHR system in your home, **please ensure it is not switched off** and vents are **not closed or blocked**.

Further information on MVHR systems is available to download from our website. [choice-housing.org/media/2712/choicemvhrweb.pdf](https://choice-housing.org/media/2712/choicemvhrweb.pdf)



## BENEFITS OF MVHR

### AIR QUALITY

MVHR constantly ventilates a property, everyday moisture will have no time to settle on surfaces.

### HEAT RECOVERY

MVHR systems can recover up to 90% of heat in a room.

### FUEL COSTS

MVHR recovers up to **90% of normally wasted heat** and uses **less energy**

than a traditional heating system, saving money on your energy bills.

### NO NEED FOR OPEN WINDOWS

You don't need to constantly open windows to insure you get fresh air.



# HOW TO VENTILATE YOUR HOME



## WHY DO WE NEED TO VENTILATE OUR HOMES?

By failing to properly ventilate a home, problems such as condensation and mould can occur. However, leaving windows open constantly or for very long periods of time, can mean the fabric of your home (your walls, ceiling and floor etc.) can cool down. This could mean that your home becomes harder to heat and you will have to run your heating system for longer periods of time than is necessary. It is also important for our respiratory health that we are breathing fresh air.



## HOW TO VENTILATE OUR HOMES

We can effectively ventilate our homes by opening the windows during the day to let fresh clean air into the property. We can also use ventilation systems like MVHR to improve the air flow around the home.

When drying clothes make sure to either dry them outside or if you are drying them inside make sure the room is ventilated correctly. I.e. have the windows open. Try to avoid drying clothes over radiators can also increase the moisture in your home which can lead to issues such as condensation and mould

Broughshane Street, Ballymena

