

Information booklet 29th May 2020

This booklet details sources of support around some key themes: Emotional wellbeing, physical wellbeing, Access to food, Housing related/financial information and assured information on the Coronavirus CV19.

DISCLAIMER: all information is fact checked where possible and accurate at the time of sending.

If you notice any inaccuracies, please contact CommunityInfoUpdates@leics.gov.uk

We will review and update this next week to reflect the changing support structures that are available.

Warm Homes advice



The Government and energy regulator Ofgem are working closely to develop guidelines for energy suppliers to support customers and for residents to maintain affordable warmth during prolonged periods at home where energy usage may significantly increase. Full details can be viewed [here](#). Key points:

Priority Services Registration:

If you or someone you know is vulnerable, of pensionable age, has children under 5, a disability or long-term medical condition it's important to let your energy supplier know. Each energy supplier and network operator keeps a [Priority Services Register](#) of people who may need additional assistance such as password security to help you identify supplier representatives. It's free to be added to the list.

Leicestershire residents should join via Western Power Distribution and agree to information sharing so that their energy supplier is notified automatically:

<https://www.westernpower.co.uk/customers-and-community/priority-services/priority-services-register>

How can I top-up my prepayment meter if I am self-isolating?

You should tell your supplier straightaway if you can't top up your meter. This includes if you are ill with coronavirus or following guidance to stay at home and self-isolate, and if you don't have anyone to help you.

The government has launched an [emergency package with energy suppliers](#) to ensure you don't face any additional hardships in heating or lighting your home during the coronavirus outbreak. Customers with prepayment meters who are self-isolating or unable to leave their home can now speak to their supplier on the options. This may include:

- someone being sent to top up your prepayment card or token
- having funds added to your meter credit
- having a preloaded gas or electricity card sent to you in the post.

No credit meters will be disconnected during the outbreak.

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Suppliers must tell you:

- what customer service support is available, particularly if you are vulnerable
- how you are supported if you can't top up or could go off supply.
- If your meter is outside, it may be helpful for you to leave your meter box unlocked if it's safe to do so, and if you need someone else to top it up. You may also want to arrange for a trusted person to take your top-up card to the shop if needed.

If your local top up shop closes, contact your supplier who can help. [Paypoint.com](https://www.paypoint.com) and [Payzone.co.uk](https://www.payzone.co.uk) list alternative vendors online, and the [Post Office](https://www.postoffice.com) also provide top ups for some suppliers.

If you are a smart meter customer, you should be able to top-up remotely, such as by phone, mobile application or online.

Citizens Advice has published more detailed online advice for [prepayment customers](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/energy/prepayment-customers). You can also their helpline on 0808 223 1133. Calls are free. If you feel overwhelmed, or are unable to deal with your supplier on your own because of personal circumstances, the helpline may also be able to refer you to the Citizens Advice Extra Help Unit. Learn more at: <https://ehu.org.uk>.

Guidance on the policies and support currently being provided by individual energy companies is available here:

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2020/03/uk-coronavirus-help-and-your-rights/#energy>

I'm not sure who my supplier is. Who should I contact?

Check a recent energy bill or check your suppliers website for contact details.

If you can't do this, consider using one of the following tools:

Gas: **Meter Point Administration Service** on 0870 608 1524 (7p/minute)

Or visit: <https://www.findmysupplier.energy/webapp/index.html>

Electricity: **Western Power Distribution** 0800 096 3080

Energy supply problems (e.g. power-cut, meter issues)

Contact your supplier straightaway if you have an energy problem, such as a gas leak or faulty meter. Tell them if you are unwell or self-isolating.

I'm a tenant and due my annual gas safety check/boiler service/maintenance – Can I refuse?

Routine and non-urgent works may be cancelled or delayed by your housing provider or their contractors. The approach taken varies and you should check the Coronavirus updates published on your housing providers website if possible in the first instance or contact the contractor or housing provider customer services team for further advice.

Please see the following advice pages for housing providers locally:

[Derwent Living](#)

[EMH Homes](#)

[Midland Heart](#)

[Orbit Housing](#)

[Platform Housing](#)

[Riverside](#)

[Stonewater Homes](#)

[Tuntum Housing](#)

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Residents refusing non-urgent works are likely to be contacted at a later date as it is still a legal requirement for gas safety checks to take place.

Emergency works to maintain safety and wellbeing take precedence and contractors will be required to contact households to check circumstances and have appropriate Safe Systems of Work processes in place to ensure stringent hygiene standards through use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and safe distancing.

Smart meter installation are continuing:

Smart meters fitted free of charge by your energy supplier bring a number of benefits such as accurate bills, a clear picture of your energy usage in pounds and pence and where using prepayment introduce the ability to top-up your meter remotely.

- Ahead of a smart meter installation visit, your supplier should contact you and establish i) whether there are any people in the household who are more vulnerable to COVID-19 infection (e.g. those aged over 70 or with underlying health conditions) ii) whether your household is self-isolating in line with government guidance.
- If yes, unless an emergency meter exchange is required to keep you on supply, we advise that the installation visit should not go ahead. Emergency metering work should still proceed.
- All installers should follow Public Health England guidance, such as avoiding close contact with you and washing their hands regularly.

If you become unwell or are self-isolating, contact your supplier to tell them. You can postpone or rearrange your installation appointment if you want to.

Gas and Electricity Network operators in this region are operating as usual:

Electricity - Western Power Distribution: Enquiries: 0800 096 3080.
Power supply issues: 0800 6783 105.
Gas - Cadent: Enquiries: 0345 835 1111.
National Gas Emergency Helpline: 0800 111 999.

Local support in a crisis:



Double click the icon to view the general advice booklet on maintaining a warm home

Emergency credit:

If your meter runs out of credit you will normally have an emergency credit that can be used (normally £5). This will be paid back straight away next time you top up.

Those experiencing financial hardship may be able to access discretionary support via their local authority Housing Options team who can facilitate access to emergency credit for prepayment meters, food, essential items and support those experiencing or at risk of homelessness:

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[North West Leicestershire](#): Telephone: 0800 952 0079.

[Charnwood](#): Telephone: 01509 634 567.

[Melton](#): Telephone: 01664 502 502.

[Harborough](#): Telephone 01858 82 82 82.

[Oadby & Wigston](#): Telephone: 0116 288 8961.

[Blaby](#): Telephone 0116 275 0555.

[Hinckley & Bosworth](#): Telephone 01455 251 137 / 01455 238 141.

[Citizens Advice](#) also have a guide to support if you can't afford to top up your prepayment meter.

Leicester Charity Link:

Heating:

Portable electric convector heaters are available throughout the county locally to support vulnerable low income private sector households experiencing a heating crisis.

Leicestershire County Council staff are able to view the intranet guidance [here](#).

Residents needing to access a heater should contact their local authority on their customer services number:

North West Leicestershire: Telephone: 01530 45 45 45.

Charnwood: Telephone: 01509 263 151.

Melton: Telephone: 01664 502 502.

Harborough: Telephone 01858 82 82 82.

Oadby & Wigston: Telephone: 0116 288 8961.

Blaby: Telephone 0116 275 0555.

Hinckley & Bosworth: Telephone 01455 238 141.

For more information regarding support locally please visit our Warm Homes service webpages:

<http://www.firstcontactplus.org.uk/our-services/your-home/warm-homes/>

Due to Coronavirus restrictions we are not currently able to visit households.

General advice:

Stay on top of heating costs:

Households where residents are spending significantly more time at home during periods of isolation or home working may wish to consider increasing regular payments to reflect the likely increased energy consumption. This will help to ensure that a direct debit for example is covering the amount of energy used at home. Your energy supplier usually only reviews your direct debit every 6 months. Taking action now may prevent unexpectedly large bills and jumps in your direct debit later in the year.

If you are a prepayment meter customer consider:

- Top up your meter by more than you usually would each time you top up
- Make a list of family, friends or neighbours who live nearby and might be able to top-up your key or card
- Visit your energy suppliers website for more information in the first instance as many suppliers may have a reduced telephone service at present and be relying on online 'live-chat' services to reduce wait times.

Switching energy tariff or supplier:

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If you're concerned about heating costs consider checking if you can get a cheaper deal elsewhere. [These](#) Ofgem approved services are free and impartial and can make the process quick and simple.

Warm Home Discount:

If you are on a low income and claim certain benefits you may be eligible for the £140 Warm Home Discount off your energy bill. The scheme runs each year up to the end of March and opens again in the Autumn. The scheme operates on a first come, first served basis and can close early once all funds are allocated. Some suppliers will let you register your interest to be notified when the scheme re-opens later in the year. Check if you are eligible:

<https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme>

Keep Warm:

It is recommended to heat your main living space to 21° C or 70° F and other rooms to a minimum of 18° Celsius or 64° F during the day.

- Eat and drink warm foods
- Wrap up warm and wear plenty of layers
- Keep active
- Hug a hot water bottle
- Use an electric blanket or heated seat cover to keep warm. This is much cheaper than using room heaters and is particularly effective for those who are less mobile or taking medication that means they feel the cold more easily. They can ensure a person is warm in themselves without having to use additional room heaters or set the thermostat excessively high and waste energy heating the whole home.

Further energy advice guides for households and businesses:

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/energy-guides>

For those whose home finances are under pressure including a result of Coronavirus, the following services offer advice and information on a host of money management and consumer advice:

[Money Advice Service](#)

[MoneySavingExpert](#)

Utility Bills:

Many families may be struggling with or will struggle with utility bills – almost all of the main providers have funds for account holders which can support with bills and by providing household electrical items.

- [EON Energy Fund](#) - helps pay current or final EON energy bill arrears. It can also help EON's most vulnerable customers by providing replacement household items such as cookers, fridges, fridge-freezers and washing machines – and also help to replace and repair gas boilers as well as e-learning vouchers
- [EDF Energy Trust](#) - awards grants to individuals and families to clear electricity and gas debts owed to EDF Energy and to purchase essential energy efficient household items
- [npower Energy Fund](#)
- [Scottish Power Hardship Fund](#)

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- [Ovo Energy Fund](#)
- [SSE \(Southern Electric\) Priority Assistance Fund](#)
- [British Gas Energy Trust](#)

British Gas Energy Trust offers grants and schemes that are open to anyone - you don't have to be a customer:

Housing support services:

The Bridge:

Specialist housing related advice, support, and assistance services and accommodation options to homeless and vulnerably housed people across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

<https://www.thebridge-eastmidlands.org.uk/>

Tel: 01509 260 500

WhatsApp: 07521386794

Shelter:

Shelter helps millions of people every year struggling with bad housing or homelessness through advice, support and legal services.

<https://england.shelter.org.uk/>

Tel: 0808 800 44 44

Online chat

Housing Ombudsman:

If you are a social housing tenant and cannot resolve an issue through your housing providers complaints procedure first, you can raise a complaint via the Ombudsman:

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

Tel: 0300 111 3000 (9:15am – 5:15pm)

Private Sector Housing:

If you rent your property via private landlord or their management agent and are having difficulty resolving an issue, contact your local authority and ask to speak to the Private Sector Housing team who can advise, liaise and where necessary take enforcement action.

Information and advice:

Not sure where to start or what services can help with your query?

First Contact Plus:

Helps adults in Leicestershire find information about a range of services all in one place.

<http://www.firstcontactplus.org.uk/>

Tel: 0116 305 4286.

Zinthiya Trust

The Zinthiya Trust is a registered charity that works to alleviate abuse and poverty

Tel: 0116 254 5168

Email: zinthiya.trust@gmail.com

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Community Advice and Law Service:

'Our services are free and targeted towards individuals most at risk of social exclusion. We work closely with other providers to reach communities who are most in need. We ensure that our work meets the quality assured standards as set by the Legal Aid Agency and CALS holds a contract with The Money and Pensions Service for the East Midlands Money Advice Partnership.'

<https://www.cals.uk.net/>

Tel: 0116 242 1120

Email: enquiries@cals.uk.net