

A housing guide for refugees in Scotland

Energy costs

scottish
refugee
council

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If you have received leave to remain, you will now be responsible for your energy costs, that is the electricity and gas that you use for heating, lighting, cooking, etc. This leaflet explains what you can do to help keep your costs down and to pay your fuel bills.

Find practical advice about paying for heating and saving on bills on the Shelter Scotland website: http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/getadvice/advice_topics/paying_for_a_home/paying_for_heating_during_cold_weather

I have leave to remain – what happens now?

Once UK Border Agency gives you leave to remain in the UK, you are no longer an asylum seeker. This means that the Agency will not continue to provide you with financial support and you will be responsible for paying for the energy that you use.

What do I do?

- The first thing to do is take a note of the readings on your meters, **which will look similar to the image shown here**. It will be in your home and, if you have a mains gas supply, a gas meter. If you do not know how to take a meter reading, ask a friend to help you. If you live in a block of flats, you could ask the concierge to help.
- Contact your energy suppliers to register your details with them and give them the meter reading. If you are not sure who supplies your electricity (or gas), ask your landlord.



How can I keep my energy costs under control?

Scotland is cold during the winter, and energy costs are high. You can reduce your energy costs by:

- using less energy
- checking that your supplier is giving you the best deal
- maximising your income

The following sections give you more detail on each of these.

How do I use less energy?

Don't waste the energy you're paying for. You can:

- close curtains, when it's dark
- if you have one, use a shower rather than a bath
- use your kettle to boil only as much water as you need - don't fill it up every time you use it
- turn off lights in rooms you aren't using

Find more advice about saving energy on the Energy Saving Trust website:

<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/What-can-I-do-today/Getting-started>

If your home is cold or draughty, you could make some improvements to it (or ask your landlord to do so). This could be as simple as fitting some draught excluders to your doors and windows, to getting the heating system replaced. If you have bought your home or if you rent it from a private landlord, you may be able to get a grant or cheap loan to help you insulate it or replace inefficient heating and appliances.

Find out how much energy and money you can save by using the home energy checker on the Energy Saving Trust website:

<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/proxy/view/full/165/homeenergycheck>

You can also telephone an advisor free on 0800 512 012. They will give you information and put you in touch with the agencies that can help you most.

How do I get the best deal from my energy supplier?

Above all, do not accept a prepayment meter, as this is the most expensive way of paying for energy. Your supplier will have different schemes that are much better – for instance, you may get a discount for buying both your gas and electricity from the same company. If you have a bank account, it may be cheaper to pay by Direct Debit on a monthly scheme.

There are many websites that tell how to get the best deal such as the Save on your bills website:

<http://www.saveonyourbills.co.uk/>

How do I maximise my income?

It is well worth having a benefits check, even if you are working. The best way of doing this is to go to a money advice centre. You can find your nearest one by phoning the GAIN Helpline on 0808 801 1011.

You should also have a look at Leaflet 7 in this series, 'Housing benefit and late rent payments', which is available on the Scottish Refugee Council website.

Where can I get further information?

You can contact:

A local energy advisor

Phone this number free: 0800 512 012

A local money centre

Call the GAIN Helpline on 0808 801 1011 to get details of your nearest centre