**A Collation of Useful Utility Information (especially for Energy)
(from Nina’s communications since 28/3/22)**

**31/10/22 Household Support fund** and **Fuel Voucher Scheme**

**24/10/22 More on OFGEM Guidance on Energy Payment Difficulties** and **Suggested text for Back-Billing Complaint letter**

**23/10/22 Useful tips on how to challenge unreasonable energy companies** and **OFGEM’s Guidance on Treating Vulnerable Customers Fairly**

**23 /10/22 Energy Bill Support Scheme (EBSS) and Arrears** and **Energy Prices Bill (EPB)** and **CPAG Fuel Rights Handbook**

**6/10/22 Utilities and deductions; Pre-payment meters; Creditor Enforcement of Judgement; Reselling Energy to Tenants; Energy Bill Support Measures**

**26/9/22 Q&A on Energy Issues** and **Energy Price Guarantee and effect on DROs**

**6/6/22 Energy Bills Support Scheme** and  **New OFWAT Guidance on Supporting People to Pay their Bill**

**23/9/22 Cancelling Direct Debits and OFGEM Standard Licence Conditions** and **Warm Home Discount**

**28/7/22 Energy Firms and Unfair Direct Debits**

**19/7/22 Energy Bills Support Scheme and DROs**

**6/6/22 Energy Bills Support Scheme** and
**New OFWAT Guidance on Supporting People to Pay their Bill**

**11/5/22 Temporary pause on energy usage deductions from benefits** and **British Gas Energy Support Fund**

**12/4/22 Energy Guide** and **Pause of Fuel Deductions from Benefits (especially UC)**

**28/3/22 Grants and benefits to help you pay your energy bills**

31/10/22 Email from Nina

**Household Support fund and Fuel Voucher Scheme**

**Household Support fund Open for Leicestershire county**

The HSF is now live.  Same process as before – please refer via the link below and ensure you submit with your UNIQUE CODE
 <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/adult-social-care-and-health/assessment-and-eligibility-for-care-and-support/household-support-fund>

Leicester hasn't caught up yet, but you can refer to CALS *(Community Advice and Law Service, Leicester)* for Fuel Vouchers:

**Fuel arrears voucher scheme**
You can book an appointment with an experienced debt adviser who can provide advice and assistance to help you manage fuel arrears and any other bills you may be struggling to pay. The free support will include help to maximise your income and reduce your outgoings, negotiating affordable payment plans with your suppliers, provide one off grants to eligible applicants, and identify options to help you resolve all your outstanding bills.   (From our perspective, you could send the client off to CALS with a detailed SFS, produce in Catalyst by clicking 'Export Finances to PDF or Excel')

Please visit cals.uk.net for more information or contact book an appointment with an adviser on 0116 242 1120 or by email enquiries@advice-cals.org.uk.

24/10/22 Email from Nina

**More on OFGEM Guidance** and **Suggested text for Back-Billing Complaint letter**

**Extra Update - Ofgem guidance on Energy payment difficulties**

This is important because it clarifies three important issues where there has been some uncertainty:

* offering variable instalments to suit different ‘income patterns’
* pausing debt recovery where a client is vulnerable, including financial vulnerability like a negative budget
* considering a client’s risk of self-disconnection before fitting a prepayment meter as part of a ‘safe and reasonably practicable’ assessment

- Variable instalments - gives grounds to challenge monthly DDs

- Pausing debt recovery - this is much more clear than the standard licence conditions

- Risk of self-disconnection (where a client simply stops using gas & electricity to save money, which is especially harmful where high standing charges are in force).

This is clear guidance that suppliers should not move people to prepayment meters, including smart meters, if a client will self-disconnect. Evidence of a negative budget might stop prepayment meter installations.

**Please make complaints against any supplier not following these guidelines**, and copy me in on any that you make. I will collate them to send to CPAG.

**If you do make a complaint to a supplier and they do not respond satisfactorily**, keep escalating the complaint, refusing any goodwill offers, until you reach either the 8 week letter or the Deadlock letter, whichever comes first. Then make a complaint to Ofgem. It is important to make the complaint to Ofgem - not only does it cost the supplier £500 for every complaint, but it also contributes to Ofgem's public quarterly results where they will quote cases and outcomes such as fines for the supplier.

Read [Ofgem’s letter to suppliers on the Ofgem website](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=00f1dae907&e=87bf44fe74) (PDF, 134KB).

Read [Ofgem’s ‘Good practice for supporting customer in payment difficulty’ on the Ofgem website](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=d3b3ca7a08&e=87bf44fe74) (PDF, 207KB).
*'We consider it good practice to pause debt recovery actions for consumers in a negative income who have an inability to pay their arrears. '
'When carrying out safe and reasonably
practicable assessments, suppliers could assess as broad a range of hazards and potential risks as possible...and include potential risks such as self-disconnection.'*

*'When installing prepayment meters for consumers who are unable to leave their house, suppliers should carefully consider this as the right course of action, as an inability to top up their meter can exacerbate the mental health condition'*

Read [Ofgem’s ‘safe and reasonably practicable’ guidance for prepayment meters on the Ofgem website](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=3a060caa1c&e=87bf44fe74).

See next page for Back Billing Complaint template email text prepared by Nina

**Back Billing Complaints**

Here is the text of template email I have created (following a back billing complaint for a client):

We have been consulted by the above for advice and assistance with their financial affairs and enclose a signed form of authorisation which we request you keep on file.
We are making a full evaluation of our client’s circumstances and understand that they may have an outstanding debt to you.

**Complaint**

(history of bills & readings, eg ' you sent a large bill on (date), even though the meter is accessible on the outside of the house / our client remembers visits by a meter reader etc, and our client has submitted readings through their app...etc)
 **I would remind you that you are not allowed to back bill beyond 12 months, as per the Ofgem Standard conditions of electricity supply licence since 1 May 2018:**

'Condition 21BA. Backbilling Part A: application to Domestic Customers Prohibition 21BA.

1 Subject to paragraph 21BA.2, where the licensee or any Representative Issues a Bill to a Domestic Customer or otherwise seeks to recover (including via a Prepayment Meter) Charges for the Supply of Electricity from that customer (hereafter a “charge recovery action”), they must only do so in respect of:

(a) units of electricity which could reasonably be considered to have been consumed within the 12 months preceding the date the charge recovery action was taken; and

(b) where applicable, amounts in respect of a Standing Charge or any other type of supply charge accrued within the 12 months preceding the date the charge recovery action was taken.'
 **You are also required to take a physical meter reading at least once a year, which it appears you have not done.
and that the onus is on you as the supplier to notify the customer if there are errors in billing:**

See Ofgem's letter to Energy Suppliers 17 Dec 2020:

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2020/12/open_letter_on_expectations_for_energy_suppliers_undertaking_charge_recovery_action_0.pdf>

'Ultimately, it is the responsibility of suppliers to bill consumers correctly for their usage and to ensure consumer accounts are correctly reconciled. Consumers must not be held responsible for failing to identify errors in their billing or that a debt balance is accruing.'

**We request you to credit our client's account with the value of the unbilled energy consumed over 12 months ago, taking into consideration any payments already made or credits applied to the account, so that he is not required to pay any additional sums towards this previously unbilled energy consumption.

Refusing to do so may suggest non-compliance with SLC 21BA.**

Best wishes,

Debt Adviser
Money Matters Leicester

23/10/22 Second Email from Nina

**Useful tips on how to challenge unreasonable energy companies** and

**OFGEM’s Guidance on Treating Vulnerable Customers Fairly:**

**Ofgem guidance on payment difficulties**
Ofgem has set out its expectations for suppliers dealing with people in financial difficulty. In an open letter, Ofgem states that suppliers must:

* proactively contact those in difficulty
* consider affordability in debt recovery
* ensure all prepayment meters are ‘safe and reasonably practicable’ for clients and change clients back to credit meters where necessary

The 10 page guidance includes:

* offering variable instalments to suit different ‘income patterns’
* pausing debt recovery where a client is vulnerable, including financial vulnerability like a negative budget
* considering a client’s risk of self-disconnection before fitting a prepayment meter as part of a ‘safe and reasonably practicable’ assessment

This is clear guidance that suppliers should not move people to prepayment meters, including smart meters, if a client will self-disconnect. **Evidence of a negative budget might stop prepayment meter installations.**

Read [Ofgem’s letter to suppliers on the Ofgem website (PDF, 134KB).](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=00f1dae907&e=87bf44fe74)

Read Ofgem’s [‘Good practice for supporting customer in payment difficulty’ on the Ofgem website (PDF, 207KB)](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=d3b3ca7a08&e=87bf44fe74).

Read Ofgem’s ‘[safe and reasonably practicable’ guidance for prepayment meters on the Ofgem website](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=3a060caa1c&e=87bf44fe74).

**Ofcom updates its ‘treating vulnerable customers fairly’ guidance**
On 29 September, Ofcom revised its guidance on treating vulnerable customers fairly. Chapter 4 of the guidance includes:

* having specialist teams for vulnerable clients, including in debt management
* using service restrictions proportionately, retaining freephone helpline access
* using disconnection as a last resort
* considering payment deferrals and ability to pay when setting arrangements

The example on page 25 implies that even where arrangements are agreed, services could still be restricted.

Read the [revised Ofcom guidance on the Ofcom site](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=ba99f274ba&e=87bf44fe74).
Read the [Ofcom General Conditions on the Ofcom site](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=0e0ac74af9&e=87bf44fe74).

23/10/22 First Email from Nina

**Energy Bill Support Scheme (EBSS)** and

**Energy Prices Bill (EPB)** and **CPAG Fuel Rights Handbook**

**Energy Bill Support Scheme (EBSS) and arrears**
Advisers have asked how supplies will deal with the EBSS payments where a client has arrears to the supplier. According to the scheme guidance, it depends on how a client pays for usage:

**Direct Debit (DD)**

- If a supplier reduces a DD with the EBSS payment but the DD is less than the EBSS payment, any remaining EBSS payment will be used for arrears. This will be rare as most DD payments will be greater than the £66/£67 EBSS payment.

**Credit (pay when they receive a bill)**

- The EBSS payment can be used to settle arrears. Where a client is not paying ongoing usage, the whole EBSS payment can reduce arrears. There appears to be supplier discretion about how much they attribute to arrears under this payment method.

**Smart and traditional prepayment**
- The EBSS payment can be used towards debt before usage. Again, it appears there is discretion in how this is done.

**Summary:**
DD customers are most protected. With many clients who are unable to meet their DDs moving to other methods, it is a difficult balance. Where a client can afford a DD arrangement, it might be in their best interests to arrange one.

The guidance reminds suppliers that Standard Licence Conditions 27 (ability to pay) applies. We (CAB) would add that so does SLC 0 and the fair treatment of customers.

Under these conditions, a supplier must consider a client’s ability to pay their charges. SLC 0 requires the fair treatment of vulnerable clients. Advisers could help clients to show that the payment of EBSS is critical to ongoing affordability, and that using it to pay arrears is unfair.

Read this post on Workplace - [Utilita took 30% of an EBSS to repay arrears on prepayment.](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=bda4f84c39&e=87bf44fe74)

Read the [EBSS guidance on GOV.UK](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=0a1a6eed75&e=87bf44fe74).

Read about [grants and benefits to help you pay your energy bills on the CAB website.](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=b8fcf0787b&e=87bf44fe74)

**Energy Prices Bill (EPB)**
The Government introduced the EPB on 11 October (see the Consumer section of this update).
The Bill will introduce legislation ensuring support for offgrid, heat network and alternative fuel users (e.g. oil). Clause 19 aims to ensure landlords pass on support where bills are included in rent.
Read the [Energy Prices Bill on the UK Parliament website.](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=227159a7fd&e=87bf44fe74)

**CPAG Fuel Rights Handbook 20th Edition is now free online**

This is the essential source for challenging energy suppliers. CPAG have now made it free online. You can find it [here](https://askcpag.org.uk/?id=-242440) or search in the Money Matters shortcuts in Chrome.

6/10/22 Email from Nina

**Utilities and deductions; Pre-payment meters; Creditor Enforcement of Judgement; Reselling Energy to Tenants; Energy Bill Support Measures**

**High Court finds that DWP must contact claimants before starting utility deductions**
In [a decision last Friday](https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2022/2392.html), the High Court found that DWP has been making third party deductions from benefits for utilities unlawfully (the 'Fuel Direct' scheme). The case related to water and fuel deductions from the claimant’s ESA (though it's more common to see this in Universal Credit).
DWP internal guidance incorrectly failed to state that the claimant must contacted to establish their wishes and allow them to make representations.  This means in future, DWP must contact a claimant before starting third party deductions for energy or water.

 Note that DWP does still have the power to impose deductions without consent, but this case establishes that they must give the claimant the chance to make representations first.

**Citizens Advice has published Out of the Cold? Helping People on Prepayment Meters Stay Connected this Winter.**
4m households currently use pre-payment meters. Not being able to spread out higher winter fuel costs means those on pre-payment meters pay an average £86 per month more in the winter months compared to those on credit meters. Advisers will be familiar the self-disconnection that follows when clients cannot afford to top up their meter.
 Over 450,000 people are likely to be changed to pre-payment meters due to arrears accrued in 2022, with 225,000 of these likely to happen over this winter. Those changed to pre-payment over this winter will pay a total of almost £50m more than if they had stayed on credit meters.
The report calls for government and Ofgem to work together to put in place a moratorium on changing from credit to pre-payment meters (including via smart meters) until April 2023. Full report [here](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Energy/EXTERNAL_%20For%20publication_Out%20of%20the%20cold_%20Helping%20prepayment%20customers%20to%20stay%20connected%20this%20winter.pdf)

**How a creditor can enforce a judgment**

A creditor can enforce a County Court money judgment (CCJ) using:

* a warrant of control
* a writ of control in the High Court (if judgement amount exceeds £600)
* a charging order
* an attachment of earnings order
* a third party debt order.

More info [here](https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/legal/debt/money_claims_and_judgments/how_a_creditor_can_enforce_a_judgment?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=10267&utm_content=Sep%2022%20ebulletin&utm_term=67347#reference-1) in a Shelter on methods of enforcement

**Energy Resold to Tenants by Landlords must be sold on at cost**

OFGEM require that where a landlord resells energy to tenants, it must not add charges. See [here](https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2005/10/11782-resaleupdateoct05_3.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwiUsP3cg7j6AhVQUcAKHXC-A_IQFnoECA4QAQ&usg=AOvVaw11Cp4A8FBmrlexD170Xd1O)

Note that this does not apply to LPG sold in containers.

**Energy Bill Support measures update**
The Energy Bill support Scheme to provide £400 per household, starting this month, will not reach every household. In recognition of this the government has said it will:

* introduce legislation to ensure that landlords pass on the payment to tenants who pay all-inclusive rent
* provide additional funding so that payments will be extended to include people such as park home residents and those tenants with communal heating systems whose landlords pay for their energy via a commercial contract
* provide a payment of £100 to households who won’t benefit from the Energy Price Guarantee -  such as those who are off grid - to compensate for the rising costs of alternative fuels such as heating oil

Read the [full announcement on the energy bill support measures](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-outlines-plans-to-help-cut-energy-bills-for-businesses?mc_cid=e86a79687e&mc_eid=87bf44fe74) on GOV.UK.

26/9/22 Email from Nina

**Q&A on Energy Issues; Energy Price Guarantee and effect on DROs**

**Useful Q&A on Current Energy Issues**

Greater Manchester Money Advice Group Debt Advisers Forum held a Fuel Q&A special on 18th August - some interesting stuff [here](https://wakelet.com/wake/1b2wc1KRNf5CN-pTbThZv)

**Energy Price Guarantee (and effect on DROs)**

You've probably seen all this already, but if you're anything like me, it takes a few repetitions for it to stick, so here is a useful summary from the CAB Expert Advice Team:

On 8 September the government announced plans to limit further rises in energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee (See the Consumer section for full details). The government will shortly release the actual energy unit prices. The new guarantee will run for 2 years from 1 October.

No new support measures have been announced but the following existing support measures are still in place:

* £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme
* £150 Council Tax rebate
* Cost of living payments
* Low income benefits and tax credits
* Disability Cost of Living Payment
* Pensioner Cost of Living Payment

Working out eligibility for debt options where outgoings are subject to change might be difficult, especially for Debt Relief Orders (DRO). Once the unit prices are available clients can contact their supplier who should be able to give quite accurate average cost predictions.

The DRO Team have said that payments under the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme which will be made in the next 6 months should be disregarded and won't count as income.  However, the low income Cost of Living Payment, the disability Cost of Living Payment and the pensioner Cost of Living payment should be treated as income and apportioned over a reasonable period (maximum of 12 months) when assessing surplus income.

**23/9/22** Email from Nina

**Cancelling Direct Debits and OFGEM Standard Licence Conditions and
Warm Home Discount**

**Paying Energy Bills & Whether you should cancel your Direct Debit**

I've been checking the Fuel Rights Handbook (latest is 20th Edition, and I've ordered a copy, but the 16th Edition may be found [here](https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-FuelRights-sample.pdf) or in the Money Matters shortcuts on Chrome under 'Utilities - Energy)....and also Debt Camel about the current hot topic - whether you should cancel your Direct Debit. Here are some key points:

Suppliers must offer a range of payment methods:

**OFGEM Standard Licence Conditions SLC 27.5&27.6**

*'Customers in payment difficulty
27.5 The licensee must offer each of the services set out in paragraph 27.6 when it becomes aware or has reason to believe that a Domestic Customer is having or will have difficulty paying all or part of the Charges.
27.6 The services referred to in paragraph 27.5 are:
(a) the facility for a Domestic Customer to pay Charges:
(i) by using, where available, a means by which payments may be deducted at source from a social security benefit received by that customer;
(ii) by regular instalments calculated in accordance with paragraph 27.8 and paid through a means other than a Prepayment Meter; and
(iii) by using a Prepayment Meter, where it is safe and reasonably practicable in all the circumstances of the case for the Domestic Customer to do so and where any instalments to be paid are calculated in accordance with paragraph 27.8'*

* Some providers allow you to amend your DD amount each month
* Variable DDs - an alternative method of payment where the supplier takes only the amount billed for that month.

Beware...

* Suppliers must offer alternative ways to pay, **but this can be overridden if they have good reason to believe that you won't be able to afford the new arrangement.**
* Some suppliers offer a discount for paying by DD - check if you would lose this by cancelling.
* If there isn't enough money in your account at DD time, bank charges from Returned Direct Debits are £25 each time

However...

* You can ask for credit back from your supplier, but they may ask questions about how you will afford ongoing payments.

Smart meters potentially have their own problems:

* Smart meters can be changed remotely by the supplier into a prepayment meter. See [here](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/getting-smart-meter)
* This can be done without a visit to the client's home. See [here](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7504927/Smart-meters-turning-debt-collecting-gadgets-Energy-firms-making-pre-payment.html)
* Ofgem's Interim Guidance to energy companies of Aug 2010 states 'Where the supplier has the ability to remotely disconnect or remotely switch the customer to prepayment terms, there is no operational need to physically visit the premises. However, visiting the premises is often the only way vulnerability can be detected.' See here
* Vulnerable Persons Register - some suppliers have a tighter definition so you may wish to quote [Ofgem's criteria for the Priority Services Register](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/getting-extra-help-priority-services-register) to them

**Warm Home Discount**

The criteria for the Warm Home Discount are changing. The good news is that you don't have to apply - it will be paid automatically. The bad news is that if you are not on Pension Credit, you also have to meet the High Energy Cost rule, which is calculated automatically and based on your home's age and floor area. See [here](https://debtcamel.co.uk/new-warm-home-discount/#respond) for more detail.

28/7/22 Email from Nina

**Energy Firms and Unfair Direct Debits**

I just opened an email from 13th July containing a link to this article <https://debtcamel.co.uk/ofgem-energy-firms-poor-direct-debit-setting/>

which talks about Ofgem taking action against companies unfairly increasing direct debits.

19/7/22 Email from Nina

**Energy Bills Support Scheme and DROs**

**Cost of living payments and DROs**
HM Treasury has confirmed the cost of living payments to assist with the current cost of living crisis. The payments are:

* the one-off-cost of living payment to be paid to households on means-tested benefits in July and November totalling £650
* the pensioner cost of living payment of £300 to be paid in November/December along with the winter fuel payment
* the disability cost of living payment of £150 to be paid in September
* A grant of £400 through the energy bills support scheme will be taken off energy bills from October

The DRO Team have confirmed that for anyone subject to a DRO moratorium at the time the above payments are made, they will not consider the above payments as windfall payments or an increase in income requiring a re-assessment of surplus income.

For anyone considering a DRO, the cash payments should be treated as income. The funds are provided to assist with rising costs which will be reflected in an applicant’s outgoings. Therefore, in making the surplus income calculation the payments should be reasonably apportioned, over a maximum of 12 months, to offset against increased outgoings when determining that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for surplus income.

The universal rebate of £400 through the energy bills support scheme and the council tax rebate of £150 should be reflected in the amounts entered as outgoings in any calculation of surplus income. Where the applicant will receive a cash sum in respect of the grant or rebate this should be apportioned and treated as income.

6/6/22Email from Nina

**Energy Bills Support Scheme** and

**New OFWAT Guidance on Supporting People to Pay their Bill**

**Energy bills support scheme - £400 to all households with an electricity supply**
The Chancellor has announced that, as part of a wider set of cost of living crisis measures, **all households will get £400 of support with their energy bills**. This will be paid as a grant over a 6 month period from October. Direct debit and credit customers will have the money credited to their account, while customers with pre-payment meters will have the money applied to their meter or paid by voucher.

You can read more about the [Energy Bills Support Scheme on GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-of-living-support/cost-of-living-support-factsheet-26-may-2022?mc_cid=d8310461d2&mc_eid=87bf44fe74)

You don’t need to make a claim for the new support payments from the government, or change benefits, as you will automatically receive your cost-of-living support. **New Ofwat guidance on supporting people to pay their bill**
Ofwat has published guidance to water companies when helping people with their bill. The guidance includes:

* supporting those in debt
* approaches to enforcement
* supporting vulnerable people

The guidance sets out against using High Court enforcement in most cases. You can [read the guidance on the Ofwat website](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=7016f12ffd&e=87bf44fe74).

11/5/22 Email from Nina

**Temporary pause on energy usage deductions from benefits** and

**British Gas Energy Support Fund**

**Temporary pause on energy usage deductions from benefits**

The Fuel Direct Scheme enables energy suppliers and benefit claimants to apply deductions for energy arrears from benefits. In light of the significant increase in energy bills, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has written to UK energy suppliers about plans to temporarily pause requests to pay for ongoing energy usage from benefits from 1 April. However, the customer can still request a new deduction. Note this is all about ongoing useage, not debt.

See here for [more](https://www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/news/temporary-pause-on-energy-usage-deductions-from-benefits/)

**British Gas Energy Support Fund**

[British Gas Energy Trust (BGET) has launched a new Energy Support Fund](https://britishgasenergytrust.org.uk/grants-available/) which will run in addition to their existing Energy Trust Fund. Through the new fund, British Gas customers with fuel debt of £250 to £750 can apply for grants. The fund is aimed at ‘the most financially vulnerable British Gas customers who are struggling to pay their energy bills’.

12/4/22 Email from Nina

**Energy Guide** and **Pause of Fuel Deductions from Benefits (especially UC)**

**Energy Guides**

[This useful guide from the charity 'NEA - Action for Warm Homes'](https://www.nea.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/WASH-GUIDE-NOVEMBER-2020.pdf)  helps us to understand options available for clients, and the pros and cons of each one.

Also see Martin Lewis's [Heat the Human not the Home](https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/heat-the-human-not-the-home-save-energy/)

And the CAB [factsheet](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/get-help-paying-your-bills/struggling-to-pay-your-energy-bills/), including how to negotiate with energy suppliers

**Pause on Fuel Direct deductions from benefits, especially UC**In response to the energy costs crisis, [The Social Security Benefits (Claims and Payments) (Modification) Regulations 2022](https://i-m-a.us6.list-manage.com/track/click?u=2f05d221b093ecf0d403f383a&id=5b2ccec8c9&e=2146665c02) come into force on 26 April.

From that date, the new regulations state that the DWP will not accept new requests for third party deductions for gas or electricity arrears, or for increases to existing deductions. This applies to deductions from Universal Credit, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, pension credit and income support.

Clients will still be able to request a deduction, *or request a change* to an existing deduction.
The regulations cease to have effect on 6 April 2023.

28/3/22 Email from Nina

**Grants and benefits to help you pay your energy bills**

See [here](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/get-help-paying-your-bills/grants-and-benefits-to-help-you-pay-your-energy-bills/?mc_cid=b775830037&mc_eid=87bf44fe74) for advice from the CAB about Warm Home Discount, grants to help pay off energy debts, local energy grants (eg help with costs for improving your home), fuel vouchers etc.