

BIG ENERGY SAVING WEEK...

- CHECK**
- SWITCH**
- SAVE**

**citizens
advice**



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

**energy[®]
saving
trust**

Introduction

Big Energy Saving Week (BESW) is back to help consumers prepare for the chilly winter months ahead. We'll be helping people understand their energy use, cut fuel bills and get the financial support they are entitled to.

This section of the briefing provides an introduction to the problems that people face in keeping their homes warm and managing the cost of gas and electricity supplies. It explains how you can spread awareness of ways to save money and energy, signpost consumers to information and help those experiencing problems.

This year, BESW (week beginning 31 October) focuses on saving consumers money and energy by:

- 1 Educating consumers directly on how to **check** their energy costs and **switch** tariff or supplier if they are paying too much

- 2 Spreading awareness of the advice and support available for consumers from programmes like Energy Best Deal extra to the Priority Services Register

- 3 Ensuring that consumers are able to **save** money and energy by taking control of their usage and implementing energy efficiency measures such as insulation

**You can use this opportunity to support consumers to
check—switch—save.**

Context

Many consumers aren't taking advantage of opportunities to maximise their income or get support

- Up to £17bn in benefits and tax credits went unclaimed in the UK in 2013 – enough to pay the fuel bills of nearly 13.5 million homes!
- Specialist support for vulnerable consumers is available from suppliers through the Warm Home Discount scheme, Cold Weather Payments and the Priority Services Register. For more information on the schemes, including eligibility criteria, see bigenergysavingweek.org.uk or call the Energy Saving Advice Service or the Citizens Advice Consumer Service.

Many consumers are unaware of how they could save money on their fuel bills

- Many people stay on the same tariff or with the same supplier for years without realising they could be getting a better deal elsewhere. They could be saving around £300 a year, particularly if they have never switched before.
- Making simple changes to everyday behaviours, such as using electrical appliances differently (e.g. not leaving TVs on standby or not leaving lights on and taking shorter showers) could save a family household as much as £130 on their annual energy bills – that's equivalent to 500kg of carbon dioxide emissions.

We live in energy-inefficient housing

- An energy efficiency retrofit of the home – including insulating cavity walls, topping up loft insulation, installing double glazing and upgrading a boiler – could save a household on average £250 on their annual energy bills, reducing emissions by 1 tonne of carbon dioxide a year.
- There are several supplier and Government schemes, including Nest in Wales and ECO and HEEPS in Scotland, to help consumers make their homes more efficient and reduce the amount they spend on energy. For more information on the schemes, including eligibility criteria, see bigenergysavingweek.org.uk or call the Energy Saving Advice Service.

People aren't aware of changes to the energy market which make it easier to check, switch and save

- Understanding energy costs and **checking** that you're not paying too much is simple.

All energy suppliers should supply a personal projection on bills and other communications that estimates likely energy costs over the next 12 months, explaining price changes in pounds and pence and an annual summary to help consumers understand their tariff and compare it with others

- **Switching** is now easier than ever before – all suppliers should now offer consumers clear and personalised information, including:
 - Regular updates on the cheapest available tariff
 - Providing tariff information labels (similar to food labels) to make comparisons easier

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- **Consumers** should find it easy to identify how they might save money on fuel:
 - Advance warning of any price increases or contract changes that would disadvantage a consumer.
 - Fixed term deals are fixed – suppliers can't increase the price on any fixed-term deal agreed on or after 15 July 2013.
 - Consumers on a fixed-term deal will receive a notice 42-49 days before the end date to remind them the tariff is coming to an end. If they switch after this point, suppliers can't charge a termination fee.
 - No automatic rollover to another fixed term deal, only to the cheapest evergreen or default (variable with no end date) tariff – meaning consumers can switch if they want to. This can often mean that consumers roll onto the most expensive tariff so its important to be alert and switch to another fixed deal to save.
 - Consumers on dead tariffs (old deals you can't sign up to anymore) must be transferred onto the cheapest variable deal with no end date if this will save them money.

We need to make sure that consumers are aware of the market rules and the range of other support available. Vulnerable consumers, for example, are hit hardest by price rises, are less likely to shop around and are more likely to be on the most expensive rates. BESW is an opportunity to reach these groups and encourage them to take up the support and discounts they are entitled to.

Change in the Market

In 2016 the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) concluded its two year investigation into the energy market. This found that consumers have been paying £1.4 billion a year more than they would in a fully competitive market, and recommended a number of changes to improve competition in the market and protect consumers. These should be put place by the end of 2016, although they may take a while to fully implement. Measures include a transitional price cap for consumers on prepayment meters until 2020, a new database of disengaged consumers to allow rival suppliers to contact these consumers.

At the same time there is a large amount of change in the retail market, as many new, smaller suppliers enter and more innovative business models and products emerge. To ensure regulation is able to meet these challenges Ofgem, the energy regulator, are introducing new principles based regulations which provide the flexibility to respond to these changes, and which force suppliers to consider how their actions impact consumers. These changes will take effect from early 2017.

Key messages

The primary message of BESW is that consumers can save money and energy if they **check—switch—save**.

CHECK

Make sure you aren't paying too much or missing out on any benefits or support that could boost your income and lower costs. Call your supplier or visit your nearest Citizens Advice for more information.

SWITCH

You could save around £300 by switching energy tariff or supplier. Use your Power to Switch and visit <https://energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk/> to compare energy prices or go to a Big Energy Saving Week event near you.

SAVE

Make your home energy efficient and cut your bills by hundreds. Don't leave your TV on standby or mobile on charge unnecessarily, and ask your supplier about help to pay for insulation or a boiler upgrade.

For more information, advice workers and consumers can visit www.bigenergysavingweek.org.uk or call 0300 123 1234 (0808 808 2282 in Scotland).

Focus on 'SWITCH'

Switching energy supplier can be a great way for households to save money, with research showing that the majority customers on non-fixed deals could save a significant sum of money. Initiatives by Government and industry mean that switching is becoming quicker and easier than ever before, so this really is a good moment for more people to get active in the market.

Citizens Advice price comparison tool

Citizens Advice has developed our own price comparison tool <http://energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk/>. Please encourage advisers to try it out.

What is different about the Citizens Advice price comparison tool?

- Free tool for clients to use and for suppliers to list their pricing information.
- A **full** market comparison tool.
- Our brand and reputation means suppliers welcome a totally independent price comparison tool for clients to use.

What are the benefits for clients in using the Citizens Advice price comparison tool?

- Independent tool – trusted brand.
- Available via multiple channels online, telephone service, face to face.
- Educational information to help a client understand the benefits of switching and where to get further help with energy issues.
- Access to a downloadable fact sheet containing relevant information which will also contain supplier contact details and Ofgem accredited switching site details

- Website pages will also contain supplier company performance stats including comparable information about service performance and customer service offer

Citizens Advice is aware that energy prices are rising, and we're speaking out nationally about the possible implications of this for consumers, particularly those who are vulnerable. However BESW is an awareness-raising campaign that will focus on increasing consumer understanding of how to use energy more efficiently, save money and access support with energy costs. The campaign will remind consumers that:

- There is a lot of support available and your first point of contact if you are having difficulty should be your supplier.
- Citizens Advice can offer support in dealing with arrears or identifying benefits that you are eligible for to help you to keep up with your bills.
- If you are in need you should take up support through supplier grant and discount schemes, and/or join the Priority Services Register.
- Simplified tariffs and bills have already been introduced to help consumers get a better service from their supplier.

You may want to use these messages or vary them in order to use existing materials, tackle local issues or focus on your own area of expertise. Additional downloadable resources produced during last BESW, along with new resources produced by local partners, will be available at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/besw16-partner or www.cas.org.uk/besw (for those in Scotland).

Top tips to help you check, switch and save

Check

Read your meter regularly and check your bills to make sure you know how much energy you're using and that you are paying the right amount.

Talk to your supplier or local Citizens Advice if you think your bill is wrong or have problems paying. You could be entitled to benefits or support to pay your bill.

Switch

You could save around £300 by switching energy supplier or changing tariff. Visit <https://energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk/> to compare energy prices.

You can switch even if you owe up to £500 per fuel if you use a prepayment meter. However you pay for your energy, if you have problems switching due to fuel debts, Citizens Advice can help you to negotiate with your supplier.

Save

Make your home energy efficient – insulate lofts and walls, double glaze or use thick curtains to keep the heat in, and get your boiler serviced or replaced to make sure it's energy efficient. There are schemes to help with this

Save money and energy – only charge laptops and mobile phones when they need it, don't leave appliances on standby and always turn off the light when you leave a room.

Find out how to get lower energy bills and a more comfortable home with the Energy Saving Trust's Home Energy Check at <http://hec.est.org.uk/>

For more information, visit www.bigenergysavingweek.org.uk

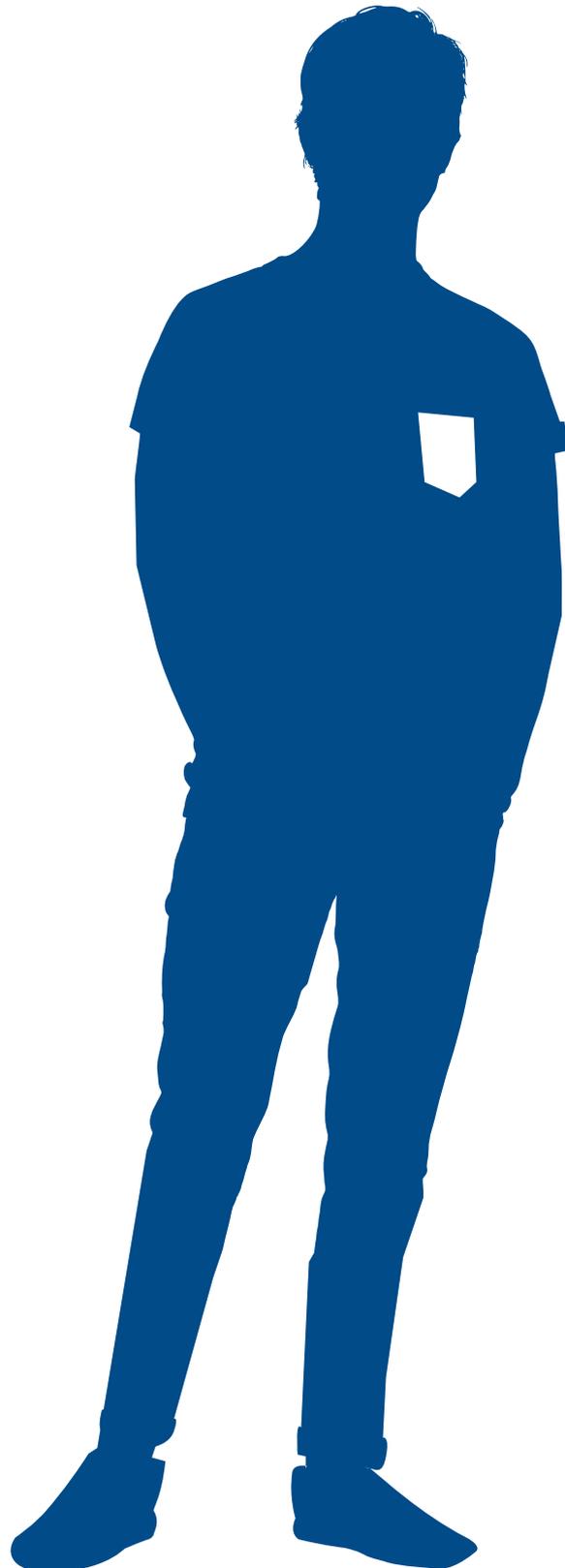
How to get involved

We are asking all of you to support the campaign by championing these messages in your local area. This year, we have split participation into three levels.

All partners can spread the word about energy issues by carrying out all of the straightforward **'bronze level'** actions. We have funded 60 individual events across the network.

Citizens Advice has selected 23 Silver partners to deliver at least events in their local areas.

Citizens Advice has also selected 25 **'gold level'** partners who will be funded to deliver energy related activities throughout October, with a focus on the week beginning 31 October 2016. Gold partners will also produce locally relevant materials and plan larger events that you can get involved in. See www.citizensadvice.org.uk/besw16-partner to find your nearest gold partner and get in touch to see how they can support you.



Resources

You can download additional free resources from www.citizensadvice.org.uk/besw16-partner or www.cas.org.uk/besw (Scotland) including:

- BESW activity guides
- Energy Best Deal resources
- materials and resources produced and shared by gold partners
- the BESW campaign video
- a desktop background
- help for consumers who use energy prepayment meters

To order extra copies of anything in this campaign pack, or to get hold of our energy saving giveaways, go to www.citizensadvice.org.uk/besw16-partner. These resources are free and we will cover postage.



Bronze level

Support BESW by:

● Raising awareness within your bureau/office

- Put the posters and leaflets in public spaces (waiting rooms and reception areas).
- Make sure that advisor/one-to-one rooms are provided with Energy Best Deal adviser information booklets.
- Add desktop background to any publicly visible computer screens.

● Raising awareness locally

- Run a BESW outreach event. Set up a stall at a public venue such as a library, college, shopping centre, sheltered housing/care home, lunch club or community centre. You can order extra materials at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/besw16-partner. Let us know the details of your event by filling in the form on [cablink](http://cablink.org). Our guidance on event planning will help you organise your event and monitor its outcomes www.citizensadvice.org.uk/besw16-partner or www.cas.org.uk/besw (Scotland). Consider how you can target lower-income consumers as they stand to gain the most and are least likely to take advantage of check, switch, save tips, according to evidence
- Send a press release to local media and/or local authority news channels using our standard template (to be coordinated by our media partner to avoid duplication).

- Hold a briefing for staff/volunteers to promote the messages of the campaign and ask them to share the ideas throughout their own networks. Follow up examples where staff/volunteers, or their contacts, or clients have made savings as a result of following the check, switch, save tips. These make good case studies for your evaluation, media work and future energy related campaigns.
- Contact local MP/MPs/AMs/MSPs highlighting BESW using the template letter at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/besw16-partner or www.cas.org.uk/besw (Scotland).

● Raising awareness online

- Use a BESW email footer.
- Feature BESW on the front page of your website, including a link to or an embedded copy of the campaign video.
- Tweet or retweet at least one of the key campaign messages, using the hashtag **#Besw16**.
- Secure agreement from local libraries or council venues to add the desktop background to any publicly visible computers and to feature the film on public screens.
- Make sure you include links where there are online resources that can be printed off.

Silver level

Silver level involvement means doing the bronze level tasks and a little bit more. See some ideas to consider below:

- 1. Get a slot on local radio/ community radio to highlight key education messages. Use case studies to show how consumers can save money and consider taking along an energy or debt expert to take questions from listeners**
- 2. Run two or more events at public venues setting up stalls with a range of online and offline materials. Consider how you can target people who are most hard to reach by the campaign messages and prioritise events that attract these consumers**
- 3. Target education messages at specific groups by putting together articles with statistics and a case study for specialist local publications/websites. Council newsletters, carer magazines, housing association literature, or community/local councillor newsletters. Follow up by getting case studies and statistics of successful consumer outcomes**
- 4. Use social media events in addition to tweeting and Facebook posts. Consider a Twitter and/ or Facebook Q&A where your followers are invited to get energy help from an expert or expert panel. You can set up some template content in advance and ask friends, colleagues to put questions to keep the debate moving over a timed period. Contact other local partners to see if you can share networks and resources**

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Gold level

Twenty-five organisations will receive a grant of up to £6,000 to coordinate a programme of the gold level activities, working with partners in their region, before and during BESW.

As well as carrying out the bronze level activities, gold level partners are asked to commit to all of the following:

1. Ensure BESW is relevant to your region, by:

- a. 'adopting' (an) energy issue/s to focus on during BESW and producing/sourcing locally-relevant resources and giveaways as required
- b. mapping/collating energy and financial support available in the region to support signposting and referral at outreach and through www.bigenergysavingweek.org.uk

2. Support other organisations to get involved in BESW, by:

- a. Sending out advance notice of the week and opportunities to get involved to your networks
- b. Sourcing energy related information (e.g. consumer facing factsheets), giveaways and offers of support from voluntary and corporate sector partners
- c. Developing a process to offer small grants and/or disseminate locally sourced and produced resources to local Citizens Advice and other voluntary sector agencies in your region prior to BESW
- d. Distributing digital and hard-copy consumer education resources to community facilities and frontline workers across the region (i.e. JCP, local authority, libraries)
- e. Holding at least two workshops, seminars or public events for other agencies and stakeholders (including suppliers) to discuss how they can work better together to help consumers get access to the right support across the region. These may take place in the run up to BESW.

3. Raise the profile of BESW locally and regionally, by:

- a. Running a sustained Twitter and Facebook campaign throughout the week, utilising materials provided by Citizens Advice and the national BESW media partner The Energy Saving Trust
- b. Planning and carrying out a local media campaign engaging with local print media, online news sources, radio and/or television. Offer advice and support to consumers on saving money and energy

4. Carry out consumer facing awareness raising work and support consumer action, by:

- a. Highlighting energy issues and available support directly to the public through one or more events across October, culminating in a 'roadshow' comprised of at least five outreach activities during BESW
- b. Offering opportunities for supported action (including switching, engagement with energy advice projects or take up of energy saving measures) through BESW outreach and/or targeted work to reach disengaged consumers

5. Monitor, capture and follow up on outcomes of engagement and consumer actions taken as a result of BESW, by:

- a. Developing a process to record reach and engagement of BESW action across the week
- b. Developing a system for following up with engaged consumers and recording action following the week
- c. Working with partners to record the benefits of the week (including money saved, referrals made and support taken up)

Tell us about your involvement

Whatever you do for Big Energy Saving Week, please let us know! This is so we can make sure you get the resources you need as well as recognising all the great work you do.

If you are a local Citizens Advice, please submit a local action reporting form, www.cablink.org.uk/larf.

There is also a form so you can register any events you are holding. Its really important to fill this in so we can help promote your events.

We will send out a monitoring and evaluation form link to everyone who has taken part following the week. If you are in receipt of BESW funding, these will be conditional upon providing monitoring and evaluation information.

Otherwise, you can let us know what you're up to – or ask any questions – by emailing the campaigns team at campaigns@citizensadvice.org.uk (England and Wales) or Lucy.manson@cas.org.uk (Scotland)

