

# **BIG ENERGY SAVING WEEK...**

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

**citizens  
advice**



HM Government

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# Introduction

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Big Energy Saving Week 2019 (BESW) is back to help consumers understand their energy use, cut their bills and get the financial support they are entitled to.

BESW is a partnership campaign between Citizens Advice, Citizens Advice Scotland, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and numerous other organisations. It is funded through a statutory levy on energy network companies.

BESW will be launching the week beginning **21 January 2019**. We chose January because we have found people are more likely to be thinking about their fuel bills at the beginning of the year, often after spending a lot in December. They are more likely to be engaged with the topic and motivated to find ways to save money.

Every year, BESW partners empower people across England, Wales and Scotland to save money on their energy bills through face to face events, social media, local partnerships and engaging with their local media.

Last year, campaigners helped **thousands of people save approximately one million pounds** through their events and campaign activity and almost 9 in 10 consumers contacted after attending a BESW event said they felt more confident they knew how to save money and energy in future.

This year, BESW 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.

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- 2** Spreading awareness of the advice and support available for consumers, from programmes like Energy Best Deal Extra to the Priority Services Register to benefits and grants they may be entitled to.

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- 3** Ensuring that consumers are able to **save** money and energy by accessing discounts and implementing energy efficiency measures such as insulation.

**Join us in supporting your local community to check—switch—save.**

Read on for more details of how to get involved with the campaign.

# Why campaign?

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Citizens Advice is a national charity which delivers free, confidential and independent advice to help millions of people to find a way forward. We are also the official consumer body for energy.

We use research and evidence from the people who contact our advice service every day to understand the problems facing energy consumers in Great Britain. We help solve these problems by engaging with industry, changing policy and supporting consumers to navigate the market.

## **We know that many of our clients are struggling to pay their energy bills**

- In 2017, our offices provided over 78,600 consumers with assistance on energy issues. Over half of these clients needed support with debts owed to their energy supplier.
- Our helpline answered 61,000 contacts from consumers, providing them with help and advice about their energy supply. Our online energy advice pages were viewed 1.4 million times.

## **Too many people are living in fuel poverty**

- 11% of households in England are estimated to be in fuel poverty<sup>1</sup>.
- One in five customers living in private rented households in England are in fuel poverty, higher than any other type of household and twice the national average<sup>2</sup>.
- One in ten prepayment meter customers “self-disconnected” from their electricity or gas supply because they did not top up their meters<sup>3</sup>.
- BESW aims to tackle fuel poverty by raising awareness of ways that consumers can keep their energy bills down and helping them to find better deals, discounts, grants and help.

## **Face to face help reaches households in vulnerable situations, who can find the energy market confusing**

- Many customers in vulnerable circumstances continue to be most likely to be paying over the odds for their energy<sup>4</sup>.
- Older people and people on low incomes are less likely to shop around and are more likely to be on the most expensive rates<sup>5</sup>.
- One important way to reach these households is to provide local, face-to-face advice on reducing bills. That is why a key component of BESW is holding public events to directly help consumers.

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1 BEIS annual fuel poverty statistics report 2018 (2016 data)

2 BEIS annual fuel poverty statistics report 2018 (2016 data)

3 State of the energy market 2018

4 Ofgem press release, 11 October 2018

5 The cost of loyalty, Citizens Advice, February 2018

## Why campaign continued

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

- Over £20bn in benefits and tax credits goes unclaimed in the UK – enough to pay the fuel bills of millions of homes!
- Specialist support for vulnerable consumers is available from suppliers. Yet not everyone who is eligible receives the Warm Home Discount or is signed up to the Priority Services Register. BESW is an opportunity to promote this extra help.

### Many consumers are unaware of how they could save money on their fuel bills by switching or changing their habits

- Many people stay on the same tariff or with the same supplier for years without realising they could be getting a better deal elsewhere. Ofgem research found that more than half of households were still on a poor value default deal. They could be saving hundreds of pounds a year, particularly if they have never switched before – 34% of people have never switched supplier.
- Making simple changes to everyday behaviours could save households over £80 a year – by turning appliances off standby, turning off lights when they're not in use, using a washing up bowl, only filling the kettle up with the amount of water needed and cutting back on washing machine use by one cycle a week.
- Being smarter about heating homes could lead to savings of over £100, through draught proofing around doors and windows, installing a room thermostat and thermostatic radiator valves and turning down the room thermostat by one degree.

### We live in energy-inefficient housing

- A quarter of heat is lost through the roof in an uninsulated home. Consumers can save hundreds of pounds and reduce carbon emissions by insulating their home. This could be a combination of loft insulation, insulating the hot water tank, using radiator reflective panels, installing cavity walls and double glazing.
- There are several supplier and Government schemes, including Energy Companies Obligation (ECO), Nest in Wales 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, visit [simpleenergyadvice.org.uk](http://simpleenergyadvice.org.uk), [nest.gov.wales](http://nest.gov.wales) (Wales) or call Home Energy Scotland on 0808 808 2282 (Scotland).

### Rural consumers can have a hard time with energy

Rural energy consumers are often hit the hardest because of lack of choice, inefficient or older homes or having to be on alternative fuels such as oil. We have created a leaflet specifically to help rural consumers. Find the leaflet at [bigenergysavingweek.co.uk](http://bigenergysavingweek.co.uk).

### People aren't aware of changes to the energy market which make it easier to switch

Understanding energy costs and checking that consumers aren't 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.

## Why campaign continued

### Switching is 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
- advance warning of any price increases or contract changes that would disadvantage a consumer.
- 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.

The Energy Switch Guarantee ensures energy switching is completed in just 21 days. At the time we are printing this briefing, 24 suppliers are signed up to it. Check which ones at [energyswitchguarantee.com](http://energyswitchguarantee.com). The guarantee ensures:

- consumers can continue using their existing energy supplier until they switch
- in the event of a problem occurring, the consumer's new supplier should make sure the issue is resolved swiftly and efficiently
- the consumer can change their mind within 14 days of the switch and return to their previous supplier
- and, any credit from their old energy account will be refunded within 14 days of their final bill.



## Citizens Advice price comparison tool

Switching energy supplier can be a great way for households to save money, with research showing that the majority of customers on non-fixed deals could save a significant sum of money.

Please encourage staff and volunteers to use the Citizens Advice price comparison tool  
[energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk).

- **Free** tool for clients to use and for suppliers to list their pricing information
- **A full market** comparison tool
- **Totally independent**
- Gives a **customer service rating** out of 5 stars for the largest energy suppliers
- Tells you if a provider offers the **Energy Switch Guarantee** and/or the **Warm Home Discount**
- Access to a downloadable fact sheet containing relevant information which will also contain supplier contact details and Ofgem accredited switching site details

# Key messages

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Are you ready to join us in campaigning and raising awareness of how to save money on energy bills?

BESW is all about making sure 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, grants or support that could boost your income and lower costs. Call your supplier or visit your nearest Citizens Advice for more information. You can also call the consumer helpline on 03454 04 05 06.

## SWITCH

You could save hundreds of pounds by switching energy tariff or supplier. Visit **[energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk](https://energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk)** to compare energy prices or go to a BESW event near you.

## SAVE

Make your home energy efficient and cut your bills by hundreds of pounds. Don't leave appliances on standby, always turn off the light when you leave a room, and ask your supplier about help to pay for insulation or a boiler upgrade.

# How to get involved

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We have created a range of resources to help you campaign and raise awareness. Posters, leaflets and freebies (bags, meter keys and more) are **FREE** to order, and you can download additional free resources from [citizensadvice.org.uk/besw19-partner](https://citizensadvice.org.uk/besw19-partner) including a social media pack and template press release.

- Use the **tally counter** we have sent you to count how many people come to your events.
- Use the **stickers** to signal people can speak to you about energy advice.
- Help clients moderate the temperature of their homes by giving them our **temperature gauges**.
- Use our **selfie board** to take photos of people you've helped save money.

## Raise awareness within your office

- Put the posters, leaflets and Energy Best Deal booklets in public spaces (waiting rooms and reception areas).
- Hold a morning briefing for staff and 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.

## Put on BESW events to engage with the public

- Set up a stall with BESW campaign materials at public venues such as the local library, college, shopping centre, care home, lunch club or community centre.
- Let us know the details of your event and order extra materials and freebies at [citizensadvice.org.uk/besw19-partner](https://citizensadvice.org.uk/besw19-partner).
- Use a laptop or tablet to help consumers save money by switching energy provider or tariff using our energy price comparison tool: [energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk](https://energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk).
- Consider how you can target people who are hardest to reach by the campaign messages and prioritise events that attract these consumers.

## Engage local media

- Send a press release to local media and local authority news channels using our template.
- 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.

## How to get involved continued

### Support local partners to get involved

- Contact local MPs, MSPs, AMs and councillors highlighting BESW using the template letter at [citizensadvice.org.uk/besw19-partner](https://citizensadvice.org.uk/besw19-partner).
- Send out advance notice of the week and opportunities to get involved to your networks.
- Source energy related information (eg consumer facing factsheets), giveaways and offers of support from voluntary and corporate sector partners.
- Distribute digital and hard-copy consumer education resources to community facilities and frontline workers across the region, such as local Citizens Advice, Jobcentres, local authorities and libraries.
- Consider holding a workshop, seminar or public event 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.

### Raise awareness online

- Run a Twitter and Facebook campaign throughout the week, using the BESW social media pack and linking to BESW news coverage.
- Tweet or retweet at least one of the key campaign messages, using the hashtag #BESW19.
- Promote the Citizens Advice energy price comparison tool: [energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk](https://energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk).
- Share success stories about how much money you have helped clients save during BESW – use our selfie board to take photos of people you've helped save money.
- 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 or colleagues to ask questions to keep the debate moving over a timed period. Contact other local partners to see if you can share networks and resources.



**I'm so glad you were here today.  
I wouldn't know where to start.**

# Tell us about your involvement

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Whatever you do for BESW, 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.cablinc.org.uk/larf](http://www.cablinc.org.uk/larf).

There is also a form at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/besw19-partner](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/besw19-partner) for you to register all the events you are holding. It's really important to fill this in so we can accurately evaluate our impact.

We will send out an evaluation form link to everyone who has taken part following the week. You can use our monitoring form to help you do this. Copies of these are at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/besw19-partner](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/besw19-partner). If you are in receipt of BESW funding, this will be conditional upon providing monitoring and evaluation information.

Gold and Silver partners will also need to fill in client surveys both during and after the week.

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](mailto:campaigns@citizensadvice.org.uk)



**Can't believe I have saved over £400, I thought the whole switching process would be much harder.**

# More information on the energy market. Things you should know for 2019

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## Price caps

Since April 2017, there has been a transitional price cap – called the ‘safeguard tariff’ – for consumers on **prepayment meters**. This is expected to last until 2020. From February 2018 this cap was extended to include consumers receiving the Warm Home Discount. These Warm Home Discount households will be transferred onto the new price cap for people with standard meters.

A new price cap for those with **standard meters**, who are on default and standard variable tariffs will be introduced on 1 January 2019. This cap doesn't limit the total bill, but the cost of each unit of energy. Therefore, the more electricity and gas a person uses, the more they will pay.

While the price cap should save people money on standard variable tariffs, people should still be able to find a better deal on their energy bills by shopping around. The Citizens Advice energy price comparison tool and supplier star rating can help with this.

## Smart Meters

Smart meters are a new type of meter for gas and electricity which are currently planned to be offered to all British households by 2020. Smart meters send meter readings directly to your energy supplier and will enable a range of new services like displays that show you exactly how much energy you're using, the cost of that energy and tailored tariff and energy efficiency advice. Smart meters should mean that manual meter readings, estimated and back bills will become a thing of the past.

## Suppliers are rolling out smart meters at different rates.

This means not all suppliers may be ready to install smart meters yet. It also means some may be targeting certain areas and groups first.

For some consumers, technical solutions may need to be developed before a smart meter can be installed. However the plan is that almost all homes will be able to have a smart meter by the end of the rollout.

## Smart meters are optional

While energy suppliers are obliged to offer smart meters to everyone, you don't have to accept one if you don't want one. In the future, smart meters will be the only option available to replace old meters. However, you'll still be able to request that your supplier not make use of the smart meter functionality, meaning that it will act like a standard meter.

## You may lose some 'smart services' if you switch suppliers

You might not be able to use your smart meter's functionality with your new supplier. You can switch but might have to have your smart meter in standard meter mode. Check if your new supplier will take automatic meter readings or if you'll need to submit them. Newer smart meters, called SMETS2 meters, have now started being installed which should avoid this issue.

For more information, see [citizensadvice.org.uk/energy](https://citizensadvice.org.uk/energy).

