



ENERGY PRICE INCREASES

ADVICE & SUPPORT FOR CUSTOMERS

You will have seen in the press that we are in the middle of a global energy crisis. UK energy bills are increasing at an unprecedented rate. It's important to understand why this is happening and what support is available to you.



Why are energy prices going up?

The rise in energy prices has been driven by an increase in energy costs in recent months. This has increased the amount providers pay for gas and electricity and that cost is now being passed onto consumers. This means that bills are going up substantially for lots of households.

To try to combat this, the UK Government recently announced a new energy bill support package. Bield have reviewed the content of this and this leaflet provides answers to some of the main questions you may have. Please note that individual circumstances will determine what additional support is available – in some cases, certain eligibility criteria will apply.

What am I entitled to if I pay my energy supplier directly?

The UK Treasury is providing financial support for individual households which have an individual electricity meter and pay an energy supplier directly. A £400 energy grant to reduce bills will be paid to the accounts associated with these electricity meters. This means pre-payment meters will get the credit applied to them while those on standard meters will get the amount credited to their account. If you pay by direct debit, the money will be credited to your account. These are automatic payments and will likely be spread out over the six months from October 2022 to March 2023.

Am I entitled to anything if I pay for my energy via my rent or service charges?

Bield provides energy to many of our customers who pay for their energy as a service charge. Bield has negotiated some very good procurements arrangements and we are able to provide the energy at much lower rates than customers would be able to obtain directly from other suppliers. However, because of the direct supply, these customers are not currently eligible for the £400 energy grant as it does not apply to households which pay their electricity via their rent charge or service charge. Bield are working closely with the Scottish Government to continue to secure the best rates possible to try and mitigate against the impact of future price increases. Bield is also working to see if we will be able to change the eligibility requirements for this grant. Bield did increase energy service charges from 1st April 2022, however this increase was far below the actual increased cost which Bield will pay.

What is expected to happen with energy prices in the future?

You may have seen in the press that the energy market remains volatile and it is difficult to predict what will happen over the next 12 months. Reports had indicated that domestic energy prices were expected to rise by 80% in October 2022 however the UK Government has recently intervened and an energy price cap of £2,500 for a typical household will be put in place until 2024. It is anticipated that the energy market will not begin to stabilise until 2024 at the earliest. At present, specialist advice suggests that the main way to mitigate these increases is for everyone to educate themselves on how to manage their energy usage to ensure it is as efficient as possible.

Will Bield increase the energy charges that I pay via my rent and service charges?

Bield understand that our customers have been and continue to be impacted by ongoing energy price increases (as well as other cost of living increases) and remain committed to doing all we can to make bills as affordable as possible. Our energy service charges were increased by 17.5% in April 2022. This was significantly lower than the increases applied to bills for all households paying their energy suppliers directly. Bield's costs to supply the energy to our customers have risen by 96% and we have taken the decision to absorb the shortfall this year to mitigate the impact on our customers. Unfortunately, it will not be financially sustainable to do this every year. Covering the increase in energy costs means we have less money to maintain homes and deliver the improvements you have asked us to deliver such as kitchen and bathroom upgrades. An increased energy charge will therefore be applied from 1st April 2023 to tackle the rise in energy prices and help us to continue to provide quality homes and services to our customers. We will do everything possible to keep this increase as low as we can, including utilising all available government initiatives and managing how we use our energy. However, the current and planned price increases make this a difficult challenge.

What are Bield doing to reduce energy costs?

Bield are continuing to monitor energy consumption levels throughout all of our developments and have begun introducing energy saving measures to help reduce energy usage and expenditure. We have been researching energy efficiency measures and looking at recommendations and guidelines issued by Age Concern and NHS Scotland. From 1st September 2022, we will also commence a programme to reduce the temperature by 15% (and therefore reduce the cost) at all of our developments which are heated via a communal boiler.

What can I do to help reduce energy costs?

The ongoing energy crisis is a worry for all and likely to be with us for a while. We need all of our customers and staff to work together to save energy and reduce costs. Simple steps like turning down your heating (or turning it off where you can) and unplugging electrical devices and appliances (such as your TV) when they are not in use can make a big difference. This will not only save on energy usage, but it will help to limit the increase we apply to energy costs in the future. This energy supply crisis is not a short-term problem. The greater the number of small changes we all make to reduce costs and change how we use our energy, the more this will help us to mitigate the effects of rapidly-rising costs and ensure that we can move towards a more sustainable solution.

Am I entitled to any other energy financial support?

The table below outlines the existing and additional financial support which is available for households.

Payment	Comments/ Eligibility	Amount	Payment Date
Cost of Living Payment	<p>A non-repayable £650 payment will be given to households receiving the following benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Credit • Income-based Jobseekers Allowance • Income-related Employment & Support Allowance • Income Support • Pension Credit 	£650 - paid in two instalments	2022/23
Disability Cost of Living Payment	<p>A one-off payment of £150 for those receiving disability benefits. To be eligible, you must have had a successful claim for a disability benefit in progress on 25 May 2022.</p>	£150	Sept 2022
Energy Grant	<p>A non-repayable £400 discount on energy bills between October 2022 and April 2023 for domestic electricity customers. This sum will be paid automatically to domestic accounts with electricity meters.</p>	£400	Autumn 2022
Pensioner Cost of Living Payment	<p>A one-off payment of £300 will go to households that receive the Winter Fuel Payment. This is a top-up to your Winter Fuel Payment.</p>	£300	Nov/Dec 2022

Payment	Comments/ Eligibility	Amount		Payment Date
Warm Home Discount	This is a one-off payment to help with the cost of energy over winter. It's usually added as credit to your electricity bill. It's likely you're entitled to this if you or your partner receive the Guarantee Credit part of Pension Credit.	£150		Winter 2022
		Over 65	Over 80	
Winter Fuel Payment	You qualify and live alone (or none of the people you live with qualify).	£200	£300	Nov/Dec 2022
	You qualify and live with someone under 80 who also qualifies.	£100	£200	Nov/Dec 2022
	You qualify and live with someone 80 or over who also qualifies.	£100	£150	Nov/Dec 2022
	You qualify, live in a care home and do not get certain benefits.	£100	£150	Nov/Dec 2022

What else can I do if I'm struggling to pay my energy bills?

Bield understand that this is a difficult time for our customers. If you have any concerns in relation to paying your energy bills, please speak with your energy supplier in the first instance or contact the following organisations for additional advice and support:-

- **Advice Direct Scotland**
 - Call **0808 196 8660** or visit their website (you can also email them via the website): **energyadvice.scot**
- **Citizens Advice Scotland**
 - Call **0800 028 1456**, visit your local Citizens Advice Bureau or visit their website: **www.cas.org.uk**
- **Ofgem**
 - Visit their website: **www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers**

You can also email Bield at: **energyadvice@bield.co.uk**

