

[News story: Pre-payment meter price cap comes into effect to protect millions of consumers](#)

Today the CMA's price cap on pre-payment meters has come into force to the benefit of around 4 million households.

Last June, following a [two-year investigation](#) into the energy market, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) decided to put in place a temporary price cap to protect some of the most vulnerable households in Britain.

The temporary cap is expected to reduce bills across Britain and will save the average household £80 a year. The CMA found that people using pre-payment meters had less choice and were paying disproportionately higher bills than customers paying by other means – including direct debit.

The price cap will remain in place until the end of 2020 when the smart meter roll-out – combined with other changes imposed on the industry by the CMA – is expected to tackle issues that prevent such customers accessing the better deals available to others.

Andrea Coscelli, Acting Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

Households across the UK deserve to get a fair deal on their energy bills.

On top of a number of measures to get competition working better, the CMA's pre-payment meter price cap means that more than 4 million consumers, many of whom are vulnerable, and who can't easily shop around for a better deal, will see their bills cut by around £80 a year each, saving British customers a total of £320 million per year.

[Press release: Energy reforms come into force today](#)

- Energy suppliers to focus help on vulnerable households
- Part of plan to improve energy efficiency of 1 million homes by 2020

Homes across Great Britain will get extra support to make their homes cheaper

and easier to keep warm thanks to Government reforms that have come into force today.

Changes to the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) will make sure energy companies give support to people struggling to meet their heating bills, with plans to extend the scheme from April 2017 to September 2018 also confirmed.

Consumer Minister, Margot James said:

The big energy firms already have to help households save gas and electricity bills, by improving homes so they are easier and cheaper to keep warm.

We're strengthening this obligation today and making sure they prioritise low income households as part of our plan to insulate 1 million homes by 2020.

The reforms, which were consulted on last year, will simplify the scheme, with energy companies required to provide struggling households with energy efficiency measures to make their homes warmer and bring their bills down.

As well as an increased focus on low income and vulnerable homes, eligibility will be extended to social housing tenants in EPC bands E, F and G, and local authorities will also be able to help match people with energy suppliers.

Suppliers will also be required to install a minimum 21,000 solid wall insulations per year, up from the earlier proposal of 17,000.

There will be continuing protection for the delivery of energy efficiency measures in rural areas, with a requirement that 15% of suppliers' Carbon Emissions Reduction Obligation be delivered in these areas.

ECO has proved a very effective delivery mechanism with around 2.2 million measures installed in around 1.7 million properties between 2013 and the end of January 2017.

Notes to editors

- The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is focused on insulation measures (e.g. solid wall insulation, cavity wall insulation, loft and room in roof insulation amongst others).
- Under the part of the part of ECO focused on fuel poverty, households can also receive heating measures, including first time central heating and more efficient boilers.
- The energy companies obligated are British Gas, The Co-operative, EDF Energy, EON Energy, First Utility, npower, OVO Energy, Scottish power, SSE, Utilita, Utility Warehouse, Extra Energy, Spark Energy, Flow Energy, Economy Energy.
- There are three ways to qualify under the Affordable Warmth element of the scheme: i) those in receipt of certain means tested benefits ii)

those living in social housing with an EPC of E,F or G and iii) those referred to suppliers by local authorities under the newly-introduced flexible eligibility. Suppliers can also refer households who are in or at risk of fuel poverty or vulnerable to living in a cold home.

- The 18-month extension will provide industry with time to adapt their IT and delivery models to deliver insulation rather than boilers to fuel poor households.
- Eligibility for certain measures under Affordable Warmth is extended to social housing in Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) bands E, F and G in order to allow measures to be provided to social tenants who are most in need and more likely to be fuel poor.
- Households are usually identified by the installation companies who fit the energy efficiency measures on behalf of energy companies.
- A small proportion of customers are also referred via the Energy Saving Advice Service.
- For independent, expert advice and to find out if you are eligible for support, contact the Energy Saving Advice Service on 0300 123 1234. Calling hours: Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm. (Calls cost no more than a national rate call)

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News story: British businesses boosted by tax changes coming into effect in April

[unable to retrieve full-text content]This month, a number of new tax changes come into effect, benefiting millions of businesses across the UK.

News story: Spring pay bump for Britain's workers as tax changes come into effect

[unable to retrieve full-text content]Millions of workers will benefit from increases to the Personal Allowance and Higher Rate Threshold on 6 April.