

How to switch energy suppliers

You and your energy supplier
A series of five leaflets

Why change energy suppliers

This can be one of the easiest ways to save money on your energy bills. There are many different deals available and the information in this leaflet can help you get the best one for you.

It may be that your current energy supplier has a cheaper tariff than the one you are currently on. It is worth checking if you are on the best tariff they offer.

Information you need to change your tariff or energy supplier

You will need the following information to compare tariffs:

- 1 The name of your current tariff. This is usually on your bill
- 2 How much you spent on electricity and gas in the past year. You can work this out by looking at your past bills. For the most accurate information use bills based on actual meter readings rather than estimates. Your annual statement will also detail how much you spent on energy in pounds and kilowatt hours (kWh) the previous year. Using your annual consumption in kWh will give you a more accurate comparison

- 3 How you currently pay for your energy: cheque, Direct Debit, online or prepayment meter
- 4 How you would like to pay with a new energy supplier. Direct Debit or online payments are usually cheaper than paying by cheque or prepayment meter
- 5 Decide if you want to change both your gas and electricity supplier. Dual fuel deals from the same energy supplier are often the cheapest options
- 6 Your postcode

How to find the best deals

There are a number of ways to find out about the best deals:

- Search an accredited internet price comparison website
- Contact energy suppliers directly
- Talk to an energy supplier's sales person

Contact energy suppliers

If you have a particular energy supplier in mind, you can find their best deals and tariffs on their website or by telephoning them.

Search internet price comparison websites

Use one of the internet price comparison websites accredited by the Consumer Focus Confidence Code. These websites:

- Compare different energy suppliers' prices
- Show you how much you could save
- Help you find a better deal
- Have a free and easy-to-use switching service

Internet price comparison websites with Consumer Focus Confidence Code accreditation

- www.confused.com
- www.energyhelpline.com 0800 074 0745
- www.fuelswitch.com
- www.energylinx.co.uk 0800 849 7077
- www.moneysupermarket.com 0845 345 1296
- www.simplyswitch.com 0800 111 395
- www.theenergyshop.com 0845 330 7247
- www.ukpower.co.uk 0845 009 1780
- www.unravelit.com 0800 279 4091
- www.uswitch.com 0800 404 7908
- www.whichswitch.co.uk 01992 822 867
- www.beatthatquote.com 0845 652 1546
- switchelectricandgas.com 0871 711 7771

Talk to a sales person

You can find out about a particular energy supplier's prices by talking to a sales person who knocks at your door or has a stall in a public place such as a shopping centre or supermarket.

A sales person can tell you about any deals with the energy supplier that they work for, but this will not give you a comparison with other suppliers.

When talking to a sales person, remember to have the information about your current energy supplier with you.

What a sales person must tell you

Sales people for energy suppliers have to follow certain rules.

- 1 The information they give must be:
 - complete
 - accurate
 - understandable
 - appropriate
 - not misleading
- 2 They must be fair and transparent about prices
- 3 Before you sign up to a new deal, a sales person must give you a written estimate and, where possible, a written comparison with your current tariff
- 4 The estimate should tell you how much your energy is likely to cost you for a year and be based on how much energy you currently use
- 5 If you use a prepayment meter or a sales person says the new tariff will be cheaper than your current one, they must give you a written comparison
- 6 If you decide to switch suppliers, the sales person must:
 - give you a copy of the contract you have signed
 - explain what happens next
 - remind you to check that the new energy supplier and tariff is right for you
 - explain how to cancel your current energy supplier

The EnergySure code

This code has clear standards which sales people must follow. These include explaining your rights and what you should do if you have any concerns. The six big energy suppliers have signed up to the code:

- British Gas
- EDF energy
- EON
- npower
- Scottish Power
- SSE (Southern Electric, Scottish Hydro, SWLAEC, Atlantic)

What to do if you change your mind

Following your decision to switch energy suppliers, the new supplier must call you within 24 hours to check that you are happy to continue and explain the contract you signed.

You have seven days after signing the contract with the sales person to cancel the contract with the new energy supplier.

Making a complaint

If you think a sales person did not give you the right information, or you felt intimidated or harassed by them, you can complain to the energy supplier or Consumer Direct.

What happens after you've chosen a new energy supplier

There will be no interruption to your electricity or gas supply while you are switching suppliers.

The following steps will happen to complete the process.

- 1 Your new energy supplier will ask for a meter reading to make sure you are billed at the right time for the right amount
- 2 Your new energy supplier will pass this reading onto your old supplier so that they can bill you for any outstanding money you owe. If you do not pay this outstanding amount, the old supplier can stop you from leaving until you pay
- 3 Your new energy supplier will let you know the date when your contract with them will begin
- 4 Both the new and old energy suppliers will give you telephone numbers to call if you have any questions
- 5 The switching process should be completed in six to eight weeks

Problems during the switching process

Energy suppliers have signed an agreement saying they will work together to quickly and simply resolve any problems during the switching process regardless of who is at fault.

If you have a problem, you can contact either your old or new energy supplier.

How Consumer Focus can help – www.consumerfocus.org.uk

Energy suppliers' details are on the Consumer Focus website.

Internet energy price comparison websites recommended by Consumer Focus have the Consumer Focus Confidence Code logo on their home page.

How Consumer Direct can help – **08454 04 05 06**

Consumer Direct is a free independent advice service and they can:

- 1 tell you what your rights are
- 2 give you independent advice
- 3 give you information about free services from energy suppliers

You and your energy supplier – a series of five leaflets

What to do when it is difficult to pay your energy bills

Are you missing out on free services and other benefits?

How to make a complaint

How to switch energy suppliers

Switching energy suppliers when you owe money to your current supplier

For more information, or to receive this leaflet in an alternative format, please telephone on 020 7799 7900 or via email contact@consumerfocus.org.uk.