

Your entitlements to free benefits and services from your energy supplier, and water and sewerage companies

All gas and electricity suppliers, water and sewerage companies can offer you free services if you:

- are in receipt of eligible benefits
- are over 60
- are chronically sick
- are disabled
- have hearing or visual impairments

Free services for gas and electricity include:

- Password protection scheme
- Conveniently located prepayment meters
- Regular meter readings service
- Communication services for those with hearing and visual impairments
- Bill nominee scheme
- Advance notice of electricity supply interruption
- Priority services in an emergency
- Annual gas safety checks

Free services for water and sewerage include:

- Password protection scheme
- Re-siting of your meter (some companies charge for this service), an outreader or a regular meter reading service
- Communication services for those with hearing and visual impairments
- Bill nominee scheme
- Advice on eligibility for the vulnerable groups tariff, WaterSure
- Advice on fitting, adaptations and other aids
- Special arrangements to communicate with customers requiring assistance in case of an emergency

Password protection scheme

You can agree a unique password with your supplier which staff will use when visiting your home. This enables you to be confident that the person you let into your home is genuine.

Regular meter readings

Energy suppliers are only required by law to read meters once every two years. If you are over 60, chronically sick, disabled or have a hearing or visual impairment, your supplier can read your meter for free every quarter if no-one is able to do this for you. This will mean you are paying bills based on actual energy use rather than estimates.

Without submitting regular and accurate meter readings, you might receive 'catch-up' bills running into thousands of pounds.

Water companies, are only required by law to read meters once every two years. More frequent meter reading may be offered as an alternative to resiting a meter if you are visually impaired or physically disabled.

Bill nominee scheme

You can agree with your supplier to have your bills, or a copy of your bill, sent to another person who has agreed to help you read and check them.

Advance notice of supply interruption

If you rely on electricity to power vital medical equipment in your home, your energy supplier can give you advance notice if your supply is going to be interrupted for planned work. This will give you time to make alternative arrangements.

Water companies will provide advance notification of work on water supply when a customer has registered with them as being on dialysis.

Communication services for those with hearing and visual impairments

Both your energy and water supplier can provide information, including meter readings and bills, in a suitable format. This could be in Braille, large print, audio tape or via textphone or Typetalk.

They can also help you with any enquires or to make a complaint using these formats.

Special arrangements to communicate with customers requiring assistance in case of an emergency

Your energy and water companies can put special arrangements in place for communicating with you in case of an emergency, for example if you require alternative communication methods such as personal phone call or visit.

How to access any of these services

Contact your supplier if you would like any of these services. If it is easier for you, your supplier can make the arrangements for you through a friend, relative or carer (or any third party, for example social services, or your nominated advice bureaux or housing association)

They can be contacted by:

- telephone
- letter or email
- a form on their website
- textphone or Typetalk or in Braille, large print or audio tape

Your supplier's contact details will be on the back of a gas, electricity or water bill, or on an annual statement if you use an energy prepayment meter.

Conveniently located meters

If you are disabled and cannot easily access your electricity or gas prepayment meter your supplier can move the meter to a convenient location for you, as long as it is possible to do so safely. Some companies might apply a charge for this, so check with your supplier.

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

Energy suppliers' details are on the Consumer Focus website.

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

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

How can Consumer Council for Water help you?

More information on services for older and vulnerable customers; water companies' contact details; and information on local Consumer Council for Water offices can be found on the website of the representative for business and water consumers, the Consumer Council for Water:

<http://www.ccwater.org.uk/> or by calling 0845 039 2837.