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## Introduction

Moving into a new home is stressful enough, without having to worry about energy. This booklet contains all the advice you need to set up and use a prepayment meter in your new home.

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Moving into a new property

1. Take a reading of the meters and write the numbers before the decimal point in the box below.
2. Find out who your energy provider is (see page 4).
3. Get a new key or card (see page 5).
4. Call your energy provider to get the account changed into your name.
5. Ask them what tariff you are on.
6. Ask them to make sure you are not paying a previous tenant’s debt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electricity Meter reading</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gas Meter reading</td>
<td></td>
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It is important to set up your energy bills as soon as possible. If you don’t, you may be put onto an expensive standard tariff, locked into the wrong tariff, or charged for energy you haven’t used.
How to...

Take a reading of the meters

⇒ Locate your meters for gas and electricity—your landlord should tell you where they are.

⇒ Write down the readings, taking just the first five numbers (see picture).

⇒ Keep a copy of the reading to tell the energy company when your account should start from.

Find out who provides your gas and electricity

⇒ Your landlord should have this information.

⇒ If not, you can find out by calling 0870 608 1524 to find out your gas supplier, or see page 14 for help finding your electricity supplier.
Get a new key or card

⇒ Find out from the landlord what you need—some machines have a key or card (see picture), others can be topped up from a mobile phone.

⇒ **Do not** use the previous tenant’s key or card, unless you have no other option in the first few days—you could end up paying their debt.

⇒ Contact your energy supplier to register and find the nearest place to buy a new card/key or how to top up by mobile. See page 15 for contact numbers.
Set up a new account

⇒ For a list of phone numbers, see page 15.
⇒ Check the number you are using is free and if not, ask for an alternative.
⇒ Call from a landline if possible, as this guarantees 0800/0808 numbers are free and makes other numbers much cheaper.
⇒ All energy companies also have a website you can contact them through, which can be much cheaper.
⇒ Ask them to set up a **new account in your name**.
⇒ Ask them to make sure you are not paying a previous tenant’s debt.
⇒ Give them the reading on the meter when you moved in.
⇒ Ask them what tariff you are on, and write down what they say.
⇒ Ask them if there is a standing charge per day.
Monitor your usage

⇒ Take notice of how much money you are putting into the meter. Is it more than you would expect? Compare with friends and neighbours.

⇒ When you top up, make sure an amount is not taken off straight away, as this could mean you are paying off the previous tenant’s debt.

⇒ Make sure you get a regular statement of your usage and put this statement somewhere safe for your own records.

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When Kasia moved into her new flat she found that £3.50 was being taken off her meter every time she topped up. When she worked out that she was repaying a former tenant's debt, it still took almost a year for the energy company to accept that she shouldn’t have been paying it. She was eventually refunded £400 by the energy company.
Top up

⇒ Any PayPoint or Payzone outlet
⇒ At the Post Office for some providers
⇒ Over the phone
⇒ Online

Change your supplier

⇒ You need to find out your usage in order to compare tariffs.
⇒ Compare gas and electric prices, and base your decision on what appliances use electricity or gas.
⇒ Not all tariffs include a standing charge, but those that don’t have a higher rate per kilowatt hour.
⇒ You may wish to seek advice about switching provider:
  ◦ Citizens Advice Bureau or Which? will give independent advice.
  ◦ Community Switch, uSwitch and Money Supermarket all offer a free energy comparison service.
Change to a credit meter

⇒ It can be very difficult to get PPMs replaced with credit meters—companies often charge a large fee or simply refuse to make the switch.
⇒ But suppliers are obliged to switch you to a credit meter if you are ‘vulnerable’ and your health would be put at risk if you are left without heating during cold weather.
⇒ If this applies to you, you should explain to your supplier that because you are vulnerable, a prepayment meter is not safe and practicable, and request that you be moved onto a credit meter.

Get further advice on prepayment meters

Numbers for suppliers are on page 15
Citizens Advice Bureau 08444 111 444
Community Switch 0300 303 0025
uSwitch 0800 051 5493 or 0333 321 6808 (mobile)
Money Supermarket 0845 345 5708
Standing charges

Standing charges are a daily charge which you pay regardless of whether you use any gas and electricity or not. Only Ebico and Utilita have no standing charges at the time of writing.

Advantages

Tariffs which include standing charges have cheaper energy rates for both gas and electricity, which could give you a cheaper price for energy across the whole year if you have a high usage. Lower rates but a constant fee can also make your energy bill more stable across the year.

Disadvantages

Standing charges can make your bills more expensive if you are a low energy user. You can also end up in debt with your energy provider if you run out of credit on your meter, as they will continue to charge you even if you aren’t using any gas or electricity.
Economy 7 meters

Economy 7 meters lower the electricity rates for a seven-hour period overnight, during which time you can heat up storage heaters and hot water tanks.

Advantages

Money can be saved if you have water heaters and are willing to use devices late at night.

Disadvantages

Using an Economy 7 meter requires discipline and can leave a house cold in the evening if storage heater or hot water tanks aren’t big enough. Also, rates during the day are much higher than those at night. Economy 7 meters are only sensible if your property only uses electricity.
Useful contact details:

To find out who supplies your gas:
call 0870 608 1524

To find out who supplies your electricity:
see page 14 for contact numbers

If you want to complain about your energy provider:
contact your energy supplier using the number on page 15, or phone your ombudsman on 0330 440 1624 if your energy company is not helpful.

**Important advice:**
*To make sure you are not charged for 0800 numbers on your mobile, try dialling without the first 0 and the call should be free. 0800 numbers are free through some mobile networks but not others; check with your network before making 0800 calls. 0300 numbers are charged at local rates and are inclusive of your mobile minutes.*
Energy suppliers (in the UK)

British Gas
EDF Energy
E.ON UK
npower
Scottish Power
SSE
Ebico
Utilita
Ecotricity
Ovo
First Utility
Good Energy

Holiday tips:
If you pay a daily ‘standing charge’ as part of your tariff, make sure you top up before you go on holiday, as this charge will still be taken while you are away. Also ensure you leave credit to heat your home when you are away to prevent pipes freezing. If pipes are damaged you may be liable – check your contract.
## Finding your electricity supplier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scotland North</td>
<td>0845 026 2554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland South</td>
<td>0845 270 9101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East England</td>
<td>0845 601 3268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West England</td>
<td>0870 751 0093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern England</td>
<td>0845 601 5467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern England</td>
<td>0845 026 2554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West England</td>
<td>0845 601 5972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East England</td>
<td>0845 601 5467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>0845 601 5467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire</td>
<td>0845 330 0889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Wales, Merseyside and Cheshire</td>
<td>0845 270 9101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Wales</td>
<td>0845 601 5972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>0845 603 0618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>0845 603 0618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>0345 764 3643</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contacting your energy supplier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplier</th>
<th>(Landline)</th>
<th>(Mobile)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Gas</td>
<td>0800 048 0202</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Npower</td>
<td>0800 073 3000</td>
<td>0330 100 3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.ON</td>
<td>0345 303 3040</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Power</td>
<td>0800 027 0072</td>
<td>0345 270 0700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSE Southern Electric</td>
<td>0800 048 2391</td>
<td>0800 048 2392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDF</td>
<td>0800 015 1733</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebico</td>
<td>0800 980 0414</td>
<td>0800 980 0427</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These numbers go through to Southern Electricity, you will need to tell them you are using Ebico*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplier</th>
<th>(Landline)</th>
<th>(Mobile)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilita</td>
<td>0345 207 2000</td>
<td>0196 239 7097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecotricity</td>
<td>0845 555 7100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovo</td>
<td>0800 358 3523</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Utility</td>
<td>0192 632 0700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Energy</td>
<td>0800 254 0000</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
About us and why we wrote the booklet:

We are a group of people who were brought together by Church Action on Poverty and The Broughton Trust to look at Fuel Poverty in Salford. We wanted to help people with prepayment meters (PPMs) to get a fairer price for their energy, and during our research we discovered several cases where people using PPMs were paying a previous tenant’s debt. We hope that this booklet will provide useful advice for people using PPMs.

With thanks to:

Group members - Kath Cain, Conor Coulter, Sandra Dutson, Mark Frith, Conor Hartnett, Joyce Kay, Andy Marsh, Katarzyna Ostrychacz, Letitia Rose, Sue Schofield, Julie Stewart and Ivor Whitfield.

Leigh Fairbrother of Community Switch.

Manchester Metropolitan University and CAEC.

For further information or more copies contact Church Action on Poverty: 0161 236 9321, www.church-poverty.org.uk or joyce@church-poverty.org.uk

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