Heating your home

Daventry & District Housing
DDH

Advice to make the most of your energy

Welcome

We have produced this leaflet to help you find out more about the type of heating and hot water system you have in your home.

It includes tips for controlling your heating to make it more efficient and advice on ways that you can save on fuel costs.

Looking after your heating system in line with the instructions you have been given will help to:

- Save money
- Make better use of energy
- Keep you and your family safe from harm.

There are a number of websites which can provide useful information - for example:

www.theenergysavingtrust.org.uk
www.energyhelpline.com
www.consumerfocus.org.uk

We hope that you find this leaflet useful but if you have any questions please contact us. Our details are on the back of this leaflet.

Types of heating system

You will have one of the following types of heating in your home:

- Central heating via gas-fired back boiler with radiators
- Central heating via wall hung or back boiler with radiators
- Gas fire only
- Solid fuel open fire
- Electric storage heaters
- Oil central heating
- Ducted warm air
- Back boiler - solid fuel or gas

The type of heating you have will have been explained to you when you moved in. If it isn't clear, then contact us and we can explain more.

Each of these different types of heating will have different controls.

Heating controls allow you to:

- Control when the heating comes on and off and set the temperature in your home
- Control when hot water is available and set the temperature of the water

The next two sections explain more about the different types of heating system and the controls that make them work.

Understanding gas, oil and LPG systems

Your boiler

Under current building regulations, when a new boiler is put in it must be 'A-rated'. This means that it is very efficient and cost-effective to run.

With a typical A-rated boiler, for every £1 you spend on gas, 90p of it is used to heat the home. In a home with an older boiler, only around 65p from every £1 spent is used.

Combi boiler

If you do not have a hot water tank in your airing cupboard it means that you have a combination boiler - known as a combi. A combi boiler is efficient as it only heats the water you need when you need it. It does this by switching on only when you turn the hot tap on.

Combi boilers are particularly good for singles or couples living in smaller homes or flats.

To get the best out of a combi boiler, make sure that the temperature control is set to 60 degrees centigrade.

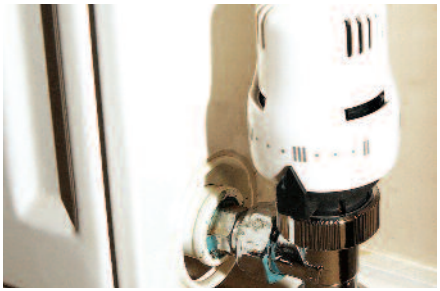
Conventional boiler

For larger family homes, where more people need hot water on a frequent basis, a regular or system boiler helps to keep larger amounts of water hot. This is done by storing it in an insulated tank - often in an airing cupboard.

Your radiators

The radiators in your home are likely to be fitted with thermostatic radiator valves. There will be one on each radiator to allow you to control the temperature of each room separately.

This means that you can keep rooms you are using all the time - such as the living room - warm, while keeping other rooms - such as spare bedrooms - cooler.



The valves normally have a scale from 1 to 5 - 1 being the lowest temperature and 5 being the highest.

The best temperatures for rooms are between 18 and 20 degrees centigrade for living areas and bathrooms (3 to 4 on your valve) and 14 degrees centigrade for bedrooms (2 to 2.5 on your valve).

You should always keep room temperatures to a minimum of 14 degrees centigrade as this reduces the risk of condensation or damp forming.

Once your room reaches the temperature you have set, the valve will stop the flow of hot water and the radiator will start to cool. When the temperature drops below the level set, the valve will open and the radiator will start to heat up again.

This cycle carries on all the time that the heating is switched on.

Your hot water tank

Modern hot water tanks - or cylinders - are normally pre insulated with either green or yellow foam.

Older cylinders have quilted jackets fitted around the copper tank. The jackets should be at least 80mm thick. If this is not the case, then please report it to us and we will arrange for a new one to be fitted.

Keeping your hot water tank insulated helps to keep it hot and save you money.

Newer systems have what is known as a cylinder thermostat fitted to the cylinder. This is normally fitted half way up the cylinder and can be in the form of a small box, with a dial and a scale on it.

This dial should be set between 55-60 degrees centigrade. There are two reasons for this. Firstly it gets rid of a bacteria known as legionella and secondly, it reduces the risk of scalding.

The thermostat controls the temperature of the water stored in the cylinder. Once the water reaches the temperature, the thermostat switches off the boiler, helping to save energy and save you money.

If you have a combi boiler, you will not have a cylinder as all of your hot water comes directly from the boiler when you turn the hot tap on. Some combi boilers have a hot water store and the temperature of the water in this store also needs to be set at 60 degrees centigrade.

Whether you have a combi or conventional boiler, the controls will make sure that the water temperature is kept at a safe level to prevent scalding.

Programmer

The programmer turns your heating and hot water on and off at set times of the day. Each programmer is different and you should refer to the manufacturers' instructions for information about how to use it.

Room thermostat

The room thermostat is usually in the hallway as this is the coldest part of the house. It should be set to 18 degrees centigrade (although older residents and those with small children may want the home to be a little warmer).

This thermostat works in a similar way to the ones on your radiators.

When the room or the area around the thermostat reaches the temperature set, the thermostat turns the boiler off. It then turns it on again when the temperature drops and more heat is needed to maintain a constant temperature. This stops the boiler from running when it isn't needed - saving energy and saving you money.

If you find that 18 degrees centigrade is too warm then turning the thermostat down by just one degree could reduce your fuel bills by up to 10 per cent.

Electric systems

Electric storage heating systems are very different from gas central heating. The majority of homes heated electrically have a combination of storage and panel heaters, with an electric immersion heater for the hot water.

Storage heaters

These operate by storing heat during 'off-peak' periods when the electricity is cheaper - usually overnight.

You can only get cheap night-time electricity if you are on an off-peak tariff, such as Economy 7, Economy 10 or Warmwise.

The heat stored overnight is then released into the room the following day and evening.

There are two controls on the majority of storage heaters (input/charge and output/boost) which control the temperature and have to be adjusted in preparation for the following day's weather.

Modern, slimline storage heaters often have a charge control (or an automatic charge control) which adjusts the amount of heat stored overnight. An automatic charge control will measure the temperature in the room, or more rarely outside the house, and if it is milder, store less heat. This helps to save energy and save you money.

If the storage heater has a manual charge control, you will have to make this adjustment yourself.

Output or boost control

The output control tells the heater how much heat to put out during the day. If this is at the maximum setting (usually 6 or 9) you will find that the stored heat is distributed fairly quickly.

It is important to set the controls in line with the temperature outside and the times that you are at home. If you are going out or going to bed early, then turn the output down to the minimum setting.

Although storage heaters can be very large and bulky, they are much cheaper to run than panel

heaters because of the way in which they are able to store electricity during off-peak times.

A well-controlled storage heater should give you 10 hours of useful heat a day. As the weather gets warmer in summer months, and you find you no longer need the storage heaters on, simply turn them off at the wall.

Be sure not to put clothing or ornaments on top of the storage heaters as they can become very hot and this could cause a fire.

Electric immersion

Most electric storage heating systems use an electric immersion to heat hot water. This may be using 'peak' or more commonly 'off-peak' electricity (usually between 11.30pm and 8.30am).

If your system uses off-peak electricity to heat water then this will be controlled automatically by a timer and the whole tank will be heated for about eight hours overnight.

The water temperature can be boosted during the day, at peak rate, by overriding the time. If you are using peak electricity only, switch the immersion on only for as long as it takes to heat the water.

It is expensive to keep the immersion on for long periods during peak times.

Solid fuel appliances

If you have a solid fuel (or open) fire, here are some tips for getting the best out of it.

- Remove ash regularly - don't allow the ash to build up to the firebars and touch them
- Use the overriding device and a poker to clear ash and clinker that collects above the firebars as the fire will not work properly if the grate is clogged
- Ensure your chimney or flue or is swept once a year - contact our customer service team for advice on this matter
- Scrape away the soot that forms around the flue opening on a daily or at least weekly basis
- Try to keep at least 75mm to 100mm of fuel in the fire when it is lit to keep heat at a maximum

- If your appliance has a door, always keep it closed
- Adjust the damper to control the flow of air so that the fuel does not burn too quickly
- Empty the ash can every day when the appliance is in use.
- Ensure you only use recommended fuels on your appliance.

Getting the right energy tariff

You can choose which company supplies you with the energy to your home. There are a large number of energy suppliers and tariffs to choose from and it is worth taking time to shop around for the best deal. If you have internet access, price comparison websites such as www.uswitch.com and www.moneyexpert.com are a useful tool. These allow you to compare the prices of lots of different energy suppliers based on what you use.

Things to look out for when choosing an energy supplier and tariff:

- Does it provide off-peak electricity?
- Do I have to pay by direct debit?
- Is there a premium price for prepayment meters?
- Is it a fixed term tariff? (ie will the price go up after a certain period?)
- How quickly can I change supplier?
- Will I be tied in?

Most energy suppliers offer a social tariff for those at risk of fuel poverty. Fuel poverty is defined as having to spend 10 per cent or more of your household income on heating your home.

Talk to your supplier to see if you qualify and you could save money on your energy bills. If you are on a pre-payment meter also talk to your supplier about moving onto a regular payment plan as pre-payment meters are the most expensive way to pay for gas and electricity.

Saving energy and saving money - some tips

Here are some tips and things to look out for in the home to help you save energy and save money.

- Turn your thermostat down - reducing your room temperature by just one per cent could cut your heating bills by up to 10 per cent and save you around £50 a year
- Check if your water is too hot - your cylinder thermostat should be set at 60 degrees centigrade
- Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows and reduce draughts at doors and windows by using draught excluders
- Turn off the lights when you leave a room
- Don't leave appliances on standby and remember not to leave appliances on charge for longer than necessary
- Only boil as much water as you need when boiling the kettle - remembering to cover the elements with water as this can otherwise lead to damage
- If you're not filling up the washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher, use the half-load or economy programme. If you are buying a new machine make sure it is A-rated
- Report a dripping hot water tap - a dripping tap can waste half a bath full of water within one week
- Use energy-saving lightbulbs - they last up to 10 times longer than ordinary bulbs and could save you around £40 over the lifetime of the bulb

Ventilating your home

Your home is thermally insulated to help keep in the heat. This is achieved through double glazing, draught exclusion and thermal insulation in the walls and the roof space.

This effective sealing of the house can cause problems due to a lack of air circulation.

When this occurs there is potential for damp and mould to appear, particularly in rooms with high levels of humidity - such as kitchens and bathrooms.

Please make sure you use any ventilation equipment fitted, such as extractor fans. If you need any help operating these, let us know.

If the weather is fine, open the windows to the vent position, allowing air into the room without leaving the window insecure. Also make sure that the trickle vents are not blocked.

Servicing your heating system

Regular servicing of your heating system is essential for your safety and also to make sure that it is working efficiently.

We will service your gas oil or solid fuel central heating system for free every year as part of our obligations as your landlord. We will let you know by letter when we need to visit and all you have to do is get in touch to make an appointment. Electric systems do not require an annual service.

The engineer carrying out the check will need access to the boiler, fire and gas meter and possibly the roof space. The engineer will be trained to carry out this type of work and will do so with respect for you and your home.

The amount of time the service takes depends on the number and type of gas appliances in your home but generally lasts between one and three hours.

For more information

If you smell gas call **0800 111 999**

If you notice an oil leak call **0800 5874735**

If your heating system is broken or you need help to use your system call us:

0800 5874735

If you have any complaints with the way a repair has been handled, please contact us:

01327 707500

This leaflet was produced with the assistance of Solutions 4 Energy Ltd

Solutions 4 Energy
Energy Consultants

For help to understand this please contact 01327 707500.

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An audio version is also available on request.

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