



# Cost of living support guide

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Support and advice services to help people  
across the city with the high cost of living

 [belfastcity.gov.uk/costofliving](https://belfastcity.gov.uk/costofliving) #CostOfLivingBelfast



**Belfast**  
City Council



# Introduction

## **Many individuals and households continue to face pressures this winter due to the continued high cost-of-living.**

Here at Belfast City Council, we are working to enhance the capacity of organisations focused on supporting those who are most in need of help.

We have also developed this guide to highlight support and advice services available to help residents across the city with rising costs.

It doesn't include details of every local neighbourhood support initiative, so please check with local community organisations for information on other support which may be available in your area.

Throughout winter 2024, we will also be sharing useful information and advice to help residents with rising costs on our social media channels, using #CostOfLivingBelfast

We will also share details of events and activities that may be of interest if you are in need of support.

Our website also has details of organisations and schemes providing assistance:















 [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/costofliving](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/costofliving)











# Help with energy costs



Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>The Consumer Council</b>	<p>Energy price comparison tool</p> <p>Save money on your gas and electricity bills by using a price comparison tool which will help you find the lowest tariffs and cheapest payment methods.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk/onlineTools">www.consumerCouncil.org.uk/onlineTools</a></p> <p> 0800 121 6022</p>
<b>NI Housing Executive</b>	<p><b>NI Energy Advice</b></p> <p>Free advice on saving energy in your home, energy efficiency grants and oil buying clubs.</p> <p><b>Affordable Warmth Scheme</b></p> <p>The scheme may be available to you if you own or rent your home and have a total annual gross income of less than £23,000.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.nihe.gov.uk/NI-energy-advice">www.nihe.gov.uk/NI-energy-advice</a></p> <p> <a href="mailto:NIenergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk">NIenergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk</a></p> <p> 0800 111 4455</p>
<b>National Energy Action</b>	<p><b>Belfast Warm &amp; Well Project</b></p> <p>Confidential advice and practical support to help people struggling to pay their fuel bills including advice on saving money, accessing benefits and applying for grants for home heating or insulation improvements and draught proofing measures. NEA also offers free energy awareness and energy efficiency training sessions.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.nea.org.uk">www.nea.org.uk</a></p> <p> @NEANorthernIreland</p> <p> <a href="mailto:warmandwell@nea.org.uk">warmandwell@nea.org.uk</a></p> <p> 028 9023 9909</p>
<b>Belfast City Council</b>	<p><b>‘Stay Warm’ oil stamp saving scheme</b></p> <p>Save towards your next oil delivery by buying £5 oil stamps and collecting these on a card which can be used to pay part or all of your next oil bill.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/staywarm">www.belfastcity.gov.uk/staywarm</a></p> <p> <a href="mailto:staywarm@belfastcity.gov.uk">staywarm@belfastcity.gov.uk</a></p> <p> 028 9027 0428</p>
<b>NI Direct</b>	<p><b>Winter Fuel Payment</b></p> <p>The Winter Fuel Payment Centre accepts telephone claims from people who are eligible to receive Winter Fuel Payment for the first time. You can ask the centre to send you an application form by post if you don't want to claim by telephone.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment-centre">www.nidirect.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment-centre</a></p> <p> 0800 731 0160</p>

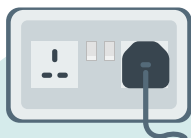


Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>NI Direct</b>	<b>Cold Weather Payment</b> If you're receiving certain benefits, you could qualify for extra money for each week there is very cold weather in your area.	 <a href="http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment">www.nidirect.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment</a>  0800 731 0160
<b>NI Direct</b>	<b>Staying warm in winter</b> Tips and information on government energy support schemes.	 <a href="https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/staying-warm-winter">https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/staying-warm-winter</a>  0300 200 7814
<b>Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP)</b>	Funding for various energy saving schemes such as boiler upgrades, LED light bulbs and draught proofing.	 <a href="http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/programme/nisep">www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/programme/nisep</a>  0800 111 4455



# 10 Top ten tips to save energy

Here are some top tips to help you save energy from National Energy Action:



You can save around **£70** just by remembering to turn off electric appliances and not leave many of them on standby e.g. TV, laptops, mobile phones



Save an average of **£75** on electricity a year by drying clothes on a clothesline, instead of using a tumble dryer



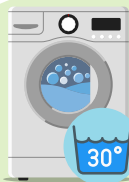
If you only have a single room thermostat for the whole house, for every degree you increase the temperature, it will increase the heating bill by about **10%**.



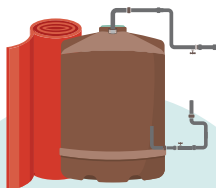
Taking a four minute shower could save you up to **£65** per year on your household energy bills.



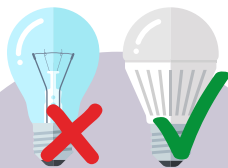
Only boil the water you need in your kettle. This can save you **£14** per year.



Washing clothes at 30 C and 1 less cycle per week can save around **£36** a year on energy



Effective insulation of your hot water cylinder is important, increasing the insulation 80mm thick, could save you **£40** a year.



Switch off lights when not in use. This could save your household **£30** a year.

Switching to LED bulbs could save you up to **£13** per bulb per year



Only run the dishwasher when full. One less run per week could save **£18** per year.














Professional draught-proofing of windows, doors and blocking cracks in floors and skirting boards can save around **£100** a year.

**Sources:** Information sourced from Energy Saving Trust. Northern Ireland prices for oil and electricity are based on an average of supplier tariffs. Correct as of July 2023.



# Help with food



Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>Trussell Trust</b>	Emergency food and signposting for people in crisis. A referral is required in most cases. <b>North Belfast Food Banks</b> Ekenhead Halls, 19 North Circular Road, Belfast BT15 5HB Immanuel Church, 35 Agnes Street, Belfast BT13 1GG <b>Dundonald &amp; East Belfast Food Bank</b> Orangefield Presbyterian Church, 464 Castlereagh Road, Belfast BT5 6BH 971 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT16 1RL <b>South Belfast Food Banks</b> 119 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HP <b>South-West Belfast Food Bank</b> 124 Stewartstown Road, Belfast BT11 9JQ	 <a href="http://www.trusselltrust.org/find-a-foodbank">www.trusselltrust.org/find-a-foodbank</a>  01722 580 180 <b>North Belfast Food Bank</b>  07902 099840  <a href="mailto:info@northbelfast.foodbank.org.uk">info@northbelfast.foodbank.org.uk</a> <b>Dundonald &amp; East Belfast Food Bank</b>  07763 849030  <a href="mailto:info@dundonald.foodbank.org.uk">info@dundonald.foodbank.org.uk</a> <b>South Belfast Food Bank</b>  07743 332489  <a href="mailto:info@southbelfast.foodbank.org.uk">info@southbelfast.foodbank.org.uk</a> <b>South-West Belfast Food Bank</b>  07938 706552  <a href="mailto:info@southwestbelfast.foodbank.org.uk">info@southwestbelfast.foodbank.org.uk</a>
<b>Social supermarkets</b>	Social supermarkets are set up within a community organisation's premises to offer food, cleaning products and toiletries at discounted prices or via a membership charge. Some distribute food vouchers rather than operating as a shop. All offer wraparound provision and signpost to services such as benefit checks, debt advice, training and employment advice and childcare. Most operate on a referral basis only.	 <a href="http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/socialsupermarkets">www.belfastcity.gov.uk/socialsupermarkets</a>





Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>Society of St Vincent De Paul</b>	Can provide emergency food relief food parcels and signposting to other services.	 028 9035 1561  <a href="http://www.svp.ie/northern-ireland">www.svp.ie/northern-ireland</a>
<b>Salvation Army</b>	Can provide emergency food relief as a one off for people in crisis.	 028 9032 9429  <a href="http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/contact-us">www.salvationarmy.org.uk/contact-us</a>
<b>The Consumer Council</b>	Helpful information and advice on saving money while shopping and when using energy in the kitchen, as well as links to other useful resources to help with food costs.	 <a href="http://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk/costofliving">www.consumerCouncil.org.uk/costofliving</a>
<b>Love Food Hate Waste</b>	Can help you waste less and save your money. Visit their website for information on food portions and meal planning, recipes, saving time and money.	 <a href="http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com">www.lovefoodhatewaste.com</a>
<b>Belfast City Council</b>	<p>Reducing food waste</p> <p>Free “Waste Less Save More” recipe books available.</p> <p>The team also offers food waste workshops and demos on how to make the most of your food and leftovers.</p>	 <a href="http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/recipebook">www.belfastcity.gov.uk/recipebook</a>   <a href="mailto:environmentaloutreach@belfastcity.gov.uk">environmentaloutreach@belfastcity.gov.uk</a>

# Tips to reduce food waste and save money



**Houses in the UK throw out 6.5 million tonnes of food every year. An average family of four can save over £60 a month by reducing food waste.**

## Make the most of leftovers

- Batch cooking - cooking larger amounts and keeping portions for later can keep down the cost of food.
- Freeze for later - having prepared meals in your freezer is a great way to avoid buying expensive ready meals or takeaways. Simply double up on the quantities and freeze half.
- Lunch box leftovers – make the most of leftovers to create additional meals. Meats left over from dinner can be added to a healthy salad or tasty sandwich.

## Savvy storage - storing food correctly can reduce waste

- Bread should be in a cupboard or bread bin – it goes stale quicker in the fridge
- Check your fridge is set below 5°C to keep your food fresher for longer
- Apart from pineapples, bananas and onions, the best place to store fruit and vegetables is in the fridge

## Differences between 'Use by' and 'Best before' dates

- 'Use by' relates to safety. Food can be eaten up until and on the 'use by' date, but not after.
- 'Best before' relates to quality. Food will be safe to eat after this date, but it may not be at its best. Use your judgement to decide.










# Warm and welcome spaces





Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>Belfast City Council</b>	<p><b>Warm Spaces, Warm Welcome</b></p> <p>Our 26 community centres are opening their doors this winter with dedicated time for older people to drop in for company, chat and a cuppa! Contact your local centre for more information on drop-in session times.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/communitycentres">www.belfastcity.gov.uk/communitycentres</a></p> <p> 028 9032 0202</p>
<b>Better</b>	<p><b>Warm and Welcome Spaces.</b></p> <p>If you are struggling to heat your home this winter, you will receive a warm welcome and some physical activity in dedicated spaces at these leisure centres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ozone - Wednesday (10:30am-12pm)</li> <li>• Falls - Friday (9am-10.30am)</li> <li>• Lisnasharragh - Wednesday (10am-11.30am)</li> <li>• Shankill - Tuesday (10am-11.30am)</li> </ul> <p>(Runs from 4 December 2023 until the end of February 2024).</p>	<p> <a href="mailto:ozonetennisarena@gll.org">ozonetennisarena@gll.org</a></p> <p> <a href="mailto:falls@gll.org">falls@gll.org</a></p> <p> <a href="mailto:lisnasharragh@gll.org">lisnasharragh@gll.org</a></p> <p> <a href="mailto:shankill@gll.org">shankill@gll.org</a></p> <p> 0330 123 1500</p>
<b>Libraries NI</b>	<p>17 libraries across Belfast offer welcoming, free and inclusive spaces, with a range of services, activities and resources for everyone.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.librariesni.org.uk">www.librariesni.org.uk</a></p>
<b>Warm Welcome UK</b>	<p><b>Warm Welcome UK</b></p> <p>Information on community organisations, churches, libraries, businesses and other faith groups who have opened their doors to provide warm and welcome spaces to people struggling to heat their homes this winter.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.warmwelcome.uk">www.warmwelcome.uk</a></p>

# Help for families and children



Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>Family Support NI</b>	<p><a href="http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk">www.familysupportni.gov.uk</a> is an online directory of family support services and childcare providers in Northern Ireland. You can search by postcode to find family support services and registered childcare in your area.</p> <p>The site also has information about financial assistance available for childcare costs.</p> <p>It also includes useful information for people with disabilities, details about parenting support organisations and family mediation services, plus wider support available for people affected by mental health problems, drug or alcohol misuse and domestic or sexual abuse.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk">www.familysupportni.gov.uk</a></p> <p> 0845 600 6483</p>
<b>Belfast City Council</b>	<p>Home safety checks</p> <p>Home safety checks for residents with young children. The checks offer tips on all aspects of home safety, as well as specialist advice on topics like heating and energy saving.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/homesafety">www.belfastcity.gov.uk/homesafety</a></p> <p> <a href="mailto:envhealth@belfastcity.gov.uk">envhealth@belfastcity.gov.uk</a></p> <p> 028 9027 0428</p>
<b>Children &amp; Young People's Strategic Partnership</b>	<p>Publication with information on organisations supporting families and children who are struggling with the current cost of living crisis.</p>	<p> <a href="https://cypsp.hscni.net/cost-of-living-resource/">https://cypsp.hscni.net/cost-of-living-resource/</a></p> <p> <a href="mailto:una.casey@hscni.net">una.casey@hscni.net</a></p>



Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>Parenting NI</b>	<p><b>Support for parents</b></p> <p>Parenting NI provides support and information for parents and carers to help them parent effectively and help their child reach their full potential. Services include a dedicated parent support line, home support, and a wide range of parenting programmes and workshops including the Summerhill Foundation workshops which have been developed to support families during the cost of living crisis.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.parentingni.org">www.parentingni.org</a></p> <p> 0808 8010 722</p>

### Reusable period products

If you live in Belfast, you can sign up to receive free reusable, non-plastic period products.

 [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/free-period-products](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/free-period-products)



### Mental health support

If you are struggling with your mental health, there are services in your area that can provide the help and support you need. This includes your GP and specialised healthcare professionals.







For more information visit:

 [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/mental-health-support](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/mental-health-support)























# Help for older people



Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>Bryson Energy</b>	<p><b>Handyperson services</b></p> <p>Advice and support for people aged over 65 and vulnerable adults including free home safety checks and subsidised rates for repairs.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.brysonenergy.org">www.brysonenergy.org</a> (search for handyperson service)</p> <p> <a href="mailto:handyman@brysonenergy.org">handyman@brysonenergy.org</a></p> <p> 0800 14 22 865</p>
<b>Age NI</b>	<p>Free advice, information and practical support on a wide range of issues including welfare benefits, community care, housing and health.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.ageni.org">www.ageni.org</a></p> <p> <a href="mailto:advice@ageni.org">advice@ageni.org</a></p> <p> 0808 808 7575</p>

## Other support and advice

Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>Advice NI</b>	<p><b>Financial advice</b></p> <p>Independent advice on benefits, money and debt, tax credits and HMRC issues, and how to access additional support on managing your bills.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.adviceni.net">www.adviceni.net</a></p> <p> <a href="mailto:advice@adviceni.net">advice@adviceni.net</a></p> <p> 0800 915 4604</p>
<b>Advice services</b>	<p>Belfast City Council supports generalist advice centres across Belfast to provide free, confidential and independent advice.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/advice-providers">www.belfastcity.gov.uk/advice-providers</a></p>
<b>Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service</b>	<p><b>Financial and other advice</b></p> <p>The service provides free, confidential and independent advice on a range of issues including benefits, consumer advice, debt, employment and housing issues.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/advice">www.belfastcity.gov.uk/advice</a></p> <p> 028 9039 1765</p>
<b>Debt Advice NI</b>	<p><b>Debt advice</b></p> <p>They offer free, confidential and independent debt and money advice.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.debtadvicenorthernireland.co.uk">www.debtadvicenorthernireland.co.uk</a></p> <p> 0800 917 4607</p>

Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>Credit Unions</b>	<b>Financial support</b> They offer a safe place for savings and access to loans at a reasonable rate of interest, starting from £50.	 <a href="http://www.creditunionni.co.uk">www.creditunionni.co.uk</a>  028 9061 4394
<b>Benefit Advice Line</b>	Call the benefit advice line to make sure you're getting all the money you are entitled to.	 0800 232 1271
<b>Housing Rights Service</b>	<b>Housing advice</b> They work to achieve positive change by promoting and protecting the rights of people in housing need.	 <a href="http://www.housingrights.org.uk">www.housingrights.org.uk</a>  028 9024 5640
<b>Housing Rights</b>	Independent housing advice and information on homelessness, housing options and renting privately.	 <a href="http://www.housingadviceni.org">www.housingadviceni.org</a>  028 9024 5640 Textphone: 028 9026 7927
<b>Helplines NI</b>	Details of different helplines providing information, advice, counselling and be-friending services. Some are telephone helplines and some can help via email, text and live web-chat.	 <a href="https://helplinesni.com/">https://helplinesni.com/</a>
<b>NI Direct</b>	<b>Make the Call service</b> Advice service to ensure that you get all the benefits, services and support you are entitled to.	 <a href="http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/make-call-service">www.nidirect.gov.uk/make-call-service</a>  <a href="mailto:makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk">makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk</a>  0800 232 1271
<b>Public Health Agency</b>	<b>Mental health support directory</b> A directory of organisations that offer services to help improve mental health and emotional wellbeing.	 <a href="http://www.publichealth.hscni.net">www.publichealth.hscni.net</a> (search for mental health support directory)
<b>Christians Against Poverty</b>	A range of free services through local churches to help people break free from debt.	 <a href="http://www.capuk.org">www.capuk.org</a>  0800 328 0006
<b>Department for Work &amp; Pensions</b>	<b>Money and Pensions Service (MaPS)</b> Financial wellbeing support including money and pensions guidance and debt advice.	 <a href="https://maps.org.uk">https://maps.org.uk</a>  <a href="mailto:contact@maps.org.uk">contact@maps.org.uk</a>  01159 659570
<b>NI Direct</b>	<b>Cost of living information and advice</b> Information and advice on a range of issues including energy, income support and housing.	 <a href="http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/cost-living">www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/cost-living</a>  0300 200 7814



## #CostOfLivingBelfast

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Look out for our #CostOfLivingBelfast campaign across our social media channels this winter, sharing useful information and advice to help residents with rising costs.



**Follow us on:**

 Facebook - @belfastcitycouncil

 Twitter - @belfastcc

 Instagram - @belfastcitycouncil

 [belfastcity.gov.uk/costofliving](https://belfastcity.gov.uk/costofliving)