



Warm Home Discount Scheme Brief

- In Great Britain many older people benefit from a warm homes discount scheme which provides them with a discount of £140 off their electricity bill during the winter.
- ASP would like to see a similar scheme set up through Power NI in Northern Ireland so that pensioners here get the same help as those in the rest of the UK.
- The current scheme was extended for an extra year to April 2016 while a review took place. ASP/NIPP wants to see discussions to begin now to see how vulnerable pensioners in Northern Ireland can benefit from this scheme in future.
- Keeping Warm in Winter/Energy prices has been the top concern of pensioners in NI every year since the Pensioners Parliament was launched in 2011. Three quarters (75%) of pensioners in the 2014 Pensioners Parliament survey listed it as a top concern.

Support since 2011

First 4 Years of Scheme spend	£1.1 billion spent by March 2015
Number of households helped household	2 million low income and vulnerable
Extension of scheme 2015/16	Committed spending target of £320m

Who Benefits?

The Core Group (Pensioners on low incomes)

- people in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit (this includes customers who also receive Savings Credit)
- Suppliers provide £140 off electricity bills to their eligible customers.

The Broader Group

- suppliers provide £140 off electricity bills to low income and vulnerable customers who meet their individual eligibility criteria and successfully apply.

Industry Initiatives

- suppliers provide a range of measures including debt assistance, benefit entitlement checks and energy advice to domestic customers in or at risk of fuel poverty.

Legislation requires suppliers with more than 250,000 domestic customers to participate in scheme.

Data Matching

Each year a qualifying date is set for the Core Group – this year it was 12 July.

Participating energy suppliers are required to provide rebates to all those people who are their customers on that date and who meet the eligibility criteria. Through a system of data matching, DWP informs suppliers which of their customers should be paid a Core Group rebate. The vast majority of customers receive a letter telling them their data has been matched and they will receive a rebate before 31 December without having to take action.

Not all pensioners in receipt of the qualifying benefit are eligible or receive the rebate automatically as described above.

- 1 Customers who are not with participating suppliers or who are not named on the electricity account are not eligible.
- 2 There are instances where customers are eligible but are not identified in the data matching process because the name and address details held by DWP and the energy suppliers differ. In order to capture this second group of people, Government sends letters to all people who have not been identified as part of the data matching process but are in receipt of the qualifying benefit. This letter requests that they phone a call centre in order to verify their eligibility. Once this process has been completed successful they too receive a rebate, usually before 31 March.

In Scheme year 3 around 1.16m people received the rebate automatically and around 75,000 received it as a result of receiving the letter and claiming successfully through the call centre.

Energy suppliers that deliver Warm Home Discount Scheme

The following suppliers are part of the scheme: Note that SSE are part of the scheme and they operate in Northern Ireland.

- Atlantic
- British Gas
- EDF Energy
- E.ON
- Equipower (Ebico)
- Equigas (Ebico)
- Manweb - see ScottishPower
- M&S Energy
- npower
- Sainsbury's Energy
- Scottish Gas - see British Gas
- Scottish Hydro
- ScottishPower
- Southern Electric
- **SSE** (SSE Airtricity in NI)
- SWALEC
- Utility Warehouse

Fuel Poverty in Northern Ireland – Why pensioners in NI need extra help

- Fuel poverty in Northern Ireland is higher than any other part of the UK (42% or 284,000 homes).
- The next highest is Scotland with 28%, then Wales 26% and England with 16%. (Dept of Energy and Climate Change (DECC))
- 70% of households (495,560) in Northern Ireland rely on home heating oil compared to only 4.4% in Great Britain.
- Almost two-thirds of older people (57%) are currently living in fuel poverty which leads to increased chance of sickness and ill health among our older population. (House Conditions Survey, 2011)
- Two thirds (66%) of households in NI with someone aged 75 or over living in it are in fuel poverty. (House Conditions Survey, 2011)
- 21% of pensioners in Northern Ireland are in poverty (Households below average income report NI, DSD 2013-14)
- The survey from the 2014 Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament revealed that 3 out of 4 pensioners (75%) list energy prices as one of their top concerns.
- Many older people are not as mobile as other age groups and this means they spend proportionately more time in the house which means they generally need more electric and heating.
- 97% of excess winter deaths in Northern Ireland during the winter 2014/15 were people aged over 65 (840 out of 870 deaths)

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