

# Cost of living support guide



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

# Introduction

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

Belfast City Council are working with a range of organisations to enhance their capacity to support those most in need of help.

This guide highlights the support and advice services available across the city which can help residents with rising costs.

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

The Belfast City Council website shares details of organisations and schemes offering assistance at:

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

















# Warm and welcome spaces

Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>Belfast City Council</b>	27 community centres across the city can provide a warm and welcoming space as well as a varied programme of activities.	 <a href="http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/communitycentres">www.belfastcity.gov.uk/communitycentres</a>  028 9032 0202
<b>The Grapevine at 2 Royal Avenue</b>	A drop-in space for older people to meet a friendly face, enjoy a cup of tea and find out about events and services. Manned by Age Friendly Belfast volunteers, it is open every Tuesday from 11am to 1pm.	 <a href="http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/winteradvice">www.belfastcity.gov.uk/winteradvice</a>
<b>Better</b>	<p>Receive a warm welcome at these leisure centres where you can also take part in a range of activities:</p> <p><b>Shankill Leisure Centre</b>            Tuesday: 9am to 11am            (Activities to enjoy: badminton and pickleball)</p> <p><b>Indoor Tennis Centre and Ozone Complex</b>            Wednesday: 10:30am to 12 noon            (Activity to enjoy: table tennis)</p> <p><b>Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre</b>            Tuesday: 10am to 12 noon            (Activity to enjoy: table tennis)</p> <p><b>Falls Leisure Centre</b>            Thursday: 11am to 1pm            (Activity to enjoy: board games)</p> <p>Scheme runs from 2 December 2024 to end of February 2025.</p>	  <a href="mailto:ozonetennisarena@gll.org">ozonetennisarena@gll.org</a>  <a href="mailto:lisnasharragh@gll.org">lisnasharragh@gll.org</a>  <a href="mailto:falls@gll.org">falls@gll.org</a>  0330 123 1500
<b>Libraries NI</b>	17 libraries across Belfast offer free and inclusive spaces with a range of services and activities.	 <a href="http://www.librariesni.org.uk">www.librariesni.org.uk</a>
<b>Warm Welcome UK</b>	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.	 <a href="http://www.warmwelcome.uk">www.warmwelcome.uk</a>









# Help with energy costs



Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>Consumer Council</b>	Energy price comparison tool Save money on gas and electricity bills by using a price comparison tool which will help find the lowest tariffs and cheapest payment methods.	 <a href="http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/online-tools">www.consumercouncil.org.uk/online-tools</a>  0800 121 6022
<b>NI Housing Executive</b>	NI energy advice Free advice on saving energy in the home, as well as information about energy efficiency grants and oil buying clubs. Affordable Warmth Scheme A scheme if you own or rent your home and have a total annual gross income of less than £23,000.	 <a href="http://www.nihe.gov.uk/NI-energy-advice">www.nihe.gov.uk/NI-energy-advice</a>  <a href="mailto:nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk">nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk</a>  0800 111 4455
<b>National Energy Action</b>	Belfast Warm & Well Project Confidential advice and practical support to help people struggling to pay their fuel bills including advice on saving money, accessing benefits, applying for grants and applying for rebates. NEA also offers free energy awareness and energy efficiency training sessions.	 <a href="http://www.nea.org.uk">www.nea.org.uk</a>  @NEANorthernIreland  <a href="mailto:warmandwell@nea.org.uk">warmandwell@nea.org.uk</a>  028 9023 9909
<b>Belfast City Council</b>	'Stay Warm' oil stamp saving scheme Save on oil by buying £5 oil stamps and collecting these on a card which can be used to pay part or all of an oil bill.	 <a href="http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/staywarm">www.belfastcity.gov.uk/staywarm</a>  <a href="mailto:staywarm@belfastcity.gov.uk">staywarm@belfastcity.gov.uk</a>  028 9027 0428
<b>NI Direct</b>	Winter Fuel Payment Available to those receiving state pension credit only.	 <a href="http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment-centre">www.nidirect.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment-centre</a>  0800 731 0160





Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>NI Direct</b>	<p>Cold Weather Payment</p> <p>A Cold Weather Payment if you're getting certain benefits or Support for Mortgage Interest. The payment is allocated if the average temperature in your area is recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees Celsius or below over seven consecutive days. The web page will be updated when cold weather payments are triggered for any NI postcode areas.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment">www.nidirect.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment</a></p> <p> 0800 731 0160</p>
<b>NI Direct</b>	<p>Staying warm in winter</p> <p>Tips and information on government energy support schemes.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/staying-warm-winter">www.nidirect.gov.uk/staying-warm-winter</a></p> <p> 0300 200 7814</p>
<b>Power NI</b>	<p>Energy efficiency support</p> <p>Based on income, Power NI can offer a number of schemes including free insulation, cavity wall insulation or a Snug Plus Heating.</p>	<p> <a href="http://powerni.co.uk">powerni.co.uk</a></p> <p> 0345 745 5455</p>
<b>Phoenix Natural Gas</b>	<p>Energy efficiency support</p> <p>Based on income, Phoenix Natural Gas can offer a Boiler Replacement Allowance. This is a government scheme, which aims to help with the cost of replacing an old, inefficient boiler over 15 years old, with an energy efficient condensing boiler. The level of grant available is dependent on total gross income of the household.</p>	<p> <a href="http://phoenixnaturalgas.com">phoenixnaturalgas.com</a></p> <p> 0845 455 5555</p>



# 10 Top ten tips to save energy

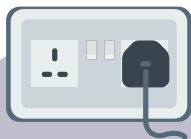
Did you know that 41% of households spend more than 10% of their income on their home energy costs? Here are some tips to help you save energy from National Energy Action.



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



Drying laundry on a clothesline instead of using a tumble dryer could save an average of **£75** a year on electricity.



Turning off electric appliances and not leaving items like TVs on standby could save around **£70**.



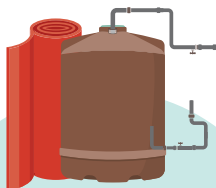
Taking a four minute shower could save you up to **£70** per year on your household energy bills.



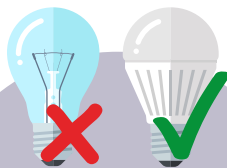
Only boiling the water you need in your kettle could save you **£34** per year.



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



Effective insulation of your hot water cylinder is important, increasing the insulation 80mm thick could save you **£45** a year.



Switching off lights when not in use could save your household **£30** a year while switching to LED bulbs could save up to **£13** per bulb per year.



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



Professional draught-proofing of windows and doors as well as blocking cracks in floors and skirting boards could 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 October 2024.

# 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.	<a href="http://www.trusselltrust.org/find-a-foodbank">www.trusselltrust.org/find-a-foodbank</a> 01722 580 180
	<b>North Belfast Foodbank</b> Ekenhead Halls, 19 North Circular Road, Belfast BT15 5HB Immanuel Church, 35 Agnes Street, Belfast BT13 1GG	0300 102 1378 <a href="mailto:info@northbelfast.foodbank.org.uk">info@northbelfast.foodbank.org.uk</a>
	<b>Dundonald Foodbank (covering East Belfast)</b> Orangefield Presbyterian Church, 464 Castlereagh Road, Belfast BT5 6BH 971 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT16 1RL	0776 384 9030 <a href="mailto:info@dundonald.foodbank.org.uk">info@dundonald.foodbank.org.uk</a>
	<b>South Belfast Foodbank</b> 119 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HP	0774 333 2489 <a href="mailto:info@southbelfast.foodbank.org.uk">info@southbelfast.foodbank.org.uk</a>
	<b>South-West Belfast Foodbank</b> 124 Stewartstown Road, Belfast BT11 9JQ	0793 870 6552 <a href="mailto:info@southwestbelfast.foodbank.org.uk">info@southwestbelfast.foodbank.org.uk</a>
<b>Social supermarkets</b>	Social supermarkets are usually small shops set up within the premises of a community organisation 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>	Provide emergency food relief food parcels and signposting to other services.	 028 9035 1561  <a href="http://www.svp.org.uk">www.svp.org.uk</a>
<b>Salvation Army</b>	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>Consumer Council</b>	Provide 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>	Provide information on food portions, meal planning and recipes, saving you time and money.	 <a href="http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com">www.lovefoodhatewaste.com</a>
<b>Belfast City Council</b>	<p>Provide free recipe books to help reduce food waste. See page 11.</p> <p>Belfast City Council also offer food waste workshops and demos on how to make the most of 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. A family of four can save over £80 a month by reducing food waste.**

## Top tips

- Batch cooking - cooking larger amounts and keeping portions for later can keep down the cost of making food.
- Freeze for later - having 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

- Store bread 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.



# Belfast City Council have created two cookbooks, **Cooking Solo** and **Thrifty Kitchen**.

Discover delicious and budget-friendly recipes for those cooking alone or to reduce waste.

Request your free copy by emailing:








 [environmentaloutreach@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:environmentaloutreach@belfastcity.gov.uk)

# Free cookery books






# Help for families and children



Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>Family Support NI</b>	<p>An online directory of family support services and childcare providers. Search by postcode to find family support services and registered childcare in your area.</p> <p>Find information about financial assistance for childcare costs. It provides useful information for people with disabilities, details of parenting support organisations and family mediation services plus wider support for people affected by mental health problems, drug or alcohol misuse, domestic or sexual abuse and cancer diagnosis. Information on the website can be translated into different languages.</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 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 cost of living crisis.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.cypsp.hscni.net">www.cypsp.hscni.net</a></p> <p> <a href="mailto:cypsp@hscni.net">cypsp@hscni.net</a></p>




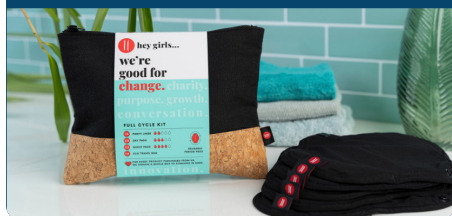


Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>Parenting Focus</b>	<p>Providing a range of services to parents and carers to ensure they have access to timely support and information to parent effectively and help their child reach their full potential. Services include a Parents Support Line, home support and a wide range of parenting programmes and workshops to support parents and carers and guide them through their parenting journey. Parenting Focus deliver a 4 week Summerhill Foundation workshop developed to specifically support families through the cost-of-living crisis.</p>	<p> <a href="http://www.parentingni.org">www.parentingni.org</a></p> <p> 0808 801 0722</p> <p> <a href="mailto:help@parentingfocus.org">help@parentingfocus.org</a></p>

### Reusable period products

Belfast residents 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







Avail of services in your area that can provide help and support with mental health and well-being. This includes your GP and specialised healthcare professionals.

For more information visit:



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

# Help for older people



Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>Belfast City Council in partnership with Bryson Energy and Public Health Agency</b>	Handyperson services Advice and support for people aged over 65 and vulnerable adults including free home safety checks and subsidised repair service.	 <a href="http://www.brysonpathways.org">www.brysonpathways.org</a> (search for handyperson service)  <a href="mailto:handyman@brysonpathways.org">handyman@brysonpathways.org</a>  0800 142 2865
<b>Age NI</b>	Free advice, information and practical support on a wide range of issues including welfare benefits, community care, housing and health.	 <a href="http://www.ageni.org">www.ageni.org</a>  <a href="mailto:info@ageni.org">info@ageni.org</a>  0808 808 7575

## Other support and advice

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






Organisation	Help available	More information
<b>Credit Unions</b>	Offering a safe place for savings and access to loans at a reasonable rate of interest.	 <a href="http://www.creditunionni.co.uk">www.creditunionni.co.uk</a>  028 9061 4394
<b>Housing Rights Service</b>	Housing advice Working 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>	Sharing independent housing advice and information on homelessness, housing options and renting privately.	 <a href="http://www.housingadviseni.org">www.housingadviseni.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 others can help via email, text and live web-chat.	 <a href="https://helplinesni.com">https://helplinesni.com</a>
<b>Make The Call</b>	Make the Call service Advice service improving the uptake of benefits for people who may be entitled.	 <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>	Mental health support directory 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>	Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) Financial wellbeing support including money and pensions guidance and debt advice.	 <a href="http://www.maps.org.uk">www.maps.org.uk</a>  <a href="mailto:contact@maps.org.uk">contact@maps.org.uk</a>  0115 965 9570
<b>NI Direct</b>	Cost of living information and advice 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



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

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