

Government Energy Support Schemes - Update

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Service: *Revenue & Benefits*
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Government energy support schemes – update

We wanted to update you on two Government schemes that have recently launched to help people who haven't yet received automatic financial assistance from any energy support schemes.

Government's Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS AF)

The EBSS AF is providing support of £400 for energy bills for households in England, Scotland, and Wales without a direct relationship to a domestic electricity supplier.

The Government scheme is now open to all eligible households until 31 May 2023.

Subject to applications meeting the eligibility criteria, people who will be able to receive support under EBSS AF include:

- care home residents and others in care facilities (wholly or partly self-funded)
- park home residents, houseboats/residential mooring and caravans that can provide proof of address.
- social and private tenants who pay for energy through a landlord on a commercial supply.
- homes on a heat network/private wire
- off-grid homes
- farmhouses used for wholly domestic purposes.

Anyone eligible for EBSS AF will need to fill out a short online form via the GOV.UK website. The form can be found by searching "Apply for energy bill support if you do not get it automatically" into the search bar on GOV.UK or an internet search engine. Applications are made directly to the Government, not to or via us at the council. For those who do not have online access, they can apply via a contact centre on 08081 753287 where a representative will guide them through the application process.

Once they have applied, the application will be processed and verified. After this, if the application is successful, details will be shared with us, and we will deliver the one-off, non-repayable support payment. We have been allocated £3,154,800 to distribute locally

and this would equate to 7,887 awards of £400 per eligible household.

The payment will be made directly into the bank account in a single instalment. Further information can be found on www.gov.uk.

Alternative Fuels Payment (AFP)

The Government has also announced a 'sister' scheme called Alternative Fuels Payment (AFP) for people that use alternative fuels for heating.

People may be eligible for a £200 Alternative Fuels Payment (AFP) if both the following are true:

- their household is not connected to the mains gas grid
- they use alternative fuels as their main form of heating

This one-off payment would be on top of the £400 from their electricity supplier.

People are eligible for this payment if the main way they heat their home uses:

- tank or bottled gas
- liquid petroleum gas (LPG)
- oil
- wood
- solid fuel

Most homes that are eligible for this payment will get it automatically as a credit on their electricity bills, but they may not get the payment automatically if their home is either:

- in an area which is mainly connected to the gas grid
- not connected to either the gas or the electricity grid

If people do not receive this payment automatically, they have to apply for this payment through the same method as the AFP Alternative Fund, for example, because they do not have a contract with an electricity supplier. Wiltshire Council will help process the payments made through the Government's portal, which is the same one used for EBSS AF. Wiltshire Council has been given £708k funding to distribute locally as part of this scheme.

We recognise that people will want access to the funding from these schemes quickly and we're working hard to ensure this happens, but we are asking residents for patience as we only received formal guidance very shortly before they went 'live' and are looking to put the resources and infrastructure in place to support this significant and important work.

Other support the council has provided during the cost-of-living crisis

A reminder that the council has a range of support, advice and guidance on our dedicated cost-of-living pages which can be found at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living. We'd welcome you sharing this link with your contacts and communities.

To help support people through the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, we have:

- Improved the efficiency of the 100 least energy efficient council houses through the green homes grant.
- Created a community directory identifying warm spaces and community food providers with 165 locations registered.
- Through its warm spaces project, given out more than 1,000 warm packs from its libraries, along with referring 80 vulnerable residents to our warm and safe support network.
- Through the Warm and Safe advice service has provided support to 1,009 residents, including 144 heating and insulation referrals and giving out over £56,000 in grants.
- Provided outreach support helping the boater and traveller communities with fuel and food vouchers, working alongside Julian House.
- Helped distribute the hundreds of millions in energy support that Wiltshire residents have received from central Government along with administering the targeted Household Support Grant Scheme using almost £3m to support residents who need most help with extra funding for families in the school holidays and support for vulnerable older people.
- Supported council housing tenants to access more than £600,000 in benefits and grants they were entitled to and had not claimed.

More information

We have put information about these schemes at <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/6279/Overview> which includes some FAQs. If you want more information or clarification, please don't hesitate to contact Ian Brown, Head of Revenues & Benefits Central, at ianpbrown@wiltshire.gov.uk