

# Be energy efficient in your rented property - A guide for tenants

## Do you want to make your home more efficient but feel restricted because you rent from a private landlord?

There are four ways to increase the energy efficiency of your home:

- 1) 'Good house-keeping': changes in your behaviour that will save energy
- 2) Easy 'DIY'
- 3) Replacing old equipment
- 4) Renovation and building work

If you rent from a private landlord you will be restricted by the terms of your contract but you can go a long way with 'Good Housekeeping' steps – things like turning down the thermostat and making sure lights are turned off. With your landlord's permission, you may be able to take some of the easy DIY steps as well. By talking to your landlord, you may be able to persuade him or her that small building works, renovation or replacing old equipment would have advantages.

### Why Save Energy?

The energy we use to heat, light and power our homes is responsible for over a quarter of the United Kingdom's carbon dioxide emissions. Despite substantial work to reduce domestic energy use there was a 19% increase in consumption between 1990 and 2001 in UK homes. This is predominantly as a result of the increased provision of central heating.

This domestic energy consumption rise is also attributable to our increased usage of electrical appliances: £1.2 billion per year is spent running our fridges and freezers; £800 million is spent operating our washing machines and tumble dryers.

Rising fuel prices and the increase in fuel poverty means that using our energy efficiently and effectively can only help to enhance our lives.

### Good Housekeeping Steps

This is a list of actions you can take, all of which will make a difference, and none of which need your landlord's permission:

- Turn lights off when you are not using them
- Turn appliances off stand-by
- Turn the room thermostat down to 19 or 18°C
- If you have a hot-water tank, turn the cylinder thermostat down to 60°C
- If you have central heating, find the controls, look at the times the heating and hot water come on and off, and review them. Make sure the heating isn't on at night and is not on when you are out. It is worth making sure you know how to use the system efficiently. You can contact the Energy Saving Trust for guidance.



For further assistance contact 01223 457954  
or visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/homeenergy](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/homeenergy)

- If you have thermostatic radiator valves, you can use these to turn heating off in individual rooms when you are not using them. You can also use them to make sure that your bedrooms are kept cooler than the rest of the house.
- Take short showers instead of baths.
- Put lids on saucepans when cooking, they can reduce cooking time and energy plus also reduce water vapour in the air
- Only boil as much water as you need.
- If you have a washing machine, run it at 30 or 40°C and only when it's full
- If you have a dishwasher, run it at 55°C and only when full
- Try not to use the tumble drier – dry your clothes outside if you can or remove
- If you have a defrostable fridge and freezer, make sure you do this regularly
- Close your curtains at dusk.
- Read your gas and electricity meters regularly. Keeping an eye on how much you are using, usually results in using less.

## Easy DIY

The first things on this list don't need your landlord's permission:

- Replace all lightbulbs with energy-efficient ones – if you put the old ones aside in a drawer you can swap them out again when you leave!
- Take a good look around the house, decide what needs to be done and what needs your landlord's permission or co-operation.
- Plug in an 'Owl' or 'Efergy' energy monitor and keep a check on your electricity use.
- If you are buying an appliance like a kettle make sure that you've chosen the most efficient one available.
- Make sure it's easy to turn equipment off – there are various devices you can buy that make it easy to turn off all your computer peripherals together.

These are some actions that you need to check with your landlord. They will all pay back in a short time, so are worth doing. Your landlord may do them himself, or may allow you to do them.

- Draught strip all external doors and windows.
- Fit draught-strip to your letter box.
- If your windows are single-glazed, fix 'shrink-wrap' insulating film over them for the winter. (But make sure you don't block any ventilation needed for an open gas or coal fire).
- Put reflective foil behind the radiators on external walls and fix shelves above so that the heat is reflected into the room and not out of the window!
- Insulate all hot water pipes.
- Put up a washing line outdoors.

## Energy Supply

Depending on who pays the bills and if you can choose your energy supplier, you may want to consider switching your electricity to a 100% renewable energy supplier.



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Renewable energy tariffs can be very competitive and you may find you are not paying any more for your electricity. If you do not want to switch to a renewable energy supplier you may want to consider a green tariff available from your current supplier. While these are sometimes not as environmentally sound as some of the specific renewable companies, they are still a step in the right direction.

Even if you do not want to consider a renewable energy supplier it may be worth checking your tariff and supplier to ensure you are getting the best deal possible.

## **Approaching Your Landlord**

Getting extra insulation in the loft, having cavity walls filled, replacing appliances that belong to your landlord or having major improvements done can only happen if your landlord takes the initiative.

Unfortunately the nature of renting on a short-term lease means there is little encouragement for landlords to do energy work. Encouragement from tenants can make a difference and being well prepared when you speak to your landlord will help. The first step is to contact your landlord and discuss your concerns about the property. They may be more approachable than you think. It's worth remembering when you speak to your landlord to consider all the justifications for having the work done, including:

- **Improved comfort** – if a property is more comfortable to live in, good tenants are likely to stay longer and look after the property well
- **Save money** – reduced fuel bills for the tenant, are likely to be a selling point
- **Improved health** – badly insulated properties can affect tenants' health
- **Preserve resources** – tenants are increasingly interested in the energy performance of their home and in leading sustainable lives
- **Improve security** – some measures offer both security and noise reduction
- **Good management** – a regularly maintained property reduces threat of major work

It may help to:

- Find out rough prices for improvements like cavity wall insulation or additional loft insulation.
- Walk round the house with your landlord explaining the problems.
- Offer examples (if you have them!) of other landlords who have made improvements.

In your discussion, try to:

- Stay calm and focused.
- Concentrate on what you would like the landlord to do, rather than on what is wrong with the property. No-one likes to be criticised and he or she is much more likely to react well if you stress what you like about the property and emphasise that you are looking for improvements, rather than complaining.
- Thank him or her for anything they offer to do, and for their time in talking to you.



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Remember that you may not be able to persuade your landlord but that doesn't mean it wasn't worth trying. When you give up the lease you can write a letter explaining that one of the reasons you are moving on is that you would prefer a more energy-efficient home. As more people make these requests, landlords will be more likely to take notice and make changes.

## **Grant Schemes & Initiatives**

If your landlord needs some convincing you may be able to help by highlighting certain initiatives, which give benefits to both the landlord and tenant:

- The introduction of **Energy Performance Certificates** may mean efficient properties may be more marketable for the landlord.
- Funds may be available to reduce the cost of energy work, through the Governments **CERT scheme and LESA Scheme**.
- The Cambridge City Council's **Property Accreditation Scheme** may allow a landlord to show they are responsible.

### Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's)

The Government is taking steps to address energy efficiency through the introduction of new legislation, in particular Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs).

EPCs became a requirement for new tenancies in rented properties in England in October 2008. Very similar to the A-G ratings found on washing machines, EPCs enable prospective tenants to see at a glance how energy efficient and environmentally friendly a rented property is and how much it will cost to heat.

### Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) Scheme

The Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) scheme is part of a national scheme which requires energy suppliers to invest in measures that will provide carbon dioxide savings. Through this scheme energy suppliers provide loft and cavity wall insulation for free to residents aged over 70 or those in receipt of certain benefits. If this criteria does not apply to you, you are still entitled to insulation at discounted rates. Home owners, private landlords and private tenants can apply for the funding. If you are a private tenant you can pay the customer contribution but you will still need approval from your landlord. The Energy Saving Trust can help you search for the best deals in grant assisted insulation - Contact them on 0800 512 012 or go to [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

### Landlord Energy Saving Allowance (LESA) Scheme

Landlords may be entitled to further savings through the Landlords Energy Savings Allowance (LESA) scheme. This scheme is a tax allowance, allowing private landlords to claim back money when they improve the energy efficiency of their rented properties, up to a maximum of £1,500 per property.



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### Property Accreditation

Accreditation is a code of standards relating to the management and physical condition of a privately rented accommodation. Landlords who join the scheme and abide by the standards can have their properties 'accredited'.

Accreditation schemes are voluntary and there is no compulsion for landlords to join, but there are advantages, including incentives. Tenants can benefit from knowing that if they choose to rent from an accredited landlord, the property will be in good condition and the tenancy will be managed to a high standard.

We are now able to offer a grant to assist landlords who would like to join the scheme in improving the energy efficiency of their properties. Contact our Property Accreditation Officer on 01223 457000 for more information.

### Warm Front

If you are a private tenant on benefits and you are in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits, you may be entitled to have energy efficiency completed on your rented accommodation through Warm Front. Contact the Warm Front Team for more information at [www.warmfront.co.uk](http://www.warmfront.co.uk) or 0800 316 2805

### **Looking For A New Property?**

When you inquire about a new property, don't forget to raise the importance of energy efficiency and discuss how this factor could affect your decision.

A few points you could raise at this time is:

- Ask to see a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate
- Discuss with the landlord the type of energy measures already in place at the property.
- Ask for an estimate of fuel bills so you can compare the running costs of like for like properties.

### **Need Further Assistance?**

#### Cambridge City Council - Home Energy Officer

Cambridge City Council now has a Home Energy Officer available to offer advice and assistance to Cambridge residents, whether you want to make your home more efficient or you need advice with high fuel bills. In certain cases we may visit your property to help identify areas where assistance may be available. For information call 01223 457000 or visit our web pages at [www.cambridge.gov.uk/homeenergy](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/homeenergy)

#### Cambridge City Council – Environmental Health (Housing Standards)

If the landlord is not open to this assistance then Environmental Health can be called in if the case is extreme and has potential health effects, but this can be dependent on the age of the occupier. If the property you are renting is in poor condition, you may be able to seek further assistance from the City Council's Environmental Health department who can act under the Housing Health and safety Rating System (HHSRS).



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Every landlord in England and Wales must ensure they provide adequate insulation and heating to prevent excess cold. Landlords have a legal responsibility to protect their tenants from the risk of ill health caused by cold. HHSRS is the system that local authorities use to check that homes in their area are safe and healthy. If tenants are found to be at risk of excess cold, under the HHSRS, the local authority can request landlords make the necessary improvements.

If you would like to discuss your accommodation with Cambridge City Council, call our Customer Services Centre on 01223 457000. You can also find more information in our Landlord and Tenant Information Pack, which is available online.

### Energy Saving Trust

The Energy Saving Trust is a non-profit organisation that provides free impartial advice tailored to suit you. There is a vast range of information available through their website. Speak to an advisor on 0800 512 012 or go to [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

### Cambridge Carbon Footprint

Cambridge Carbon Footprint is a local, voluntary organisation concerned with climate change. Our aim is to help people work together creatively to make real reductions in their CO2 emissions. Go to [www.cambridgecarbonfootprint.org.uk](http://www.cambridgecarbonfootprint.org.uk)

## **Important**

You have to be aware that any permanent work that is undertaken by a tenant without the approval by the landlord may have to be re-instated to the original condition at the cost of the tenant, so make sure you understand the full terms of your lease before you commence any work.

There also appears to be no legislation that says the landlord cannot put rents up when the tenant has made improvements.

In the case of Rent Act Protected Tenancies a Fair Rent Officer may disregard, (and usually does), the improvements made by a tenant when assessing a fair rent for a property.

With assured and assured short hold tenancies it is not so clear. The tenant can ask a Rent Assessment Committee to determine if a rent increase proposed by the landlord is a reasonable market rent. The tenant can make representations about any issues including disrepair and other dilapidations for the Committee to take into account when making their decision. It can only be assumed that the tenant can also ask the Committee to disregard any improvements carried out by the tenant and they may consider it. But it is not known whether they are specifically required by the legislation to disregard improvements by the tenant.

If you require any guidance, please contact the Tenancy Relations Officer at Cambridge City Council on 01223 457000.



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