

**Overview of Cost of Living Support in Durham**

Sources of support:

[Help with your money - Durham County Council](https://www.durham.gov.uk/helpwithyourmoney)

[Help with food costs - Durham County Council](https://www.durham.gov.uk/helpwithfoodcosts)

[Become a Member — The Bread and Butter Thing](https://www.breadandbutterthing.org/become-a-member)

[Apply for Healthy Start - Durham County Council](https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/24281/Apply-for-Healthy-Start)

**Food**

Food banks

Food banks are community organisations that can help if you can not afford the food you need. You'll usually need to get a referral to a food bank before you can use it. You can ask for a referral from an organisation that's already supporting you eg, a charity, school or family centre, or you can contact [Citizens Advice](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/).

[Durham foodbank locations](https://durham.foodbank.org.uk/locations/)

## The Bread and Butter Thing (TBBT)

TBBT collects surplus food and staple goods that often end up going to waste from supermarkets, factories and farms, and distributes it at a discount price through community hubs. You will need to become a member to use the service, but this is free to do.

For just £7.50, TBBT members' shopping bags can be filled with an average of £35 worth of items made up of quality, nutritious food. Each week members can access three bags of produce, including fresh fruit and vegetables, chilled goods, as well as cupboard staples such as pasta and cereal.

[Bread and Butter Thing: membership](https://www.breadandbutterthing.org/members)

## Healthy Start

With Healthy Start, you get free prepaid card that is topped up each week to spend on milk, fresh, frozen, and tinned fruit and vegetables, fresh, dried, and tinned pulses, and infant formula milk. You can also get free vitamins.

[Apply for Healthy Start](https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/24281/Apply-for-Healthy-Start)

**Energy**

## Help to pay your bills

### **You can't afford to top up your prepayment meter**

Tell your supplier if you can't afford to top up because you're ill with coronavirus or following guidance to 'self-isolate'. You'll find their contact details on their website or on your bill. They'll try to help you find other ways to keep your energy supply connected, such as letting someone else top up for you, adding funds to your account or sending you a pre-loaded top-up card.

You'll need to pay back any credit your supplier gives you - ask them when and how you'll need to do this. If your meter is outside and it's safe to get to it, it's a good idea to leave it unlocked. This means someone else could top it up for you.

For more information see [Citizen's Advice: you can't afford to top up your prepayment meter](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/get-help-paying-your-bills/you-cant-afford-to-top-up-your-prepayment-meter/).

### **Help with energy bills and energy debts**

We can help you reduce your energy bills by finding a more competitive tariff and switching supplier, as well as offering fuel debt advice. The Government's Energy Price Guarantee will ensure that a typical household in Great Britain pays an average £2,500 a year on their energy bill, for the next two years, from 1 October 2022.

Our Managing Money Better service can visit your home to carry out a free home energy assessment, which will include:

* assessing your fuel bills and help you to switch suppliers if savings can be made
* making sure you understand your heating system and controls
* understanding your bill and how to set heating controllers
* providing energy efficiency advice and arrange practical support, if needed, such as insulation
* dealing with fuel debt, including negotiation of affordable payment arrangements and grant applications to Charitable Trusts for arrears and essential household items
* dealing with complex energy issues such as disputing a bill
* accessing grants for insulation, gas boilers and other energy efficiency measures
* energy benefits or schemes (for example Warm Home Discount and the Priority Services Register)
* budgeting for ongoing energy consumption

In addition to advice on your energy bills, we can help you with managing your money and refer you to [Benefits advice or help with a benefits appeal](https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/3028/Benefits-advice-or-help-with-a-benefits-appeal) and other services for advice on your benefit entitlements and other help with your finances.

As several Energy Companies have recently gone bust, it's very important you check your energy bills regularly. This is to ensure your gas and electricity payments keep up with your actual energy usage and you are not underpaying and falling into fuel debt with your Energy Company.

[Contact us](javascript:;) for more information.

#### **Financial support from energy suppliers**

Information about financial support provided by energy suppliers:

* [British Gas Energy Trust](https://britishgasenergytrust.org.uk/grants-available/)
* [E.ON Next energy fund](https://www.eonnextenergyfund.com/)
* [EDF Priority Services Register](https://www.edfenergy.com/PSR)
* [Octopus energy - financial assistance](https://octopus.energy/financial-assistance/)  have set up a £15 million Octo Assist Fund

If your energy supplier is not listed, you may also be eligible for a grant from the [British Gas Energy Trust](https://britishgasenergytrust.org.uk/grants-available/), grants are available to anyone even if you are not a British Gas customer.