

**MONEY**



**COMMUNITY  
LIVING ROOMS**



**ENERGY**



## Cost of Living help and support

### How has North Somerset Council supported residents?

- North Somerset Council set up a Cost-of-Living multi-agency taskforce with key partners at the beginning of the crisis to help and support residents during these financially challenging times.
- The Council and partners organised a special Cost of Living Advice event at The Stable, Weston-super-Mare on Thursday 8 December 11am – 3pm with a number of key exhibitors present to offer helpful advice
- North Somerset Council has allocated over £25,000 in grants to help support organisations wishing to set up a Community Living Room and over £4m has been given via the Household Support Fund
- Local Cost of Living support and advice is also available on North Somerset Council's website – [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/col](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/col)
- We also hosted a dedicated Cost of Living Facebook Live special event in October, which offers advice and is still available to view online
- Follow us on social media, share our posts - #NorthSomersetTogether

### What funding has the Council provided to residents and organisations?

- Back in October we announced more financial support for residents struggling with essential living costs. The Council's Household Support Fund was topped up by an additional £1.3m bringing the total support over the past year to almost £4m.
- This supported all working age residents and pensioners who claim council tax support to receive a £60 food voucher automatically in November.
- A £60 food voucher will also be paid in January to care leavers and each child who receives free schools meals.
- We've also paid grants totalling £60K to the Fuel Bank, Salvation Army and the Handyman Service to help them support people in need.
- Over £150K is available to support anyone who is financially vulnerable but didn't meet one of the categories mentioned above
- Residents needing additional short-term support through the welfare provision scheme can find out more at [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wps](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wps).

### Where can residents keep warm this winter?

- After rocketing energy bills, over 65 Community Living Rooms (CLR) are now open across North Somerset where residents can grab a cuppa, some company and keep warm

- CLRs are free of charge and open to anyone who needs to keep warm this winter
- An interactive map showing your nearest Community Living Room along with opening times and facilities available is on the North Somerset Council website [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/communitylivingrooms](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/communitylivingrooms)
- North Somerset Council has allocated over £25,000 in grants to help support organisations wishing to set up a Community Living Room
- In addition to the £25,000 funding provided by North Somerset Council so far, match funding of £2,500 have each been given by Alliance Homes, Bristol Water and Wessex Water to support North Somerset's Community Living Rooms initiatives
- We've issued 40 grants so far totalling £22,900
- For more information about how to set up a Community Living Room in your area, email [policypartnershipteam@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:policypartnershipteam@n-somerset.gov.uk).

### **What help is available for residents struggling with their housing?**

- If residents are struggling to pay their rent or mortgage they should always contact their landlord or lender to let them know. They may be able to offer help and advice.
- Contact Citizen Advice Bureau or another free debt advice agency such as the National Debt line <https://www.nationaldebtline.org>. They may be able to help residents apply for Breathing Space which is a government scheme which gives them extra time to receive debt advice and find a solution to sort out their debt problems <https://www.nationaldebtline.org/fact-sheet-library/breathing-space-ew/>
- Work out a budget and try to cut back on non-essential expenses.
- Find out if they are entitled to any additional benefits to boost their income <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/>
- For struggling renters, there is a fact sheet available at <https://www.nationaldebtline.org/fact-sheet-library/rent-arrears-ew/>. They can also check to see if they can claim any help with their housing costs. If eligible to help via Universal Credit or Housing Benefit they may also be able to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to help with any rent top up.
- If they are threatened with homelessness due to rent or mortgage arrears they should contact the Homeless Prevention Team, North Somerset Council who will be able to find them the most appropriate support and advice. <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/housing/help-if-you-are-homeless-or-need-support/what-do-if-youre-worried-about-being-homeless>
- For mortgage problems: <https://www.nationaldebtline.org/fact-sheet-library/mortgage-arrears-ew/>. Check to see if they have insurance cover. Contact their lender and ask them if either of the following might be right for them:
  - Extending their mortgage term
  - Switching to interest only
  - If they are entitled to certain government benefits they may be able to apply for Support for Mortgage Interest (SMi)

## How can residents receive help and support with getting food?

- If residents are struggling with not having enough money to buy food, they may be able to get support from a food bank. Here is a list of: [food banks in North Somerset](#)
- Make use of the Stable food shop, community fridge (WsM and Portishead), and apps TooGoodToGo and Olio

## What support is available for residents with their energy costs?

- The unit price of gas and electricity is now capped until April 2023 – but it's still dependent on how much gas and electricity you use. The energy price cap sets a limit on the unit price and standing charge that companies can bill their customers. The cap helps the average household save £700 on energy costs this winter.
  - Electricity is capped at £0.34p per/kWh (Daily standing charge £0.46p)
  - Gas is capped at £0.10p per/kWh (Daily standing charge £0.28p).
- The amount paid under the Energy Price Guarantee will vary depending on how much energy you use. The amount can vary very slightly based on the company you're with, where you live and how you pay your bill. You do not need to apply and there's no need to contact your energy supplier. For households who pay for their energy through monthly, quarterly or other regular bills, the guarantee will be applied when your bill is calculated. If you pay your landlord or someone else for your household fuel, ask them how they are applying the Energy Price Guarantee. For more information on the Energy Price Guarantee, visit [Energy bills support factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- The energy price guarantee is in addition to the £400 energy bill rebate being paid to all households this autumn. All households are receiving this £400 energy bill discount – which isn't a loan and will not have to be paid back. From October 1, all UK households began receiving the £400 energy bills rebate. The payment will be made up of six discounts between October and March next year. Households received a £66 energy bill discount between October and November and then a further discount worth £67 in December, January, February and March. The way you'll be paid will depend on how you pay for your energy. If you're on a credit meter, the discount will come off your bills, but if you're on a prepayment meter you'll get a voucher.
- The Centre of Sustainable Energy have produced some helpful leaflets on energy advice and fuel poverty. They range from condensation and damp advice to low cost lighting options and understanding energy bills. These resources can be found on [The Centre of Sustainable Energy website](#).
- If you are disabled, Scope offer free energy and water advice to help you manage your energy and water needs. Their expert advisers can talk you through support available. [www.scope.org.uk/disability-energy-support/](http://www.scope.org.uk/disability-energy-support/) Check if you are eligible for the Priority Services Register (it's free) which can provide

extra help if you could be in a vulnerable position if your fuel supply was interrupted [Get help from your supplier - Priority Services Register | Ofgem](#)

## Cost of Living Top Tips

- Sign up to Martin Lewis newsletters and follow on social media

### Life hacks

1. Meal plan – buy only the groceries you need
2. Batch cook and freeze
3. Use budgeting apps and price comparison websites
4. Wear layers – heat the person rather than the house
5. Air dryer clothes instead of tumble dry
6. Turn your washing machine down to 30C or lower if possible
7. Only boil the water you need in the kettle
8. Fit draft excluders – or make your own
9. Move furniture away from radiators to allow air to circulate more freely
10. Invest in rugs if you have floorboards – helps to keep heat in
11. Use a slow cooker – and you can also cheaper cuts of meat
12. Make packed lunches
13. Boil a kettle in the morning and then use a flask
14. Make use of the Stable food shop, community fridge (WsM and Portishead), and apps TooGoodToGo and Olio
15. Reusable nappies
16. Buy, sell swap sites for clothes, baby equipment and toys – sell and donate  
Use sites like eBay, Facebook Marketplace or Gumtree to sell unwanted items or buy second-hand – or even free items
17. Join the library instead of buying books, magazines and newspapers
18. Turn down the thermostat
19. Wear slippers or fluffy socks – cold feet brings your body temperature down
20. Pull the curtains at night to reduce drafts and close doors to keep heat in occupied rooms.
21. Hot water bottles or electric blankets will focus heat where it's needed overnight on cold nights.
22. If you're on an economy tariff use high-energy use appliances outside peak hours.
23. Showers rather than baths
24. **Turn your heating down by 1 or 2 degrees** - The [energy saving trust](#) says turning the dial down on your heating by 1 or 2 degrees could reduce your energy bill by 10%.

For more information, contact [communications@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:communications@n-somerset.gov.uk)  
[www.n-somerset.gov.uk/col](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/col)

