

# SESSION 3: THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS, PAYING UTILITIES BILLS, AND PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

*Assessing the impact of cost-of-living on economic control and financial abuse, managing bills, and planning for the future*

## Previous Session

- Discussed how to identify economic control as abuse with victims and survivors
- Discussed how to assess lack of knowledge/skills versus lack of confidence
- Discussed how to determine the extent of abuse (e.g., coercive debt)
- Discussed how to separate financially from the ex-partner/current partner (issues due to joint accounts, no access to benefits)
- Identified support services

## OBJECTIVES

- Assessing the effects of the cost-of-living crisis
- Key changes and payments in the annual budget
- Planning for the long-term impact of climate change
- Understanding the increasing costs of utilities
- Strategies for reducing costs and supports available for paying utilities
- How to compare different providers and payment options

# Budget 2023

- Welfare payments will increase by €12 with proportional increases for qualified adults and people on reduced rates of payment (January 2023).
- People aged 25 and under who are getting a reduced rate of Jobseeker's Allowance will get the full €12 increase (January 2023).
- The weekly rate for a qualified child will increase by €2 from €40 to €42 for children under 12 years of age. It will increase by €2 from €48 to €50 for children aged 12 years and over (January 2023).

**Christmas Bonus:** A Christmas Bonus of 100% will be paid in early December 2022 to people getting a long-term social welfare payment (minimum payment €20).

**Child Benefit:** A once-off double Child Benefit payment will be paid (November 2022). This means you will get an extra €140 per child in November.

\*More information available from the Citizen's Advice

## EFFECTS OF THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS CLIMATE CHANGE ON ENERGY COSTS

- Increase in food costs
- Increase in energy costs
- Increase in travel costs
- Rationing
- Reducing use along government guidelines, e.g., using the washing machine during off-peak hours, taking shorter showers, not using the dryer unless necessary

## MOST COMMON “UTILITIES” FOR HOUSEHOLDS

Most common utilities:

- Electricity and Gas
- Bins
- Insurance
- Broadband, Phone, Television

To discuss: Reduction in number of providers (e.g., Panda Power, Iberdrola) and large increases in prices of energy



## BIGGEST USE OF ENERGY IN ANY HOME

- ❖ Heating
- ❖ Hot Water
- ❖ Lighting and appliances
- ❖ Cooking

Most recent assessments:

[Which appliances use the most electricity? | bonkers.ie](http://bonkers.ie)

***Can you guess what uses the most energy in the home?***

Activity	Energy of appliance	Cost inc. VAT at 9%*	Based on
Immersion	3 kW	€2.58	2 hours to fully heat 120-litre tank from cold
Tumble dryer	3 kW	€1.29	One hour of drying
Cooking (oven/electric)	2.5 kW	€1.08	One hour of cooking
Dishwasher (D rated)**	1.5 kW per cycle	€0.65	Standard 65° cycle
Iron	2.5 kW	€0.54	Half hour of ironing
Desktop computer***	0.2 kW	€0.43	8 hours of use
Washing machine (D rated)**	1 kW per cycle	€0.43	Standard 40° cotton wash
Fridge/freezer	0.18 kW/350 kWh annual	€0.41	One day running



# STRATEGIES: SWITCHING USER AND/OR REDUCING USAGE

## BENEFITS OF SWITCHING PROVIDERS

Switching can reduce utility costs across all utilities, as providers try to attract new customers. That said, some providers will offer loyalty discounts for remaining with them.

Price comparison websites can help you find the best and cheapest providers of energy and broadband for your household's utility needs.

These comparison websites are regulated by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) and provide an independent view of the market:

Bonkers: <https://www.bonkers.ie/> - (01) 256 0500

Switcher: <https://switcher.ie/>

## BENEFITS OF REDUCING USAGE

- Good in long term
- Increased awareness of use
- More resilient to changes in price

## COMMISSION FOR REGULATION OF UTILITIES

The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) is Ireland's independent energy and water regulator. The CRU has a wide range of economic, customer protection and safety responsibilities in energy and water.



Recent measures: <https://www.cru.ie/customer-protection-measures/>

## ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

- Community Welfare Services - Additional Needs Payment
- Electricity Hardship Funds - SVP MABS
- CRU - Enhanced Measures
- Extended Disconnections Moratorium 1 December 2022 until 28 February 2023
- Vulnerable Customer ban on disconnections 1 October 2022 until 31 March 2023 [Paying your gas bills](#)
- Debt Repayment Plans extended 24 mths - 1st Nov 22
- Pay as you go - Arrears 25% reduced 10%

## SUPPORTS FOR PAYING UTILITIES: HOUSEHOLD BUDGET SCHEME

- Currently you can pay the following service providers under the Scheme given that the total going towards bills must not be more than 25% of your flat weekly social welfare payment:
  - Local authority rent and HAP (Housing Assistance Payment)
  - ESB
  - Bord Gáis
  - Eir
  - Airtricity
  - Postmobile (prepaid mobile phone services)
  - Personal Microcredit Pilot Scheme (It Makes Sense loans)\*
- Need to be receiving payments from the local Post Office

Household Budget Scheme

## SUPPORTS FOR PAYING UTILITIES: FUEL ALLOWANCE

If you are living alone or with dependants, and receiving long-term payments such as:

- State Pension – income threshold has just increased
- Disability Allowance
- Jobseekers Allowance for over 12 months

Or taking part in certain schemes like Tús or Community Employment

Citizens Information: [Fuel Allowance](#)

The Fuel Allowance season normally runs from late September to April. The current weekly rate is €33. Only one Fuel Allowance is paid to a household.

### **Budget 2023**

Fuel allowance recipients will receive €400 before Christmas.

The qualifying income threshold will rise from €120 to €200. For over 70s, the weekly fuel allowance means limit will rise to

€500 for single people and €1,000 for couples.

# HOW TO MANAGE PAYMENT ARREARS

Contact the Creditor to Try to Negotiate a Payment Plan  
[problems-paying-your-bills](#)

Hardship Funds  
[Problems paying your bills - MABS](#)

Prepay Metres  
[Energy customer protection measures - Commission for Regulation of Utilities](#)

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY COSTS

- Gain knowledge of how energy use relates to climate change, and why governments want to change how we use energy
- Understand the ways the Irish government is trying to reduce public energy use, and know how these impact on household budgets
- Look at ways of reducing energy use and making homes more efficient
- Look at ways to reduce your overall energy bill

## GLOBAL WARMING/ CLIMATE CHANGE – WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

- Video: National Geographic  
[What is global warming, explained](#)





## WHAT CAN WE DO?

- BER Energy Rating – look to improve ratings of our homes
- SEI grant - [www.seai.ie/grants](http://www.seai.ie/grants)
- Climate Action – what you can do at home:

[gov.ie](http://gov.ie) - [Climate Action – what you can do at home](#)



# ENERGY EFFICIENCY

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

We use energy to heat and light our homes and to run our appliances, TVs and computers. Householders are one of Ireland's largest energy consumers, accounting for almost 25% of our national energy use. Some energy usage is essential in the modern world, but hopefully the information in this section will advise you about the many practical ways each of us can save energy, and in doing so reduce household running costs while conserving natural resources.



# WASTE PREVENTION

## PREVENTING WASTE AT HOME

Each year, Irish households produce around 1 tonne of waste. The good news is that overall recycling rates continue to rise and our dependence on landfill as a waste management route is decreasing. However, managing our waste has impacts on the environment, so preventing waste is to be preferred to any waste management option. By not generating waste, we can eliminate the need to handle, transport, treat and dispose of waste. We also then avoid having to pay for these services. To make a difference, we must make a conscious effort to do so. This section provides information and advice on how we can all take steps to prevent waste in the home.



## Plan Meals

## Different sites to look at:

[Good Food on a Budget - Good Food Ireland](#)

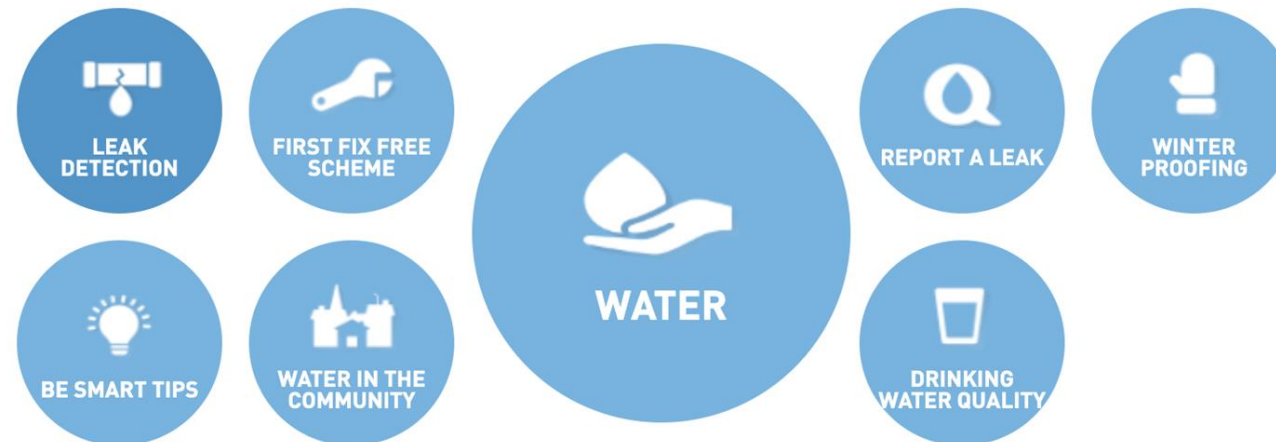
[2 Week Meal Plan](#)

Look for budget recipes online

# WATER CONSERVATION

## WATER CONSERVATION

Water is one of Ireland's most valuable resources. Only 2.5% of the earth's water is fresh water and, of that, less than 1% is accessible for use by humans. 1.6 billion litres of drinking water is produced every day in Ireland and delivered to communities through approximately 60,000 kilometres of pipelines. Currently almost half of treated water is lost through leaks from both customer properties and the distribution network. We can all save a significant amount of water by making small changes to the way we use water in our homes and by repairing leaks. By doing this we will contribute to building a sustainable water supply for all.



# GRANTS FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY

## SEAI – Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland

### Energy Efficiency Grants:

- Deep Retrofit Grant
- Insulation Grant
- Heat Pump System Grant
- Solar Water Heating Grant
- Solar Electricity Grant
- Electric Vehicle Incentives

## HOUSEHOLD CARBON HABITS

- Things to think about –
  - Do you buy local goods/ food? How often do you eat meat?
  - How often do you travel by car? Is your car renewable?
  - How often do you travel by plane?
  - How do you heat your home?
  - What temperature do you like to keep the house in the winter?
  - How much do you spend on clothes/ other goods a month?(not including shopping at the charity shop)

## Next Session

- Discuss saving and budgeting
- Discuss how abuse has affected the survivor's ability to save and budget
- Introduce banking services for victims
- Introduce useful money-saving strategies and budgeting tools
- Increase how saving is linked to wider structural issues and necessary life expenditures, as well as unforeseen/unexpected events
- Presentation on pensions from bank staff