

Whilst we're starting to see the first signs of Spring, it's as important as ever to ensure you're not at risk of health issues caused by poor conditions in your home. Citizens Advice services across Sussex have partnered with SGN, UK Power Networks, Southern Water and SSEN to share these handy hints and tips to help keep you and your home safe, whatever the weather.

Temperature

It's important to know the temperature of the room you're in, so ensure you have a thermometer if you ever feel cold at home. If your room is below 16°C, it can become harder to breathe; below 12°C, you increase your risk of a heart attack; below 9°C you increase your risk of hypothermia and even death. Always aim to keep the room you're in at 18°C or more to avoid heightened risk of high blood pressure and stroke.

Heating controls

If you're staying in just one room, you don't have to heat the whole house. Use your heating controls or thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs) to warm the spaces you're using. However, if you have health conditions such as asthma or COPD, it's important to think about hallways and spaces you may walk through during the day, as sudden changes in temperature may exacerbate your condition.

Reduce your risk of fires

If you have a chimney, ensure it has been swept and that any wood you use is dry. Check any electrical appliances, such as electric blankets, are safe to use. Your local fire service may be able to help with checking your appliances and risk assessing your property, including creating a safety plan. You can also complete your own home fire safety check online in just 15 minutes: safelincs.co.uk/hfsc/

East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service offers free home safety visits and electric blanket safety advice: esfrs.org or **0800 177 7069**

Damp and mould

It's important to keep fresh air flowing to avoid damp and mould, even in colder months. You can also use dehumidifiers to prevent this. Breathing problems, including conditions such as asthma, can be made worse by living in a damp or mouldy home. There are lots of ways you can help reduce the risk of damp and mould caused by condensation, such as not drying wet clothes on heaters, avoiding portable gas or paraffin heaters and ensuring all ventilation is unblocked.



Click here to watch a short film about dealing with damp and mould.

Priority Services Register

The **Priority Services Register** (PSR) is free to join. It helps energy companies, including energy suppliers, electricity and gas networks to look after customers who have extra communication, access or safety needs. It helps tailor the services to support households who need extra help with everyday energy matters like bills, and also in the unlikely event of a power cut or gas supply interruption.

By using the new **PSR website**, your PSR request will be made with your energy supplier (the company you pay your bills to) and your regional network companies including electricity, gas and water.

This free service is for anyone who:

- Uses medical equipment reliant on electricity or water
- Is deaf or hard of hearing
- Is disabled
- Needs documents translated or in another format
- Lives with children under 5
- Has a chronic illness
- Is of pensionable age
- Is blind or partially sighted
- Has any mental health condition, such as anxiety or depression
- Has a loss or impairment of smell
- Temporarily needs extra support



To sign up, go to [thepsr.co.uk](https://www.thepsr.co.uk)

You may be able to get:

- Support and information during a power or gas supply interruption
- Connection to local emergency services, including the British Red Cross
- Emergency power and gas
- Tailored communication
- Use of a nominated contact, such as a partner or carer
- Extra security for visits to your home, such as a password scheme

Carbon Monoxide

If you have any heating or cooking appliances that use carbon-based fuels, such as gas, oil, wood, petrol or coal, you could be at risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. CO is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, poisonous gas that can be highly dangerous in certain conditions and can kill quickly without warning.

How to stay safe from the dangers of Carbon Monoxide

- Get coal, oil and natural gas appliances checked annually by a qualified professional
- Fit an audible carbon monoxide alarm and always follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Regularly test your carbon monoxide alarm in line with the manufacturer's instructions and replace the batteries/alarm as and when required
- Ensure there is adequate ventilation for appliances and don't block air vents
- Turn off the appliance and seek immediate assistance if you suspect CO or your CO alarm sounds
- Don't ever bring a BBQ or portable heater into an enclosed space without proper ventilation

If you smell gas:

- Open windows and doors
- Turn off the gas supply at the meter and turn off any gas appliances, except if your meter is in a cellar
- Call the National Gas Emergency Service Number on **0800 111 999**.
- Don't smoke or use any naked flames
- Don't touch any electrical switches

Who to turn to for help

If you're struggling with your energy bills, speak to the East Sussex Energy Team at Citizens Advice. To see what support might be available to you contact your local Citizens Advice office for information on grants, ways to make your home warmer, and ordering a Carbon Monoxide detector.

Hastings and Rother: visit citizensadvice1066.co.uk or call **01424 869352**

Eastbourne: visit eastbournecab.co.uk or call **0800 144 8848**

Wealden: visit wealdencitizensadvice.org.uk or call **0808 278 7811**

Lewes: visit lewesdistrictca.org.uk or call **0808 278 7892**

- If you'd like a Safe and Well visit from East Sussex Fire & Rescue Services, call **0800 177 7069**.
- The Warm Home Check service offers free advice, along with home energy efficiency visits for eligible households: warmeastsussex.org.uk, call **0800 464 7307** or text WARM to **80011**
- If you smell gas, call **0800 111 999**.
- If you have a power cut, call **105**.