

A warm home in the colder months is essential.

Did you know you can save money by using your central heating controls more efficiently and checking your boiler flow temperature? Bassetlaw Citizens Advice shares some tips on how to help you save money and stay warm at home.

Use your central heating controls more efficiently

If you have radiators that are heated by water from a boiler, this means you have central heating and there are usually ways of controlling how your home is heated. You might have:

- a thermostat for setting the temperature you want your home to be
- a timer or programmer to set when your heating turns on or off
- controls that let you change the temperature of a single radiator

You can use these central heating controls to keep your home at a comfortable temperature without heating it more than you need to. This can help you save energy and reduce your bills.

Check the instructions for your central heating controls

If you don't have the instruction manual, search for it online - you'll need to know who made your heating controls. You might also find videos that show how to use your controls.

If you're not sure who made your heating controls, check your boiler or any separate controls.

Find the lowest comfortable temperature

Your thermostat senses how warm a room is and turns off your central heating if the temperature reaches the level you've set. You'll usually find that a temperature between 18°C and 21°C is comfortable. Try setting your thermostat 1 degree lower to see if you still find the temperature comfortable. Every degree you turn your thermostat down can save around 10% on your energy bill.

If you have a health condition that could be made worse by the cold, you shouldn't set your thermostat lower than 21°C.

Make sure your heating is only on when you need it

A timer or programmer lets you set what time your central heating is on. You can save energy by setting your heating to only be on when you need it.

How much you can control your central heating depends on the type of timer or programmer you have. For example, some programmers let you set your heating to be on or off at different times during the weekend or when you're on holiday. Think about the times when you don't need your heating to be on. If there's no one at home during the day, you could set the heating to be off until you're due to come home.

It takes time for the heating to warm up, so it's a good idea to set it to turn on 30 minutes before you need it.

You might decide to set your central heating to be on at a low temperature rather than turning it off - for example, if you live in an older home that takes longer to warm up. It depends on what feels most comfortable for you - but leaving your heating on all the time will be more expensive.

Check your radiator controls

Some radiators have controls that let you change the temperature of a single radiator - these are called 'thermostatic radiator valves' (TRVs). These are usually attached to one of the pipes that goes into your radiator. They have a dial with numbers on that you can adjust. The higher

the number you set the dial, the warmer the radiator will be. Check what the TRVs on your radiators are set to. If they're on a high setting in rooms where you don't spend much time, try turning them down to a low setting to save energy.

Don't turn them down to zero - this will turn off the radiator completely. Even in a room you don't use much, there should be some heat to stop damp and mould from developing.

Check your boiler flow temperature

If you have central heating, you can change the temperature of the water that flows to your radiators. This is known as the 'boiler flow temperature'. Your boiler flow temperature might be higher than it needs to be. You can save money if you set it to a lower temperature. How to change your boiler flow temperature depends on what type of boiler you have.

Keep heat in your home

There might be free or low cost ways you can keep heat in your home. This can save you money because you won't need your heating on as much.

Curtains and blinds can keep the heat in at night. Even if it's cold, it's worth keeping your curtains or blinds open when it's light. This lets the sun warm the room.

If you have central heating, make sure your curtains don't hang over the top of your radiator. Tuck the curtains behind the radiator instead. You shouldn't hang curtains over an electric heater - this is a fire risk.

Find ways to block draughts. Draughts are caused by warm air escaping through gaps and cracks in your home.

If you're just heating one room, keep the doors closed. You can reduce other draughts in your home by blocking some of the gaps that let air through - for example:

- keyholes and letterboxes
- cracks in your floorboards
- a chimney you don't use
- the gaps at the bottom of your doors

It's important to make sure that you still have fresh air coming into your home - this will help you avoid problems with mould.

Put secondary glazing film on your windows. Secondary glazing film is a clear, thin material you attach to your windows. If you don't have double-glazed windows, secondary glazing film is a cheaper way of stopping heat from escaping through your windows. You can usually install secondary glazing film yourself and it's easy to remove.

Use heated throws or blankets to keep yourself warm without turning up your heating. They use electricity, but only cost around 3p each hour to run. You should check that any heated throw or blanket you have is safe to use. Look at the label and make sure it has a safety mark.

For information and advice, contact Citizens Advice Bassetlaw on 01909 498888 or email advice@bassetlawca.org.uk or visit <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

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