

# Know how much the energy bills should be

How smart meters could help you and the person you care for



## Smart meters and carers

At Smart Energy GB, we're working with Carers UK to help carers learn more about smart meters, and how they could benefit them and those they care for.

### A smart meter could help you and the person you care for

Right now, many of us are worried about higher energy bills. And when you're caring for someone, you might have their bill to think about too. A smart meter could help.

Smart meters come with an in-home display. The in-home display is sometimes called an IHD. It shows how much energy a household is using and how much it costs.

That means you know how much your energy bills should be, which could take some of the guesswork out of balancing the budget for you and the person you care for.

The same information could also help you, or the person you care for, decide when to turn the heating up, to make sure they stay warm. Or it could help you spot when something has been left on accidentally — so you can make sure the person you support isn't using energy by mistake.



## A smart meter could help in other ways too

Smart meters record how much electricity or gas you use, just like your existing meters. But with a smart meter, the readings are sent directly and securely to your energy supplier. So, there's no need for you — or the person you care for — to climb a ladder or crawl into a cupboard to read the meter. That means one less item on your busy to-do list.



**I would recommend that other people who might be caring for a relative get a smart meter. I can keep a track of the bills. It all being done helps her not worry.”**

Sarah, carer for her mum Jean



## How smart meters work



**1.** The smart meter records your energy use, as you use it.



**2.** The IHD shows how much energy you're using, and what you've spent.



**3.** The smart meter automatically sends readings to your energy supplier.



**4.** You get a bill based on the amount of gas and electricity you used.

Smart meters aren't connected to the internet. The in-home display isn't connected to the internet, either. So, there's no need to have internet access to get one.

The only people who can see how much energy is being used are you, the person you care for, and their energy supplier.

The only information that gets sent to energy suppliers is how much energy is being used and when. Suppliers can't see what's plugged in, or when the washing machine is on!

## Prepay smart meters

If the person you support is on a prepay meter, they can get a smart meter. With a prepay smart meter, you can top up online or via a mobile phone as well as in a shop. The prepay smart meter comes with an in-home display that shows when it's time to top up.



## Seeing how much energy you've used

The in-home display shows how much energy the person you care for has used and how much it has cost. You can check how much they've used today, this week or this month.

If the person you support only has a smart meter for gas, the in-home display will only show how much gas they have used. If they only have a smart meter for electricity, the in-home display will only show how much electricity they have used.

Smart meters can help households save energy, but it's not automatic. Many carers find the in-home display useful. It allows for you and the person you support to have more information about their energy usage. Helping you both work out where to save energy and money.

For example, Sarah, who cares for her mother Jean, said:

“ It helps you see in real time how much power you're using. If something's left on accidentally, you might not notice it for quite a while but you would notice it on the in-home display. It makes Mum more independent.”



This image shows how a typical in-home display looks.

## Accessible in-home display (AIHD)

Some energy suppliers also offer an accessible version of the in-home display, sometimes called an AIHD. They have features that may help you or the person you care for. For example, they have larger buttons and can read information out loud.

An AIHD could be helpful if you, or the person you support:

- are blind or partially sighted
- have difficulties using your hands or wrists, or
- have difficulties with memory loss

Ask your supplier to find out more about getting an accessible in-home display.



This image shows how a typical accessible in-home display looks.

## Getting a smart meter

Smart meters are installed by gas and electricity suppliers. They replace your old energy meters, and do it all safely and securely. There is no extra cost to the customer.

### Here's how it works:

1. Contact your energy supplier to arrange a time and date for the smart meter to be installed.

In most cases, you can make the appointment for the person you support, but the supplier may ask some security questions.

You can make sure it's a time when you can be there too. The supplier should check if the customer — the person you care for — has any specific needs, like needing a carer to be there.

2. The person installing the meter will turn up at the arranged time and show you, or the person you care for, their ID. If they don't show you ID, you can ask to see it.
3. They will disconnect the existing meter and replace it with a smart meter.
4. Once the smart meter is working, the person installing the meter should show you and the person you care for how to use the in-home display.

Some homes can't get a smart meter yet but will be able to get one before the end of the rollout. The energy supplier can tell you if the person you care for can have one. They can also tell you how soon it can be installed.

### IMPORTANT

- someone will need to be at home when the smart meters are installed. It can be you, the person you support, or both
- if you, as a carer, have informed the supplier that you need to be present when the smart meter is installed, and for any reason you're not there, the supplier must not install the smart meter
- if the gas and electricity meters are being replaced at the same time, it will take around two hours. If it's just one meter, it could be quicker
- the energy supply will be turned off for a short time while the smart meter is being installed. If the person you care for needs energy to help them with a health condition, please let the energy supplier know when you arrange the appointment



## Helping you help the person you care for

With a smart meter, you — and the person you care for — could keep a closer eye on your energy use which could help you with your household budgeting. But we know that many carers could benefit from further support when it comes to dealing with energy suppliers.

## Become a named third party

If you need to make decisions for the person you care for and pay bills for them, it may help for you to be a named third party on their account. Contact their energy supplier to find out what you need to do.

## Safe smart meter installation

To protect vulnerable customers, many energy suppliers use a password scheme. When you set up an installation appointment, you can agree a password with the supplier. The person installing the meter should then say that password before you — or the person you support — lets them in to the house.



## Sign up to the Priority Services Register (PSR)

It may also be a good idea to get the person you care for on the Priority Services Register (PSR).

The PSR is a free and voluntary system that means the most vulnerable customers get the right support from energy suppliers. That might include advance notice of any planned service interruptions or priority in a power cut.

Once someone is on the PSR, they may also be able to request large-format or braille bills, or ask for account statements or bills to be sent to you, instead of — or at the same time as — them.

If you think being on the PSR would help the person you support, contact their energy supplier to find out more.

## More information

There's lots more information on the Carers UK website, including carers' tips on using services or arranging a power of attorney: [carersuk.org/tips-from-carers](https://carersuk.org/tips-from-carers)

## Here's what to do next

Search 'get a smart meter' today. Or get in touch with the energy supplier of the person you care for and ask if they can get one.

You can find contact details on their bill. Or to find some supplier's free-phone and textphone numbers visit: [smartenergyGB.org/supplier-free-phone-numbers](https://smartenergyGB.org/supplier-free-phone-numbers)

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# Helping you help the person you care for with a smart meter



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