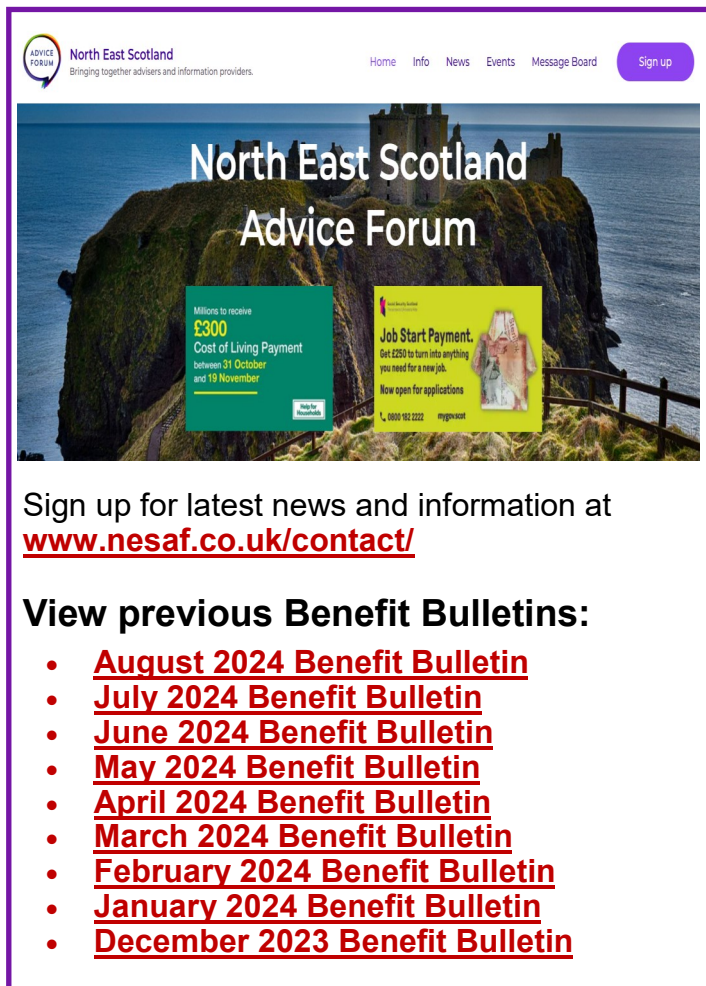


North East Scotland Advice Forum is a local network for people working in advice services to share information and experiences. The Forum meets quarterly throughout the year.

## September 2024 Newsletter

If you would like an article included in the next bulletin, please contact [admin@nesaf.co.uk](mailto:admin@nesaf.co.uk)



The screenshot shows the website header with the logo and navigation links: Home, Info, News, Events, Message Board, and a Sign up button. The main banner features a scenic view of a castle on a cliff with the text 'North East Scotland Advice Forum'. Below the banner are two promotional cards: one for a £300 Cost of Living Payment and another for Job Start Payment.

Sign up for latest news and information at [www.nesaf.co.uk/contact/](http://www.nesaf.co.uk/contact/)

### View previous Benefit Bulletins:

- [August 2024 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [July 2024 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [June 2024 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [May 2024 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [April 2024 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [March 2024 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [February 2024 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [January 2024 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [December 2023 Benefit Bulletin](#)

## Benefit calculator

Our benefits calculator will help you find out what benefits you can claim.

The calculator is free to use, and the details you provide are anonymous.

Before you start, make sure you have information about your savings, income, pensions and existing benefits (for you and your partner).

If you run out of time, you can save your calculation and come back to it later, and pick up right where you left off.

- ⇒ *Should take 10 minutes to complete*
- ⇒ *Please complete all fields with an asterisk(\*)*

[START >>>](#)



## Date for your diary

### Quarterly Advice Forum Meeting

2nd October 10:00 to 12:00

We shall hopefully have the following speakers:

- Justine Dunbar - update on the Suicide Prevention Service
- Diane Alexander - Community Partnership Officer, Home Energy Scotland
- Kevin Duffy - Money Guiders programme, Money and Pension Service
- Susan Bains - Project Co-ordinator NRPF [nrnepartnership.org](http://nrnepartnership.org)
- Amy Duncan/Jennifer Macrae - [Cash-First: Towards Ending the Need for Food Banks in Scotland](#)



### Microsoft Teams meeting details

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 327 175 907 754

Passcode: vD4Mzv

## Child Maintenance consultation extended

The Government has extended a [consultation on the Child Maintenance Service](#) (CMS) to ensure there is suitable time for feedback from external organisations.

The consultation, launched on 8 May 2024, is a chance to discuss ways the CMS can help to increase the number of children being kept out of poverty.

**The extension will now close on 30 September 2024.**

It comes as the Government launched the [Child Poverty Taskforce](#), chaired by the Work and Pensions and Education Secretaries, part of the ambitious strategy to reduce child poverty and give children the best start in life.

[Read the press notice](#)

## Move to Universal Credit update

In line with Move to Universal Credit (UC) migration plans, the Government has started migrating households in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance receiving tax credits in July 2024.

Housing Benefit only households were brought into the journey from 17 July 2024. This was previously planned to commence in June; however, timelines were extended to allow the relevant automated processes required to progress these cases safely at scale to be developed.

Letters (referred to as the Tax Credit Closure notice) are currently being issued to pension age tax credit customers who have been identified to move to Pension Credit. Pension age tax credit customers in scope to move to Universal Credit will be issued a migration notice from September 2024.

The Third Party Guide to support those households required to make a move to UC has been updated after feedback from stakeholders. Distribution of Version 2.0 took place in July. This includes it being sent by email to all local authorities. If you have not received a copy, please contact your local Partnership Manager.

## Pension Credit awareness drive as thousands of eligible pensioners yet to claim

Pensioners urged to check if they could be eligible for Pension Credit to secure the Winter Fuel Payment, worth up to £300 per household.

- Claiming Pension Credit can also passport pensioners to additional help with housing costs, council tax, and heating bills
- Comes as Deputy Prime Minister and Work and Pensions Secretary write to Local Authorities to boost uptake of pension credit in their local areas

Applications for Pension Credit can be made:

- On the [How to Claim](#) page
- Over the phone by calling 0800 99 1234 (Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm)
- By [printing out](#) and filling in a paper application form
- For more information visit the Pension Credit [GOV.UK](#) page.

Pension Credit  
awareness drive as  
thousands of  
eligible pensioners  
yet to claim



## Free online stakeholder event - Pension Age Disability Payment in Scotland

We would like to invite you to attend a free online stakeholder information event where we will share details on the roll out of Pension Age Disability Payment in Scotland.

Our Pension Age Disability Payment events for phase 1 of the pilot are now live on Eventbrite.

### Pension Age Disability Payment Online Stakeholder Events

- [Thu 19 Sep 2024 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](#)
- [Tue 24 Sep 2024 at 13:00 | Eventbrite](#)
- [Wed 2 Oct 2024 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](#)
- [Wed 16 Oct 2024 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](#)

### Background

Pension Age Disability Payment will replace Attendance Allowance in Scotland.

This new form of assistance is for people of State Pension age who have a disability or long-term health condition that means they need help looking after themselves or supervision to stay safe.

Pension Age Disability Payment will launch in five local authority areas on 21 October 2024:

- Argyll and Bute
- Highland Council
- Aberdeen City
- Orkney
- Shetland

This initial pilot will allow us to put our approach into practice: learning and improving before the benefit is rolled out across Scotland.

### Purpose of events

These events are for stakeholders who support individuals or families who are living with a disability and/or long-term health conditions within the pilot areas.

These events will include a general overview of the following topics:

#### Policy background

- Eligibility criteria and how to apply
- Key differences between Attendance Allowance and Pension Age Disability Payment
- Supporting Information
- Award and review periods
- Short Term Assistance
- Special Rules for Terminal Illness
- Passported benefits

If you would like to find out more information about these events, or book a place, please click on the appropriate link at the top of this email or visit the

[Social Security Scotland Eventbrite page](#).

If you have any questions about any of the events or difficulty booking a place, then please contact the National Engagement and Partnership Team at:

[nationalengagementandpartnership-team@socialsecurity.gov.scot](mailto:nationalengagementandpartnership-team@socialsecurity.gov.scot).



The graphic features the gov.scot logo in the top left corner. The main text reads "New benefit for Scottish pensioners" in a large, bold, dark blue font. Below this, in a smaller dark blue font, it states: "Pension Age Disability Payment will be piloted from October in Argyll & Bute, Highland, Aberdeen City, Orkney and Shetland."







## Scottish Child Payment: high level statistics to 30 June 2024

The number of children actively benefitting from Scottish Child Payment as of 30 June 2024 broken down by intermediate zone and child age-band is published on the Scottish Government Open Data Platform and can be found at the following link: [statistics.gov.scot : Scottish Child Payment: Caseload](https://statistics.gov.scot/reports/publications/scottish-child-payment-high-level-statistics-to-30-june-2024).

[www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/reporting/publications/scottish-child-payment-high-level-statistics-to-30-june-2024](https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/reporting/publications/scottish-child-payment-high-level-statistics-to-30-june-2024)

## Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods: high level statistics to 30 June 2024

Information on applications and payments for Best Start Grant from 10 December 2018 to 30 June 2024 and Best Start Foods from 12 August 2019 to 30 June 2024.

[www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/reporting/publications/best-start-grant-and-best-start-foods-high-level-statistics-to-30-june-2024](https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/reporting/publications/best-start-grant-and-best-start-foods-high-level-statistics-to-30-june-2024)

## Helping young people get money they need to start a new job

As temporary summer jobs come to an end and school leavers and graduates begin the search for employment, young people are being urged to find out if they are eligible for Job Start Payment.

The cost of starting a new role can add up, especially if young people have been unemployed and have less money.

Job Start Payment can help. It is a one off payment of £314.45 to help young people between the ages of 16-24 with the costs of starting a new job.

The value increases to £503.10 if you are the main carer for any children. This payment does not have to be paid back, and applicants are free to spend this as they see fit, but it can help to pay for expenses like travel, clothes and childcare.

Last year we improved the application process for Job Start Payment making it easier and quicker for young people to apply. These improvements mean income from trial shifts no longer impact applications, the deadline to apply was extended from three to six months and the supporting information required as proof of a job offer has been simplified.

Applications can be made online, and it only takes around 10 minutes to complete the form.

As well as encouraging young people to check their eligibility for Job Start Payment, we have resources available for organisations, including employers, to use and are encouraging stakeholders to share via their own networks and channels.

These resources include [free to download social media posts, leaflets, posters and factsheets](#) to share with young people and their new employees. While not all new hires will qualify for this one-off payment, making those who qualify aware could remove barriers to working and help improve staff retention rates.

Anyone who thinks they may be eligible can find out more and apply online, over the phone or book an appointment to apply in-person, by visiting [mygov.scot/jobstartpayment](https://mygov.scot/jobstartpayment) or call us free on 0800 182 2222.





## Find support to get online

If you or a loved one need help to connect to the internet, check to see if there's local support near you. If you're here to learn digital skills as a beginner, visit our free learning platform Learn My Way.

[www.goodthingsfoundation.org/find-support](http://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/find-support)



## What is the National Databank?

Like a foodbank but for mobile data, the National Databank provides free mobile SIM cards for people who can't access the internet.

Internet access is essential in today's society, and yet **2 million households have no home internet**, and **2.4 million can't afford a mobile phone contract**. This lack of access often affects vulnerable people facing other inequalities.

To ensure everyone benefits from internet connectivity, we built the National Databank. Launched in July 2021 with our **strategic partner Virgin Media O2**, the National Databank was founded to tackle data poverty and isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic.

By early 2022, Vodafone and Three pledged to support the National Databank, expanding our reach from 34 hubs to hundreds. In just one year this grew to over 1,000 Digital Inclusion Hubs providing free mobile data to people in their communities, and the demand for support is still increasing. As a result, the National Databank is expanding, ensuring more people can access the connectivity they need in today's digital world.

How does the National Databank work?

1. Our partners Virgin Media O2, Vodafone and Three regularly donate mobile data SIM cards.
2. Members of the **National Digital Inclusion Network**, which is a network of organisations helping people use or access the internet locally, can apply for data packages anytime.
3. We distribute the SIM cards to these community hubs across the UK, who activate and gift the free mobile data to people experiencing data poverty or living on a low income in their community.

For more details visit - [www.goodthingsfoundation.org/our-services/national-databank](http://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/our-services/national-databank)



## Scottish Government to scrap universal winter fuel payments for pensioners



**The decision follows a decision by the UK Government.**

A leading charity for older people has expressed their disappointment in the Scottish Government's decision to follow in the footsteps of Westminster and scrap universal winter fuel payments for pensioners.

The introduction of a replacement Scottish benefit has also been delayed, ministers confirmed.

Plans to means-test Winter Fuel Payment in England and Wales will see the Scottish Government's funding cut by up to £160 million.

Age Scotland said the SNP Government has been left with no decision but to replicate plans to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment announced last month at Westminster.

Social Justice Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville said the Scottish Government therefore has no alternative but to replicate the decision in Scotland and restrict payments to pensioners who receive eligible benefits.



## Scottish government ends free bus travel for asylum seekers: 'Disappointing and devastating'

**THE BIG ISSUE**

Free bus travel boosted mental health and integration for asylum seekers, refugee organisations said. But the Scottish government has ended a £2million pilot

Refugee organisations have criticised the Scottish government's "disappointing and devastating" decision to end free bus travel for asylum seekers.

The scheme provided a "glimpse of hope for the future" for asylum seekers, said the leader of one charity, as the government decided to end a pilot which had run since October 2023.

Free travel reduced isolation, enhanced integration, and improved health and wellbeing for asylum seekers – who are unable to work and survive on less than £50 a week – said Ekta Marwaha, chief executive of Refugee Sanctuary Scotland.

Announced in October 2023 with £2m of funding, Scotland's initiative inspired similar calls across the country. Oxfordshire County Council [was considering bus travel for asylum seekers as of June](#), with one Green Party councillor branding it "performative cruelty" to deny them a bus pass.

Read the full article here – [Scottish government ends free bus travel for asylum seekers – Big Issue](#)

## Scottish Government should keep freedom to travel promise

August 19, 2024



Reacting to reports that the Scottish Government has reversed its plans to pilot extending concessionary bus travel to people in the asylum system, Poverty Alliance chief executive Peter Kelly said: "We all need the freedom to travel to where we need to go. Transport gives us access to the services, support, and social connections that we all need for a better life.

"But people in the asylum system in Scotland are too-often barred from getting access to public transport. They get so little financial support, they simply can't afford the fares. In a society that believes in justice and compassion, that's simply wrong.

"As part of our [Rights in Action](#) project, we worked with community researchers from the Maryhill Integration Network to expose how the asylum process badly impacts the mental health of people in Glasgow. Transport was one of the major causes.

"That's why we supported MIN's campaign to extend concessionary travel to people in the asylum

## NAWRA call for winter fuel payment changes to be put on hold until there is a 95% take-up rate for pension credit

NAWRA has written to Secretary of State Liz Kendall to express its concerns that the government is planning to restrict eligibility for winter fuel payments (WFPs) to those in receipt of pension credit (or other specific means-tested benefits).

This is despite the fact that it acknowledges that up to an estimated 880,000 households who are eligible for pension credit are yet to claim and would therefore be ineligible for the WFP.

[Letter to SoS from NAWRA](#)

**nawra**  
national association of  
welfare rights advisers





## Report: Tackling Child Poverty in Scotland: Striking the Right Balance

August 2024

This paper argues that over the period 2017-24, Scottish Government strategy and plans directed to reducing child poverty narrowed in focus, with cash interventions prioritised as the core mechanism to drive progress.

Evidence suggests that more place-focused, person centred, preventive and holistic approaches are now required, especially if we are to address the circumstances and multi-dimensional experience of those families in the deepest poverty or at the greatest risk of hardship/destitution.

Meeting ambitious household income targets should not be at the expense of funding other interventions, including public services that impact on need at community level and support parents to overcome barriers and grasp opportunities that would enable their families to flourish.

Child Poverty cannot be tackled in isolation – to deliver sustained change we need to rethink how public services are designed and delivered and use limited resources more effectively. Better co-ordination between agencies and between tiers of government committed to shared objectives can contribute to improved outcomes.

[www.reformscotland.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Tackling-Child-Poverty-in-Scotland.pdf](http://www.reformscotland.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Tackling-Child-Poverty-in-Scotland.pdf)

reform  
scotland

## Report: Fixing the foundations: The need for better targeted support for energy consumers

21 August 2024

[Fixing the foundations – the need for better targeted support for energy consumers 1.53 MB](#)

Energy affordability no longer dominates headlines as it did when prices were at their peak, and for some households the acute phase of the energy crisis has passed. But millions of households are still struggling, and many are burdened with unsustainable energy debts built up over recent years.

In the first 3 months of 2024, energy was the most common type of issue Citizens Advice helped people with. Looking at our busiest 5 months for energy debt advice since January 2019, 4 of them have been in 2024.

To demonstrate the continuing impact of higher energy costs, we commissioned nationally representative polling of adults in Great Britain to understand people's expectations of the coming winter.

For those struggling most, there's no light at the end of the tunnel. The energy price cap is predicted to rise by around 9% just as the weather gets colder this autumn. This means bills of £1,714 for a typical household – up nearly £150 from the current level.

The new Government has inherited a challenging situation, but it is clear that more support is urgently needed. The most efficient way to provide this is to reform the Warm Home Discount, to ensure it reaches more households and provides support that is based on their energy needs.

The risk of harm to energy consumers over the coming winter is mounting – the government must work fast to ensure that effective support is put in place.

citizens  
advice



## Report: “Jumping through hoops”: Older people’s experiences of claiming social security entitlements



Independent Age’s Senior Policy Officer Tatiana Sherwood explores what it’s like to claim financial support past State Pension age, and the devastating impact if people are not able to do this.

This is how one person described the process of applying for a social security entitlement. Aged between 71 and 75, they were responding to a 2024 [Independent Age](#) survey. As a charity that speaks to older people in poverty every day, and helps many to navigate the social security system, we know that this experience is far from unique. Many people in later life rely on social security and the [State Pension](#) to get by, but too many are missing out.

Previously, we have conducted extensive research on [Pension Credit](#), an income top-up for people past State Pension age; highlighting [how much Pension Credit is not received by eligible people across the UK](#), and what the UK Government and [local authorities can do to](#) rectify this.

But Pension Credit is just one element of a wider — and extremely complex — system of financial support designed for those in later life, and it is important to understand where people are missing out across this whole pathway.

Read the full report at [medium.com/independent-age/claiming-benefits-older-social-security-dc20ac967474](https://medium.com/independent-age/claiming-benefits-older-social-security-dc20ac967474)

### Universal Credit if you’re State Pension age and get a Migration Notice letter



You need to move to Universal Credit if you get a Migration Notice letter and you’re State Pension age, as tax credits are ending soon.

Read the Guidance [HERE](#)

### Universal Credit if you’re a ‘mixed age couple’ and get Migration Notice letters



If you’re in a couple where one of you is State Pension age, and you get a Migration Notice, you both need to move to Universal Credit as your benefits will end soon.

Read the Guidance [HERE](#)

## Financial support for families

Parents and carers are being encouraged to check their eligibility for financial support as the summer holidays end and they prepare for their children going back to school.

The five family payments administered by Social Security Scotland can help pay for extra back to school expenses alongside everyday family costs like food, clothing and days out.

This includes the Scottish Child Payment, a weekly payment of £26.70 for eligible families with children up to 16.

The three Best Start Grant payments and Best Start Foods, also part of social security support, are designed to help families at key stages in their children’s early years, including during pregnancy.

There is no cap on the number of children in one family who can receive these payments.

You can find out more and apply at [mygov.scot/scottishchildpayment](https://mygov.scot/scottishchildpayment) and at [mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods](https://mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods) or by calling Social Security Scotland free on 0800 182 2222



## Stay Warm Stay Well FREE training for front line staff

Fuel poverty is a major problem in Scotland. More than one in four people can't afford to heat their homes to an adequate level. For those living in fuel poverty, the consequences are ill health, discomfort and debt. This often means choosing between heating and eating.

Energy Action Scotland (EAS) campaigns for an end to fuel poverty and works to turn cold, damp houses into warm, dry homes. EAS has recently secured funding from OVO, to provide training, free of charge, to front line staff responsible for looking after the health, wellbeing, and social welfare of vulnerable people. This energy efficiency training will enable a range of organisations in Scotland, to provide appropriate and effective advice and information to clients, helping them to obtain all the help and support that's available.

**Please note that Warm Home Discount regulations mean participants must offer help and support to clients solely in Scotland and not extend to the rest of the UK.**

The following free training is available:

### One day fuel poverty/energy efficiency training

We are delivering this course online utilising Microsoft Teams. Places are available on a first come, first served basis. The course will cover:

- Introduction to EAS and the Stay Warm Stay Well
- Fuel poverty – causes and effects
- Cold damp homes and health impacts
- Condensation dampness
- Energy efficiency
- Heat loss in the home
- Paying for fuel and fuel debt issues
- Sourcing help and effective signposting
- Tariffs and switching

The course is delivered in two sessions. Part 1 is delivered from 10am to 12pm and part 2 is delivered from 2pm-4pm. Each session consists of a PowerPoint delivery followed by a Q&A session.

Participants **must attend both sessions** to be eligible to receive a certificate for Continued Personal Development (CPD) and be eligible for the Energy Awareness, City & Guilds (Level 3) training - see below.

### Energy Awareness, City & Guilds (Level 3)

A limited number of places will be available only to those completing the one-day training. This will be an e-learning course with an online exam. Successful candidates will receive a City & Guilds Certificate which can be used for Continued Personal Development (CPD) purposes.

Do you know someone who is cold at home or who struggles to afford their fuel bills? If so, this free training can help you to find solutions.

Please click on your preferred date on the list below which will take you to the appropriate booking page to reserve your place. Please note that each session is limited to 35 places so if your first choice is not available, please try another option.

**Energy Action Scotland aims to offer places on this course to provide a benefit for both staff and their organisations. In order that we can accommodate everyone please ensure that your diary is free for the course date that you are requesting. Last minute cancellations may mean that other staff miss out on a place.**

**Please forward this email to any staff, colleagues, and contacts who you think might benefit too.**

Name	Date
01. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Wednesday 11 September 2024</u></a>
02. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Thursday 12 September 2024</u></a>
03. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Monday 16 September 2024</u></a>
04. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Tuesday 17 September 2024</u></a>
05. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Wednesday 18 September 2024</u></a>
06. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Friday 20 September 2024</u></a>
07. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Monday 23 September 2024</u></a>
08. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Tuesday 24 September 2024</u></a>
09. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Wednesday 25 September 2024</u></a>
10. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Wednesday 2 October 2024</u></a>
11. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Wednesday 9 October 2024</u></a>
12. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Thursday 10 October 2024</u></a>
13. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Wednesday 16 October 2024</u></a>
14. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Thursday 17 October 2024</u></a>
15. Stay Warm Stay Well	<a href="#"><u>Wednesday 23 October 2024</u></a>



# EMPOWER ABERDEEN

**7th October 2024, 10 am – 4pm**

A community fair, providing direct access to support available across Aberdeen.

Join in on a day of sharing services, experiences and networking with other like-minded organisations in Aberdeen to improve the lives and homes of those living in our city/area

Sign up your organisation to host a stall by following the link, or scanning our QR code

 <https://tinyurl.com/rjetw8hk>



[Sign up your organisation](https://tinyurl.com/rjetw8hk)



# Get ready for winter with Home Energy Scotland



Join us at our roadshow to help local householders prepare for winter.

Talk to us and other organisations to network, build relationships, and explore the challenges of cold homes and rising energy bills.

With energy prices due to increase in October and again in January, now is the time to act. And we can help with our free and impartial advice.

Find out how we can support your clients, and work with you in partnership.

**Monday 7 October | Aberdeen Music Hall (Empower Aberdeen event) | 10am - 4pm**

**Tuesday 8 October | Dundee – TBC | 11am - 3pm**

**Wednesday 9 October | The Inkwell, Elgin | 11am - 3pm**

**Thursday 10 October | Perth Civic Hall | 11am - 3pm**

**Friday 11 October | Kincardine and Mearns CAB, Stonehaven | 11am - 3pm**

**Friday 11 October | Strathmore Rugby Club, Forfar | 11am - 3pm**

To register to attend or find out more, email  
[partnerships@ne.homeenergyscotland.org](mailto:partnerships@ne.homeenergyscotland.org)  
or scan the QR code



HOMEENERGYSCOTLAND.ORG  
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