

MECC-ZERO

**Working Together to Make Healthier,
Safer and Fairer Communities**

WINTER IS ALMOST HERE...

As the year draws to a close and the nights grow colder, our focus turns once again to warmth, not just the kind that heats our homes, but the warmth we find in connection, community, and care. At MECC Trust, we're proud to stand alongside our local residents, offering support, advice, and encouragement as we all navigate the challenges of winter together.

As winter settles in and energy costs continue to challenge households, MECC Trust is here to remind our community that no one has to face the cold alone. Our mission has always been to help people live well, save money, and care for the planet and that's especially important during the colder months. Everyday, our team works with local residents to offer practical advice on how to stay warm efficiently and affordably. From understanding your energy bills to using your heating system more effectively, we're here to make saving energy simple. Small changes like adjusting thermostat settings, avoiding standby mode, or closing curtains early in the evening can make a big difference to comfort and cost.

In this edition of our newsletter, we're sharing practical guidance on saving energy, keeping warm this winter, and ideas to help everyone stay comfortable and connected through the colder months. However you spend this season, we hope it's filled with kindness, support, and plenty of warmth!



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Content – Edition 03

Ways to keep Warm & Well



As Winter creeps in it's important to keep yourself and those around you healthy & warm, MECC is sharing a few simple ways you can do this.

Winter Schemes & Grants



Grants and schemes that might be available to you if you qualify and help you keep your bills low this winter.

Mould, Damp & Condensation



Know the risks of Mould and Damp - Tips on how to spot mould and how to treat it in your home.

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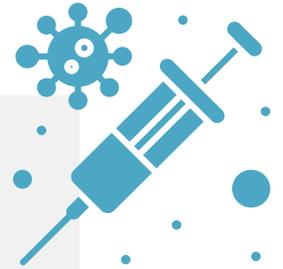
Ways to Keep Yourself Warm & Well



As the temperatures drop, it's more important than ever to keep yourself healthy, warm, and well-prepared for the winter months ahead. Here are a few ways you can protect yourself as those cold months approach.

Protect Yourself with a Flu Jab

Winter often brings an increase in colds and flu. **Getting your annual flu jab is one of the best ways to protect yourself**, your family, and those around you from seasonal illness. It's quick, safe, and helps reduce the risk of serious complications, especially for those who are older, pregnant, or have underlying health conditions. If you haven't already, book your flu jab soon! Call your local GP or Pharmacy today to book your jabs! Good hygiene also plays a key role, so remember to **wash your hands regularly**, **sanitise** frequently, and **avoid touching your face**. Since indoor heating can dry out the air, using a humidifier can help keep your skin, sinuses, and sleep more comfortable throughout the colder months!



Free Warm Packs from MECC TRUST

To help you stay cosy, MECC Trust has teamed up with BCAN & BrumEnergy to hand out free winter warm packs for those **aged 55+, with medical health condition or have a low income**. Each pack includes a selection of essentials like **thermal gloves**, **hats** and **scarfs**, an **insulated travel mug**, and a **fleece throw** to help you fight off the chill wherever you are. To receive your pack, **please book an appointment with our team** so we can carry out a quick benefits and energy bill assessment. This helps us ensure you're receiving all the support you're entitled to this winter.

Please note: Supplies of our Winter Warm Packs are limited and will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. Once they're gone, we won't be able to issue any more, so book early to avoid disappointment.

Keep Your Home Warm

To keep your home warm this winter, start by **sealing drafts with weather-stripping, draft stoppers, or rolled towels to prevent heat loss**. Make the most of natural warmth by **opening curtains during the day** and closing them at night to retain heat. **Keep beds and sofas away from radiators** and vents to help warm air circulate effectively. You can also consider simple home retrofits such as adding loft or wall insulation, **installing thicker curtains, upgrading to energy-efficient windows, or using radiator reflector panels** to boost heat retention and improve overall energy efficiency, making your home warmer and more comfortable throughout the colder months. You can also book an appointment with MECC's energy advisors for more advice or drop in to one of our Energy Cafe's! (find out when and where these on our social media @mecctrust or check our website www.mecctrust.co.uk)

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Winter Schemes & Grants



Big Difference Scheme



If you're a **Severn Trent Water customer** and struggling with your water bills, the Big Difference Scheme could be worth looking into. This programme is designed for households on a lower income and **can reduce your annual water bill by up to £390**. If you think your income is below the threshold, it may be well worth applying. You'll need to **provide proof of income, such as benefit letters or payslips**, and if approved the help will last for a year before you need to reapply. The scheme has helped many families stay in control of their bills and avoid falling behind. If you feel this could make life easier financially, it's definitely worth checking out.

WaterSure (Water Bill Cap Scheme)



WaterSure is a statutory scheme available to **metered water customers** in England who have **high essential water usage** and meet certain eligibility criteria. To qualify, households must have a water meter and receive certain means-tested benefits. In addition, they **must either have three or more children under nineteen living in the home or a medical condition that requires extra water usage**. Some water companies also accept disability benefits as proof of eligibility. Once accepted, the scheme **caps the annual water and sewerage bill at the average charge for the area, ensuring households do not pay more than they can reasonably afford** even if water usage is high. If usage falls below the capped amount, customers simply pay for what they have used. Applications are made through the customer's water provider, who normally provides a form to complete and may request medical or benefit evidence. WaterSure helps protect vulnerable households from unpredictable or unmanageable charges, offering stability and peace of mind.

ECO4 Scheme



The ECO4 Scheme is the government's latest Energy Company Obligation programme, created to **help households improve their energy efficiency, lower monthly bills, and reduce carbon emissions** through fully funded or heavily supported home upgrades. These improvements **can include insulation, heating system upgrades, renewable technologies**, and other essential measures that make homes warmer and more affordable to run. **Eligibility** is based on several factors, such as **receiving certain means-tested benefits, living on a low income, having a property with a low EPC rating (D-G)**, or qualifying through a local-authority flexible eligibility route. Because the criteria can vary depending on your circumstances, MECC Trust is here to provide clear guidance, check your qualification, and support you throughout the process. Book an appointment with us to find out whether you're eligible and what improvements your home could benefit from.

If you think any of these could be beneficial to you, book a free appointment with our advisors today who can support you with your application and help you understand what you may be entitled to!



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Mould, Damp & Condensation: Know the Risks



Damp and mould can quickly make a home feel uncomfortable and can affect your health, especially for children, older people and those with breathing conditions. The key is spotting it early. Damp and mould can lead to coughing, breathing problems, and worsen conditions like asthma, especially for children, older people, and those with existing health issues. It can also damage walls, furniture and belongings, so spotting and tackling it early is really important.

What Causes Damp and Mould?

Damp usually comes from one of three sources:

- **Condensation** – caused by everyday activities like cooking, showering, or drying clothes indoors without enough ventilation.
- **Penetrating damp** – when water gets in through problems such as cracked walls, loose roof tiles, blocked gutters or leaky pipes.
- **Rising damp** – when moisture from the ground climbs up walls due to missing or failing damp-proof protection.

What to Look For:

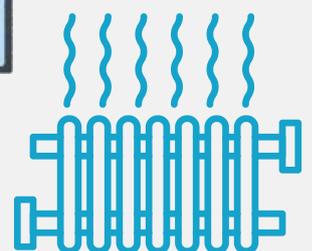
- **Black** or **green mould** spots on walls, ceilings, or around windows
- **Musty** or **damp** smells
- **Peeling wallpaper** or **bubbling paint**
- **Damp patches** on walls or ceilings
- **Regular condensation** on windows, especially in the mornings



How to Prevent & Treat It

- **Open windows** daily and use extractor fans when cooking or bathing
- **Wipe away condensation** from windows and tiles
- **Keep heating at a steady, low level** to reduce moisture
- **Avoid drying clothes indoors**, or **ventilate** well if you have to
- Move **furniture slightly away** from walls to improve airflow
- **Clean small patches of mould** with **mould spray**, **diluted bleach**, or **white vinegar**
- If the mould keeps coming back or you suspect a leak, **contact your landlord or housing provider**

If you're worried about damp or mould in your home and aren't sure what to do next, MECC Trust is here to help. Our team can offer practical advice, point you toward the right support and, where needed, help you speak with your landlord or housing provider. If you think you might need a bit of extra guidance, please get in touch, you don't have to manage it alone.



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