Unpaid carers preparing for future energy price rises

- New research finds over 4 in 10 unpaid carers are taking steps now to help someone they care for to prepare for energy increases later in the year
- 54% say the amount it costs them to look after someone has gone up in the last 6 months and 85% say they now spend more on energy for someone else
- 87% agree that the increase in energy prices in October will make it harder when caring for people
- Nearly a third are helping others to get a smart meter installed

Over 4 in 10 (43%) unpaid carers are taking steps now to help someone they care for later in the year and over two thirds (37%) would like to, ahead of further energy price rises announced for October.

But there is still confusion around what steps to take, with 52 per cent of unpaid carers saying they would like to help someone prepare for winter but don’t know how.

An unpaid carer is a person of any age who provides unpaid help and support to someone who cannot manage without their help.

There are 13 million unpaid carers in the UK, the majority of whom are people looking after parents. Half of working age carers live in a household where no-one is in paid work and 1.2 million carers are in poverty.

With the cost of living crisis continuing to impact families, over half (54%) of unpaid carers say the amount it costs them to look after someone has gone up in the last 6 months and 85 per cent are now spending more on energy as part of their caregiving.

But research from Smart Energy GB has found that nearly 7 in 10 (69%) unpaid carers agree that if they knew the person they care for had accurate energy bills, they’d have more peace of mind.

For anyone worrying about managing the bills of someone else, requesting a smart meter from their energy supplier on their behalf will ensure they only pay for the energy they use. It also takes away the worry of having to take and submit meter readings as these are sent automatically. The data smart meters provide has been identified by 2020Health* as one way to help vulnerable people to live more independently.

As technology develops, the responsibility to help those that need extra support use it is falling more and more to unpaid carers, with nearly a third (32%) helping someone to use a smart meter.

Using a smart meter’s in-home display to better understand what home appliances use the most energy could help to show the difference simple improvements like draught-proofing could make to a monthly energy bill.
So, in anticipation of future price rises, home energy experts at Smart Energy GB have identified three simple ways carers can prepare and improve the efficiency of the homes of others.

Get a smart meter for the person you look after to help get more control over energy bills and better manage their finances.

- Take control of household finances and don’t get caught out when prices rise, help prepare for when the bill arrives by knowing what it will be beforehand
- Use a smart meter’s in-home display to see how much appliances such as a boilers or electric radiators add to the energy spend of the person you look after, so it’s not a shock when temperatures drop

Simple draught proofing measures and modern insulation for homes will help retain heat.

- About 25% of your heat will escape through the roof of your home and about 35% through the walls or gaps in and around windows and doors
- Even putting simple insulation strips around windows and doors, available for a few pounds from most DIY shops, or making sure your letter box shuts securely could help stop heat being carried away. This will help improve your heating system’s efficiency and cost effectiveness

Ensure larger appliances and equipment are serviced and functioning well now, so they don’t let you down later and result in an unexpected spend for you or the person you look after.

These might be:
- Stairlifts and other mobility equipment
- Powered medical devices
- Essential appliances such as ovens or washing machines

Phillippa Brown from Smart Energy GB, said: “Doing small things now to help prepare for the future is vital, especially if you’re an unpaid carer. Arranging for someone you look after to have a smart meter installed by their energy supplier will help them and you prepare for future increases in energy prices, as you’ll both be able to keep track of what they’re spending.

“Simple draught-proofing around windows and doors will also increase the efficiency of a home’s heating system and could help your money go further when things get colder. A smart meter’s in-home display will show you in pounds and pence and in near-real time how much energy is being used so you can make small changes like this for those you look after to help better manage their household finances.”

Smart Energy GB is the not-for-profit campaign helping everyone in Britain to understand the importance of smart meters and their benefits to people and the environment. More information about smart meters for carers is available at smartenergyGB.org or search ‘get a smart meter’.
To further support vulnerable customers, particularly those who are blind, partially sighted, or have difficulties with dexterity or memory loss, an accessible in-home display has been developed with help from the Royal National Institute of Blind People. This new display audibly tells you how much energy you’re using in near-real time and can help more people fully access their energy information.

Contact your energy supplier to request a smart meter at no extra cost or visit smartenergygb.org.

-ENDS-

Notes to editors

Research was carried out by OnePoll for Smart Energy GB and surveyed 1,000 unpaid carers, 500 of which with parents over the age of 65 between 17/05/2022 to 23/05/2022.

*The 2020Health Smart Future of Healthcare report is available to read here.

About smart meters and the rollout

Smart meters are the next generation of digital gas and electricity meters, providing automatic meter readings and near-real time energy use information for households and small businesses.

Smart meters and the information they provide will help Britain to achieve net zero by allowing for better management of energy demand and supply, providing people with the visibility needed to reduce their usage, and making the best and most efficient use of wind and solar power. Innovative technology and services enabled by smart metering is pivotal in allowing our country to decarbonise and have more electric vehicles. 28.8 smart meters have already been installed across Britain.

About Smart Energy GB

Smart Energy GB is the not-for-profit, government-backed campaign helping everyone in Britain to understand the importance of smart meters and their benefits to people and the environment. Our national campaign is reaching homes and microbusinesses across England, Scotland and Wales. For more information visit smartenergyGB.org

Smart Energy GB media contacts

For more information including interview requests, case studies of smart meter users, infographics, photography and video content please contact the Smart Energy GB media team:

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