



Prepayment Services for Members

June 2019

Prepayment meters

What is a prepayment meter?

A prepayment meter allows you to pay for gas or electricity upfront, rather than in monthly or quarterly installments.

With a prepayment meter, you use a top-up card or key to load more money onto your meter. Just like a pay-as-you-go mobile phone, money is taken from that balance every time you use energy – and if you run out of credit, your power may be temporarily switched off until you top up.

What are the advantages of prepayment?

- Prepayment can make it easier for you to control how much you spend, and help you manage your energy by letting you pay in advance.
- Prepayment can be used for you to settle a debt owed to us, that you are having difficulty paying back, through regular payments over a set period.
- Our prepayment offering has an emergency credit facility which will make sure you stay supplied with energy if you run out of credit and are unable to immediately top up your meter. Emergency credit is up to £5 worth of credit. Any emergency credit used must be repaid when you next top up so please ensure that you only use it in an emergency.
- When your usage is lower in the summer months, you can build up a level of credit by topping up more than you need, which will help you pay for your higher usage during the winter.

What are the disadvantages of prepayment?

- If you don't top up your meter and then use up your credit (including the emergency credit), the energy supply to your property will stop until you buy more credit.
- If you're going to be away from the property for a few days, make sure that you have enough credit on the meter to cover the standing charges, any energy usage (such as a fridge or freezer) that will happen while you're away and any debt repayments that may need to be made.
- Tariff costs may be higher for customers on prepayment due to it costing more for us to serve this type of meter.
- It is easier for you to purchase credit for the prepayment meter if you have access to a PayPoint outlet.
- If you experience difficulties with your sight or have other specific requirements, prepayment may not be suitable for you.
- If you want to change from being supplied through prepayment to being supplied through credit, you will need to pay any outstanding balance or make a repayment agreement with us to do this.

In what circumstances might we switch your meter to prepayment meter at the property?

We may change the mode of your meter to prepayment if you have:

- Requested it so you can manage your energy use better by paying for it before you use it.
- Requested it after we have agreed that you can repay an outstanding debt to us using this method.
- Failed to keep to a debt repayment plan previously agreed between you and us.
- Requested it in preference to paying us a security deposit where we have asked for one.
- Been unable to agree another suitable way in which you can repay any outstanding debt to us.

User Guide

When you pay by prepayment at your property, we'll provide you information on how to operate it. If you have any problems or questions, please contact our member services team on our dedicated prepayment number 0330 403 0107.

How to add credit to your meter

You can buy credit for a prepayment meter at any PayPoint store. You can search for outlets in your area by visiting www.paypoint.co.uk/locator, or by contacting our member services team.

When you buy credit at a PayPoint outlet, you'll be given a receipt. We highly recommend that you keep all receipts as we may request copies if you need help with a query.

Make sure you use the prepayment barcode that we give you to buy credit. If you don't, or if you use another energy supplier's prepayment top-up mechanism, it may result in you paying the wrong price for your energy.

What to do if the meter is faulty

If you think your meter is faulty, please contact our member services team. In an emergency situation, we will send an engineer to the property within 3 hours of you telling us (or within 4 hours on a weekend or a Bank Holiday) to find out whether we can repair it. If this is not possible, we will replace it.

If you tell us about this problem outside 8am-8pm, Monday to Friday, or outside 9am-5pm on a weekend or Bank Holiday, the 3 or 4 hours will begin from the start of the next day.

If we fail to visit you within the timescales above, we'll pay you £30 within 10 working days. If we do not make this payment within 10 working days, we'll pay you an additional £30 within a further 10 working days. Payments will be made as a credit to your account unless we both agree otherwise.

What to do if the meter has run out of credit

If your energy supply has disconnected because the meter has run out of credit, we'll only respond to a request for a visit under emergency circumstances. We may also, at our discretion, charge you for costs we incur as a result of this visit. However, we will agree the level of the charge with you before the visit takes place. Our dedicated team will work with you to ensure you stay on supply.

Repaying debt through your meter

When we agree the regular repayment amounts, it is important that you give us all available details of your individual circumstances, including any benefits that you may be receiving. It is also important that you tell us whether you can afford the regular repayment amounts that we suggest.

Once this has been agreed between us, we will give you a statement with details of:

- The total debt amount that we have agreed you will repay through meter.
- The regular repayment amounts set by us looking at your ability to pay, with consideration of your individual circumstances and agreed by you.
- The date on which the debt will be fully repaid if you keep to the agreed repayment plan.
- The amount of emergency credit on your meter.

What to do if you have difficulty repaying the debt

If your circumstances change or you find yourself unable to afford the agreed regular repayment amounts, please contact our dedicated prepayment member services team. We'll try to agree a new debt repayment level with you and arrange for the meter to be adjusted to collect the new amounts.

If you need impartial advice, you can contact any of the organisations listed at the end of this document. They can help you understand how much you can afford, and we'll work together with them to agree an acceptable regular repayment amount based on their advice.

What if our prices change?

If your tariff prices change, we'll update the tariff on your meter.

If the change is a price rise, we'll give you 30 calendar days' advance notice. If you do not want this price rise, you can switch to another Tonik Energy tariff or switch to another supplier by telling us (either verbally or in writing) before or on the date of the price rise. If you choose to switch to another supplier, they will need to confirm within 20 working days of the date when you told us you wanted to switch that they are taking steps to take over your energy supply. You can then leave Tonik Energy without the price rise being applied to your account.

As a prepayment member, if you are repaying a debt of £500 or less and your new supplier agrees to take this over, we will not object to your switch. If your debt is more than £500, we may object to your switch away, and you will have 30 working days from the date we tell you about the objection to repay the amount over £500 to bring it to or below that level. Once you have done this you can complete the switch without the price rise being applied to you.

If the change is a price reduction, this will take effect on the date that we tell you.

Switching from prepayment to credit

If you've moved into a property where a smart meter is installed and functioning in prepayment mode, and you want it to function in credit mode, we'll be able to switch the meter mode as long as it's a smart meter that we can support. If it isn't, you will need to ask your current supplier to exchange the meter. There should be no charge to exchange the meter.

Emergency credit

Your meter has an emergency credit facility. This will provide you with an amount of additional credit when other credit for the meter has been used.

We recommend that this is only used as a last resort if you are temporarily unable to buy credit.

If you use all the emergency credit and do not buy more, the meter will disconnect, which means that you will not be supplied with energy until you buy more credit. To reconnect your supply, you will need to buy enough to cover the amount of the emergency credit used.

While your meter is running on the emergency credit, it will continue to take payment for the standing charge and any outstanding debt which you're currently repaying.

Changing the location of the meter

If you have trouble getting to your meter, we can arrange for an engineer to move it to a different location. If it needs to be moved further than we can help with, we'll put you in touch with your local electricity network operator or gas network operator (as applicable) who will be able to help you with this.

If you are a pensioner, have a disability or are chronically ill, or there is a child under 5 years old in your household we will not charge you to move the meter.

We'll let you know if you are not eligible to have this done free of charge, and we'll tell you how much it will cost. You can then decide whether you wish to go ahead.

Access to the meter

It is important that we can access the meter, for example, if we need to obtain an exact meter reading, complete a safety inspection or to reset or exchange the meter. If you do not grant us access to the property, we may have to apply for a warrant, and may, at our discretion, charge you any costs involved.

Your statement of account

We will send you a statement of account either annually or when you ask us to send you one. This will give you details of your energy usage, what payments you've made and any debt which may be outstanding.

Energy efficiency advice

The more efficiently you use energy, the lower and less frequent your top-up payments are likely to be. We can help advise you on this.

Citizens Advice can also provide you with independent advice. You can find their contact details at the bottom of this document.

Moving home or switching supplier

If you move out of the property or switch to another supplier, please do not continue to use the prepayment barcode that we issued to you, as this will not work correctly with any different energy supplier .

If you are moving out of the property, please let us know by contacting our member services team on the day you move out. If you don't tell us that you're moving, we may continue to charge you for energy used at the property until the new occupier tells us that they have moved in.

If you switch to another supplier, please use the prepayment mechanism that they will provide you once the switch has completed.

If you have moved into a property with a meter that we supply or if you have switched to Tonik Energy and already have a meter installed at your property, please contact us immediately. Please provide us with the meter reading on any meter on the date that you move in as this will help us to provide you with accurate statements. We will be able to provide you with a prepayment barcode which you will need to apply credit to your meter.

Your final statement

If you switch to another supplier, we'll send you a final statement based on the final meter read that you give us. You must pay any outstanding debt in full before we will agree to the switch unless it is less than £500 and your new supplier has agreed that you can repay that debt to them rather than to us.

Useful contacts

Age UK

England

www.ageuk.org.uk

0800 169 2081

Scotland

www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland

0333 323 2400

Wales

www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/

08000 223 444

Citizens Advice Consumer Service – Energy

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/

03454 04 05 06

The Disabled Living Foundation

www.dlf.org.uk

0300 999 0004

Energy Ombudsman

Ombudsman Services: Energy

PO Box 966

Warrington

WA4 9DF

www.ombudsman-services.org/energy-complaint.html

0330 440 1624

Energy Saving Trust

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

England and Wales

0300 123 1234

Scotland

0808 808 2282

National Debtline

www.nationaldebtline.org

0808 808 4000