

## Warm Home Discount Scheme

Social tariffs are energy rates which suppliers offer at discounted rates to low income and vulnerable groups. The amount of discount and eligibility criteria is completely up to the energy supplier and thus varies between suppliers. This year the government has intervened in an effort to give more protection to these groups, under a new scheme called the **Warm Home Discount**. Under this scheme, social tariffs will gradually be phased out and instead, two separate, clearly identified groups will be offered a credit of £120 each year, for the next four years, to help with winter electricity costs. There will be a transition period between the social tariffs and movement onto this new scheme with some help for people who are no longer eligible.

All of the big six energy suppliers (and some of the smaller ones- Atlantic, Equipower, Equigas, Manweb, M&S Energy, Sainsbury's Energy, Scottish Gas, Scottish Hydro, SSE, Swalec and Utility Warehouse), are part of this scheme including British Gas, Eon, N.Power, Scottish Power, Southern Energy, and EDF. The scheme makes it compulsory for these energy companies to offer the rebate to a core group of pensioners, (those who get the guarantee credit of Pension Credit). The definition of the second, broader group of customers, have been left to the energy companies to define. This group is supposed to include 'fuel poor' consumers, or those in a group at risk of fuel poverty. The criteria varies between each supplier with some more generous than others, but they basically cover households which have a low income **and** those with a disability, or long term illness, or child under 5, or a child with a disability.

You will qualify for the rebate automatically if you are in the core group of pensioners. The second group of customers will have to apply for this credit and alarmingly, five out of the six energy companies recently admitted that they had a limited amount of money for this scheme and therefore, even if you are eligible, you may not get the rebate if you don't apply quickly. British Gas is the only supplier not limiting the amount of claimants and have guaranteed that all of those eligible, who claim before January 2012, will receive the rebate, after this time there is no guarantee. There is government pressure for the rest to follow.

If you think you or anyone you know may be eligible, check with your supplier **NOW** and ask for their eligibility criteria for this scheme and you could be £120 better off this winter... there's no time to waste!