



## Services for prepayment customers

A prepayment meter allows you to pay for your electricity and gas before you use it. Here you can find out the pros and cons of paying in this way, how the meters work and when we will install one.

### Why might I want a prepayment meter?

If you want to manage your household finances by paying for your energy in advance this could work for you. You're able to clear outstanding debts through prepayment as well as pay for your usage. You may want to build up a credit during the summer to help manage your winter payments.

### What are the disadvantages?

The main issue to consider before going prepayment is the risk of going without electricity or gas should you run out of credit and your emergency credit has been used up.

You should also be aware that your tariff could be more expensive, you need to be able to get out to a PayPoint or Payzone to top up and to be able to plan for winter when your costs are higher. You also need to be organised for any time you may have away from home to remain in credit to cover standing charges and low usage such as your fridge.

If you have poor sight or disabilities you may find the meter difficult to use and it is possible that we'll charge for replacement cards or keys should they be lost.

### How does it work?

We'll supply a user guide when your meter is installed.

The meters work by telling us how much credit you have to spend on your electricity or gas by the key (electric) or card (gas) you have inserted into the meter. You can take your key or card to a local PayPoint or Payzone outlet to buy more credit.

## When might a prepayment meter be installed?

We'll install a meter if you have requested one to manage your payments or pay an outstanding debt. We'll also discuss a prepayment meter if you've defaulted on a repayment plan, as an alternative to paying a deposit or if no other suitable debt arrangement can be agreed.

## Will you charge me for installing a prepayment meter?

No, we won't charge for the meter but it is possible that we may charge for any additional costs during the installation. This would be the case if we needed to obtain a warrant from a magistrate to enter your property.

## How do I top up?

Credit for your electricity key or gas card can be bought at PayPoint or Payzone outlets. You can find your nearest shop by entering your postcode at [www.paypoint.co.uk](http://www.paypoint.co.uk) or [www.payzone.co.uk](http://www.payzone.co.uk). You can also call Bristol Energy free on **0808 281 2222** and we'll help you locate one.

It is helpful to keep your receipts as we may request copies should you have a query about your payments.

We'll need you to only use the Bristol Energy key or card supplied to avoid paying the wrong price for your energy.

## What if my device is lost or won't work?

Please call us free on **0808 281 2222** as soon as possible and we'll send you a new key or card. We may charge you for any costs incurred but will let you know if this is necessary.

## What if I think my prepayment meter is faulty?

If you think your meter is faulty but you're still on supply please ring us free on **0808 281 2222**.

For an electric meter we'll send an engineer:

- within three hours if your call is received between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday (except Bank Holidays);
- by midday the next working day if your call is received outside of the hours above.

For a gas meter we'll send an engineer:

- within four hours if your call is received between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday (except Bank Holidays);
- by midday of the next working day if your call is received outside of the hours above.

If your prepayment meter is faulty and we fail to attend within the agreed appointment time, we'll pay you £30 compensation for a electricity meter and £30 for a gas meter.

## I've run out of credit – will you visit?

If you've run out of credit we'll only visit under exceptional circumstances. It is possible that we'll charge you for the visit but we'll make this clear before agreeing to come to your home.

## How does Bristol Energy agree debt repayments?

Please ring us if you'd like to discuss how to repay your energy debt through your prepayment meter.

We'll need to know your circumstances, including any benefit payments before agreeing a plan. You'll need to tell us if you think the payments we suggest are affordable.

Once we've agreed a repayment plan we'll give you a statement that sets out:

- the date your prepayment meter was fitted;
- the total debt;
- the repayment rate;
- the amount of emergency credit available
- the date by which the debt will be fully repaid if you meet all the payments.

## What if I can't pay the agreed amounts?

Please ring us free on **0808 281 2222** if you find that your circumstances have changed so we can agree a new payment plan.

On this page you'll also find independent organisations who can provide impartial advice about managing your money.

## What happens when the debt has been repaid?

Your meter should automatically reset to allow you to pay for just your energy and your standing charge. If this doesn't happen please contact us. You'll get an updated statement to confirm that the debt has been repaid.

## What happens if our prices change?

If we change our prices we give you 30 days notice before updating the tariff on your meter. At this point you can choose to switch to another supplier.

If you are using your prepayment meter to repay a debt to us and it is less than £500 we will not object to your switch. If we do object, you have 30 working days to repay the outstanding debt. You can then move to a new supplier without the price rise being applied to your account.

## I'd like to switch back to a standard meter

If you no longer wish to pay through your meter contact us so we can discuss all the options with you. These are:

- If you have recently moved into a house or flat where there is a prepayment meter we can exchange it for a standard meter provided you meet our credit requirements. We may ask you for a deposit.
- If you have lived in your home for more than six months after we've installed a prepayment meter and you are not repaying a debt to us we can exchange it for a standard meter provided you meet our credit requirements. We may ask you for a deposit.
- If your debt has not been repaid and we can't agree an alternative repayment method we won't be able to change your meter to a standard credit meter. If we do agree an alternative repayment method but we need to install a prepayment meter at a later date because you fail to make the payments we may charge you for this.

## What is emergency credit?

Your prepayment meter will allow you to use a certain amount of extra credit once what you have paid on the meter has run out. This is known as emergency credit and is designed to prevent you being without electricity or gas when you've not been able to top up your key or card.

Emergency credit should only be used as a last resort and is normally around £5.

If you use up all of the emergency credit and you don't buy any more credit you will be disconnected. To reconnect your supply, you'll need to buy enough credit to cover the value of the emergency credit used plus at least £1.

While you are using emergency credit the usual standing charges and any outstanding debt will also continue to be paid.

## I want to move my prepayment meter

If your prepayment meter is difficult for you to access we can arrange for an engineer to move it. If it needs moving a greater distance than we can manage we'll put you in touch with your local electricity network operator or gas transporter to do this.

If you are a pensioner, disabled or chronically ill we won't charge you to move your meter.

If you're not eligible for your prepayment meter to be moved for free we'll let you know and arrange for a quote before you decide if you wish to go ahead with the work.

## Will Bristol Energy need to see my meter?

Occasionally we'll need an exact meter reading, complete a safety inspection or to reset or exchange your meter.

## How will I see my payments?

Once a year we'll send you a statement so you can see exactly how much electricity or gas you've used, the payments you've made and any debt that is outstanding. You can request a statement from us at any time.

## Can I use the same prepayment key or card if I move?

If you are moving please leave the key or card in your home. Please tell us you're moving at least two working days before you leave. If you forget to tell us you're moving we may continue to charge you until the new tenant or homeowner tell us that they've moved in.

When you move to your new house or flat please provide meter readings for your old and new homes. If there is no prepayment device at the new house or flat and you wish to continue with Bristol Energy please contact us.

## Energy Efficiency Advice

Using energy efficiently will help you reduce your bills. We can offer you advice on how to do this.

Please see our energy saving advice at [www.bristol-energy.co.uk](http://www.bristol-energy.co.uk) or call us free on 0808 281 2222.

If you live in Bristol, the Bristol Energy Network and Warm Up Bristol are good sources of information.

[www.bristolenergynetwork.org](http://www.bristolenergynetwork.org)

[www.warmupbristol.co.uk](http://www.warmupbristol.co.uk)

## Contact Us

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Prepayment customers can contact us Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm.

