66% say Government help isn't enough to keep the heating on

Tuesday 8 February, 2022

New research from Choose.co.uk finds 66% of people believe the support the Government is offering on energy bills will not be enough to help them keep the heating on this year.

28% say they are already cutting back on heating or other essentials, with 36% already struggling to afford their energy bills and 4% already in energy arrears.

In order to keep the heating on this year, respondents said they would need to make changes to their lives:

- 5% may have to move home due to energy costs
- 30% will cut back on food to keep the house warm
- 18% will cut back on broadband and mobile phones

The survey also found significant numbers of respondents are concerned and confused about the energy bill loan and other support on offer:

- 21% say the £200 energy loan won't be enough to help with their energy bill
- 49% worry they will struggle to repay the £200 loan, or it will cause them difficulty in the future
- 34% would rather opt-out and not be given this loan at all with only 17% saying they wanted the help and wouldn't mind the five-year repayments

In addition, 33% do not understand what's been announced or how it will help, suggesting communication from the Government on the new policy has been ineffective.

Choose also questioned whether energy customers are aware of the Warm Home Discount (WHD) scheme and whether they are eligible for it:

- Only 10% receive the WHD to help with their winter bills
- 24% do not know what the eligibility of the WHD scheme is
- 18% are not aware of the WHD scheme at all
- 47% are not eligible for the WHD scheme

With more than 40% of respondents either unaware of the WHD scheme at all or uncertain whether they are eligible for it, there are clear knowledge gaps around the support available from the Government.

The full report is available on Choose: Affordability in the UK energy market

Lyndsey Burton, MD of Choose.co.uk said, "Despite a media blitz over the last week, major elements of the Government's policy to support energy customers are being shown as ineffective by those who really know – energy customers themselves.

"There is clear confusion about how the policies are going to help but, more importantly, customers believe the support isn't going to be enough. For all the Government's rhetoric about helping customers with the rising costs of energy, customers are still left making impossible choices between keeping warm and cutting back on other things like food, broadband and mobile.

"The Government's failure to tackle spiralling energy bills in a straightforward way that customers can understand and that won't leave them worried about repaying an unwanted loan is damaging to households across the country. Even if customers manage to pay their energy bills, the knock-on effects to other parts of their life will be as damaging or even more so.

"It's time for the Government to think again and look at a more comprehensive support package that will help energy customers without confusing them and leaving them with a debt they don't want."

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