

UK Social Tariffs and Bill Support

A plain-English handout, a staff signposting sheet, and a “where to look” guide for older people and volunteers.

Quick note: official guidance usually says **social tariffs** rather than “community tariffs”. For energy, there is not a single UK-wide domestic social tariff at present, but there are still important support schemes and priority services worth checking.

1. One-page handout for older people

Start here: ask whether you, or your partner, gets Pension Credit. It can open the door to other help, and a first claim can usually be backdated by up to 3 months if you were entitled during that time.

Broadband, home phone, and some mobile deals: ask whether your provider has a social tariff, essential tariff, or basic package. These are cheaper deals for some people on benefits such as Pension Credit.

Water bills: if you live in England or Wales, ask your water company about its social tariff. Also ask about WaterSure if you have a water meter and high essential water use.

Energy bills: ask your gas or electricity supplier about the Warm Home Discount, the Priority Services Register, hardship funds, grants, payment plans, ECO, and the Great British Insulation Scheme.

Extra help: even if there is no discount, ask each provider whether they offer large print bills, accessible formats, a nominated contact, meter reading help, password schemes, or priority support during service interruptions.

Good places to start: your current broadband provider, your water company, and your energy supplier. If you are not sure where to begin, Citizens Advice, Ofcom, Ofwat, and Ofgem are useful starting points.

Tip: write down the name of the person you spoke to, the date, and what they told you.

2. Staff and volunteer signposting sheet

Purpose: help an older person find out what cheaper tariffs, bill support, and priority services may be available.

Category	Who to ask	What to say
First check	The older person, partner, carer, or support worker	“Do you get Pension Credit or another means-tested benefit?” “Whose name is the broadband or utility bill in?”
Broadband / phone / mobile	Current telecoms provider first	“Please check whether this customer can move onto your social tariff, essential tariff, basic package, or any lower-cost option linked to Pension Credit or other qualifying benefits.”
Water	Water company customer assistance team	“Please check eligibility for your social tariff, WaterSure, and your Priority Services Register.”
Energy	Gas or electricity supplier	“Please check the Warm Home Discount, Priority Services Register, hardship funds, grants, debt support, affordable payment plans, ECO, and insulation support.”

3. Where to look: social tariffs and support by category

Broadband and phone: examples people may see

Category	Who to ask	What to say
Extra support	Every provider	“Please add this customer to your Priority Services Register or extra support register if they qualify.”

What to record: provider name, phone number, adviser name, date, outcome, next action, and any deadlines.

3. Where to look: social tariffs and support by category

Use this section as a signposting page.

It tells people what to look for, who usually offers it, and where to start searching.

Category	What is usually available	Where to look first
Broadband, home phone, some mobile deals	Social tariffs, essential broadband, basic broadband, basic phone packages, and a small number of low-cost mobile plans.	Current provider; Ofcom's social tariffs page; provider “help with bills” or “essential” pages.
Water (England and Wales)	Social tariffs, WaterSure, and Priority Services Register support.	Local water company; Ofwat customer assistance; CCW guidance.
Energy	No single UK-wide domestic social tariff at present. Look instead for the Warm Home Discount, Priority Services Register, hardship funds, payment plans, ECO, and the Great British Insulation Scheme.	Current gas/electricity supplier; Ofgem bill-support pages; Citizens Advice.
Priority services and accessibility help	Large print or accessible bills, nominated contacts, meter reading help, password schemes, emergency support, and communication support.	Each provider's accessibility or vulnerable-customer support pages, or customer service by phone.
Extra help linked to benefits	Pension Credit may also help people access other support such as a free TV licence for some over-75s, travel concessions, and some NHS help.	GOV.UK, local council, NHSBSA, and sector-specific official guidance.

Broadband and phone: examples people may see

Look for words such as social tariff, essential broadband, basic broadband, basic phone package, or home essentials.

Ofcom's February 2026 list includes examples such as BT Home Essentials, EE Basics, Sky Broadband Basics, Virgin Media Essential Broadband, Vodafone Fibre 2 Essentials, SMARTY Social Tariff, and VOXI For Now.

If a person's current provider offers a social tariff, they can usually switch to it free of charge while keeping the same provider.

Utilities: what to look for

Water: social tariff, WaterSure, Priority Services Register, customer assistance, help with arrears, or flexible payment support.

Energy: Warm Home Discount, Priority Services Register, hardship fund, grant, payment plan help, ECO, or Great British Insulation Scheme.

Telecoms and utilities: ask every provider whether they have extra support for older customers or people with accessibility needs.

Simple wording for a signposting page

“Start with Pension Credit if you are not sure what help may be available.”

“Ask your current broadband provider, water company, and energy supplier first.”

“Look for social tariffs for broadband and water, and bill-support schemes for energy.”

“Ask every provider about their Priority Services Register or extra support services.”

Official sources checked

- **Ofcom:** social tariffs list and qualifying-benefit guidance.
 - <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-and-broadband/saving-money/social-tariffs>
- **Ofwat:** customer assistance, social tariffs, WaterSure, and priority services.
 - <https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/regulated-companies/vulnerability/water-companies-efforts-to-ease-cost-of-living-pressures-and-areas-for-further-action/>
 - <https://www.ccw.org.uk/save-money-and-water/help-with-bills/>
- **Ofgem:** bill support, Warm Home Discount, Priority Services Register, ECO, and Great British Insulation Scheme.
 - <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-and-social-schemes/feed-tariffs-fit>
 - <https://octopus.energy/press/co-op-energy-community-power-announcement/>
- **GOV.UK and NHSBSA:** Pension Credit, free or discounted TV licences, bus pass guidance, and NHS help with health costs.
 - <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a798ef740f0b63d72fc6c46/pb13787-social-tariffs-guidance.pdf>

The Checklist

Here's a simple UK **sector-by-sector checklist** you can paste into a seniors resource pack.

A good **first question** is: “**Do you get Pension Credit?**” It is one of the most useful gateway benefits for older people, and first claims can be backdated by up to 3 months if the person was eligible in that period. It is also a common route into other help, including some telecoms social tariffs, a free TV licence for some over-75s, and NHS-cost help where the person gets the **Guarantee Credit** part.

Ask first about:

Pension Credit → broadband/phone → water → energy → Council Tax → TV license → transport → NHS costs.

1) Broadband, home phone and some mobile deals

- Ask: “**Does your provider offer a social tariff, essential tariff or basic package?**” Ofcom says social tariffs are cheaper broadband and phone packages for people on certain benefits, including Pension Credit in many cases.
- Ask the **current provider first**. If that provider offers a social tariff, eligible customers can switch to it **at any time, free of charge**.
- Signpost to: **the customer's provider first**, then **Ofcom's social tariffs list** if they need to compare providers.

2) Water bills

- In **England and Wales**, ask the water company about a **social tariff**. Ofwat says **all water companies offer one** for eligible households.
- Also ask about **WaterSure** if the household has a **water meter** and essential high water use. Ofwat lists WaterSure separately from social tariffs.
- Signpost to: the **water company's customer assistance team**.

3) Water in Scotland or Northern Ireland

- In **Scotland**, water and waste water charges are usually collected with **Council Tax**, so people should check the **council bill** as well as Scottish Water information.
- In **Northern Ireland**, domestic water and sewerage users are **not directly charged**, so this is usually **not** a social-tariff conversation for households.

4) Energy bills

- Ask the energy supplier about the **Warm Home Discount**. The current scheme is a **£150 discount** off the electricity bill for eligible households, and it is usually applied automatically if the person qualifies.
- Ask to join the **Priority Services Register (PSR)** if the person is older, disabled, chronically ill, or may need extra help in a power cut or with communications.
- Signpost to: the **energy supplier first**. In England, a local council may also have **Household Support Fund** help for essentials such as food, energy and water.

5) Utility priority services (not discounts, but very useful)

- Ask every provider about **priority services**: large print, braille, password schemes, nominated contacts, welfare support during outages, or help for people with hearing, sight, memory or mobility issues. Ofgem notes that similar free priority services exist in **energy, water, telecoms and public transport**.
- Signpost to: each **utility or telecom provider directly**.

6) Council Tax

- Ask the local council about **Council Tax Reduction / Council Tax Support** if the person is on a low income or certain benefits. GOV.UK says the bill could be reduced by **up to 100%** if eligible.
- Also ask whether there are any **other Council Tax discounts or exemptions** that apply to the household.
- Signpost to: the person's **local council revenues/benefits team**.

7) TV licence

- Ask whether the person is **75 or over** and gets **Pension Credit**. If so, they may qualify for a **free TV licence**.
- Also ask about the **blind/severely sight-impaired** discount or the **residential care** concession where relevant.
- Signpost to: **TV Licensing** or GOV.UK's TV licence concession page.

8) Transport concessions

- Ask about the local **older person's bus pass** or concessionary travel card. The scheme name and age rules vary across the UK.
- In **England**, free bus travel usually starts at **State Pension age**; in **Scotland** it is generally **60+** through the National Entitlement Card; in **Northern Ireland** there are **60+ SmartPass** and **Senior (65+) SmartPass** schemes.
- Signpost to: the **local council** or the relevant **national transport scheme**.

9) NHS costs

- Ask whether the person gets **Pension Credit Guarantee Credit**. If so, NHSBSA says they are entitled to help with prescriptions, dental treatment, sight tests, glasses/contact lenses, wigs and travel costs for NHS treatment.
- If not, ask about the **NHS Low Income Scheme**, which can help with prescriptions, dental costs, eyecare and healthcare travel costs.
- Signpost to: **NHSBSA / NHS help with health costs**.

Prepared on 16 March 2026.

Because tariffs and schemes can change, check the provider or regulator page before publishing widely.