

Many people do not realise that utility companies provide a Priority Services Register for their older and more vulnerable customers.

Criteria for inclusion are typically:

- those over pensionable age
- the disabled
- those who are chronically sick
- those with a visual or hearing impairment



These can offer a range of services to those who join which can be very useful in improving peace of mind and wellbeing. Services may include:

- **A Password Protection Scheme:** - Energy companies and customers can agree a personal password for use by company staff when they visit the home. In this way, customers will be protected from bogus callers pretending to be representatives of the gas/electricity/water company.
- **Quarterly meter readings:** - some companies do this as standard, but if customers have difficulty in reading their meter or are worried about inaccurate bills, their supplier can arrange for someone to call every quarter to read the meter.
- **Relocation of meter for improved access:** - If it is difficult to read or access the electricity or gas meter, energy companies may consider moving the meter, free of charge, to a more convenient position.
- **Bill nominee scheme:** - On request, bills can be sent to the address of a friend, relative or carer so that they can help to arrange payment.
- **Advance notice if electricity supply is to be interrupted:** - Companies should recognise the possible increased dependence on energy services by vulnerable consumers e.g. those reliant on electricity to operate medical equipment, and make special efforts to provide them with advance warning of supply interruptions.
- **Services for those with impaired hearing or vision:** - companies may provide Braille and talking bills and must also have available suitable facilities to handle complaints and enquiries from customers who have these impairments.

Call your utility provider to register or call us at Age Concern Thurrock 01375 389872 for more information.