

Single Mum with an 11 year old daughter living in an old damp rented property, helped to save 40% in energy costs by Citizens Advice South Hams

Sally, a single mum claiming long term Job Seekers Allowance and currently studying with the Open University, and her 11 year old daughter, recently moved into a 100 year old Housing Association building which was cold, mouldy and damp. The flat had a mix of old night storage heaters, electric wall heaters and a plug in electric heater. Initially Sally was using the night storage heaters on the more expensive day rate because no one had explained the cheaper E7 night tariff to her. She also inherited a prepayment meter which was expensive, costing her up to £30 a week in top ups, ending up in her not using the heating because she felt she couldn't afford it. She stated that the damp was so bad her bedroom carpet felt wet.

Sally called Citizens Advice South Hams and one of our energy advisers visited her. They were able to explain how to operate the night storage heater controls to get the best rate and that Sally should contact the landlord to discuss options on removing the remaining high rate ordinary electric heaters in the bedrooms and bathroom. Our adviser went through the flat and established the damp and mould was almost entirely due to condensation and suggested ways to reduce this which Sally was happy to discuss with her landlord.

A plan was agreed that Sally should contact her energy supplier to replace the expensive prepayment meter in favour of monthly Direct Debit payments; and advised to request their best tariff, and the warm home discount she was eligible for. Our Advisor also carried out a full energy switching check which contributed towards the result of a 40% saving.

Sally said *"You helped so much, the electricity costs were so much more manageable. I was sinking with all the old flat problems and solving the electric costs got the ball rolling for me to feel able to make other changes"*. Sally and her daughter have now moved from their old flat and Sally now feels confident in doing her own yearly energy switching checks, and is also helping neighbours who don't have access to the internet, to do the same.

It has been noticed that some landlords are not explaining how the E7 night storage rate works and sometimes replacing old storage heaters with ordinary heaters thus making tenants pay extra for heating which may already be weighted because of prepayment meters.