

Keeping Your Home Energy Use at Bay While Working from Home

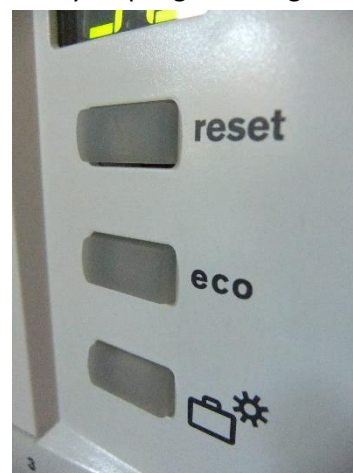
Jemima Parker, Diocesan Environment Officer, March 2020

The shift to working from home means a considerable uptick in our home energy use. That translates into higher bills, but also higher home carbon emissions, a typical UK house uses 26,000 kWh of energy and emits 6 tonnes of carbon dioxide a year. [Uswitch](#) has predicted households where people are working from home will use 25% more electricity and 17% more gas per day.

I have been home based for 7 years and am acutely conscious that my carbon emissions are as unkind to others as unnecessary social contact in a Covid 19 outbreak! So here are some tips learned from my experience, please do add your own suggestions. One basic principle may help – generating heat uses a lot of energy.

Heating

- The more space you heat the more energy you will use. Try to work in a smaller room (if possible), close the door, and turn the radiators down in other rooms during the day. Choose a sunny spot if you can, from this time of year onwards, solar gain can make a big difference in room temperature.
- Review your thermostat settings. How long do you need the heating on for? Are you getting up later now that you are not commuting to the office?
- How low can you go? Set your thermostat to the lowest temperature that you can tolerate in your home and make friends with your wardrobe of jumpers, vests, rugs, slippers etc. Turning your thermostat down by 1°C can save you £80 a year on your energy bills according to [The Energy Saving Trust](#) and cut your emission by between 100-250kg of carbon dioxide a year.
- Use a small electric heater in the room you are using rather than heating the whole house (hot water bottles are good too!)
- If you get cold sitting still for prolonged periods, get up and do some star jumps, climb the stairs or do the washing up to get your circulation going and warm up!
- Shut off rooms you don't use and turn down/off the radiator in that room.
- Try to keep the heat in your home. Don't open windows unnecessarily. If someone comes to the front door, step outside to speak to them (normally I would say invite them in), don't leave the door open letting all your heat escape.
- Personally, I have the thermostat on 17°C for a few slots in the day and work in a small study, which gets the morning sun. I get cold easily so I have a little electric heater to boost the room temperature when needed and have rug and slippers ready by my desk. With four of us now working from home we have agreed to put the thermostat to 17°C throughout the day.



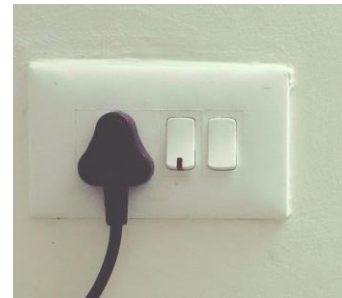
Hot water

- It may be that you can cut down on your hot water use with less showers (or baths). No commute to the office in the car in polluted air or on public transport and no particular need to smell sweet on video calls to colleagues!
- We are all washing our hands more, so we need more hot water right? Well if we are “self-isolating”, we only need to be meticulous about our hand washing when we come into contact with things from outside our homes.
- Anyone for a cuppa? Your kettle is probably getting a lot more use. Only boil the water you need for each cup. You can use the marker on the side of the kettle as I do, or be as nerdy as my husband and fill your cup with the right amount of cold water and tip it into the kettle to heat (this can yield another 100kg CO2 annual saving).



Lighting and appliances

- Switch everything off when not in use: lights when you are not in the room, laptop when you go for lunch, internet router overnight.
- Don't leave appliances on standby unless you have to. This can save you £30 a year on your energy bills according to [The Energy Saving Trust](#) and cut your carbon emissions by up to 100kg a year.
- Working from home has a few advantages like being able to reduce your tumble dryer use and make use of free wind and solar energy, aka the washing line (cutting another 100kg carbon dioxide off your emissions tab). Through the winter, washing dries mostly by the wind, so you can leave it up overnight if the forecast is dry. (I now love hanging the washing and find it a great time to pray outside either in the sunshine or looking at the stars!)



- Being a less polluted environment (not travelling and in poor quality air in the city centre) you may feel more comfortable washing your clothes less too.
- Ditch the ironing, it's an electricity guzzler! With casual home working clothes, can you cut back on your ironing? Halving your ironing can save up to 100Kg carbon emissions a year.

There are masses of things you can do to improve the thermal performance (keeping your heat in) for your home and to move off fossil fuels (gas and oil) for heating and cooking, visit [The Energy Saving Trust](#) website for more. Now may be a good time to think through what actions you could take to reduce carbon emissions at home and make your home more comfortable, without costing the earth.