

**CHEAPER  
GREENER  
FAIRER  
ENERGY  
FOR YOUR HOME  
SWITCH  
DAY**

**RESOURCE PACK**



Citizens UK Fair Energy Campaign

# Fair Energy Switch Day

## Resource Pack

Stepney Area Pilot, Autumn 2020



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This resource pack was produced by St John's Hoxton and Hackney & Islington Citizens to be used for the Citizens UK Fair Energy Campaign, Autumn 2020 but feel free to send it on to anyone who might want to run their own Switch Day. We can't guarantee that the companies we recommend will always be the best to switch to, so double check if you use this pack outside of Autumn 2020.

Thanks to St James' Clapton and St Peter's Harrow for trialling their own Switch Days and giving us feedback, and thanks to Capital Mass for their support and advice.

If you run a Switch Day, we'd love to hear how it goes! Let us know at:  
[froilan.legaspi@citizensuk.org](mailto:froilan.legaspi@citizensuk.org)

## The story so far...

In Autumn 2019, a group of us at St John's Hoxton felt moved to take action on the Climate Emergency. We were also aware that loads of people at our church were overpaying for their gas and electricity due to overcomplicated and unclear policies. Most energy suppliers offer extremely cheap rates for new customers and then hike them up dramatically causing households who don't switch regularly to pay hundreds of pounds more than they need to. As Christians, we believe God asks humans to care for the planet in a way that benefits everyone so we felt compelled to act on this issue where social and environmental injustice are intertwined.

We got speaking to people at church and found most people were well aware they were getting ripped off by their energy supplier. But why were they sticking with them? For some, it was a case of *better the devil you know*— they might be overpaying, but at least they recognised the company name and knew it wasn't going anywhere. Others didn't know who would be cheaper or how to switch. Everyone assumed switching would require them to jump through endless hoops or spend hours on hold to a call centre. Who has time for that?

Working with Hackney & Islington Citizens showed us that things didn't need to be this complicated. Through their research into fair energy suppliers, we had names of companies who were committed to hassle-free switching and ethical business practices. Best of all, they offered green energy much cheaper than what most people were paying the 'Big Six'.

Motivated to share this knowledge with our friends at church, we ran our first switch day in November where we sat down alongside people, talked to them about their energy options and helped them switch suppliers for good. We were amazed at the sort of impact we could have on people's finances and carbon footprints through such a simple campaign, so we looked to share our experience with other churches as well.

We had 8 churches planning to run their own Switch Days around Lent 2020, but unfortunately most were disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. By separating us and disrupting our Sunday routines this crisis has made it much harder to help people switch. However, it has made fair energy all the more important. This winter the pandemic is likely to force people to stay home again, resulting in reduced income and increased energy bills for many. If unfair prices discourage adequate home heating, people will be at increased risk of respiratory problems, including the virus we are trying to protect ourselves from.

So we are asking our friends in churches across Stepney to work with us this Autumn to help our neighbours save money and cut their carbon footprints by switching suppliers for good.

## A word from the Bishop of Stepney

Like so many powerful ideas, the Citizens UK Fair Energy Campaign is remarkably simple: we help our friends and neighbours to switch energy suppliers to save money and carbon. I am championing this campaign because I believe it sets a precedent for just and inclusive climate action within the Church. By tackling financial injustice at the same time as the climate emergency, it offers a vision of environmental action that is accessible to all. I hope it will provoke deeper spiritual exploration of these issues among the congregations that participate.

The campaign comes at a time when many are scratching their heads about how to respond to the General Synod's 2030 net zero target while simultaneously trying to respond to the impact of Covid-19 on family and church budgets. I hope to pilot the project with a select few churches, chosen for their diversity of tradition and demographic, before sharing it throughout Stepney and eventually presenting it to the rest of the Church of England. The volunteers from St John's Hoxton, plus our friends at Capital Mass and Citizens UK, will be working hard to help you set up your own Switch Day teams. I am so excited to work together with you to cut energy bills and carbon footprints across Stepney!

- **The Rt Rev Dr Joanne Grenfell**

## Impact to date

So far we've run four trial Switch Days across three churches. With small teams of volunteers and a few laptops, we've helped 26 households switch to better deals.

Everyone that we helped at St John's Hoxton who had been with a major supplier for longer than 12 months were quoted drastically reduced annual energy bills. Several large families are expecting to save around £600 per year.

According to Bulb estimates, helping 26 households switch to renewable energy is preventing the emission of 40 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year. This is roughly equivalent to the amount absorbed every year by all the trees in Victoria Park!

We are learning as we go, and your co-operation and feedback during this Stepney pilot will be invaluable in making the Switch Day more effective and helping us to help more families.

## Who do we recommend, and why?

We are recommending households switch to **Bulb** or **London Power** (a branch of Octopus Energy operated by the Mayor of London) during our Fair Energy Switch Week. Both Bulb and Octopus are very highly rated by independent reviewers, sharing most of the honours at the [Uswitch Energy Awards 2020](#) and topping the most recent [Which? Energy Survey](#) table.

A few other suppliers offer slightly cheaper tariffs (although not much cheaper), but the fair and green practices Bulb and London Power are committed to make them the most ethical choice around and the most economical long-term. While they're new(ish) companies, they have big financial backing and won't go bust soon.

So what in particular makes these guys so good?

### They're fair

- No fixed term contracts or exit fees, so you can leave any time.
- They are committed to no unfair price rises.
- They offer pay as you go for customers on prepayment meters.
- Bulb will refund exit fees (up to £60) from previous suppliers.

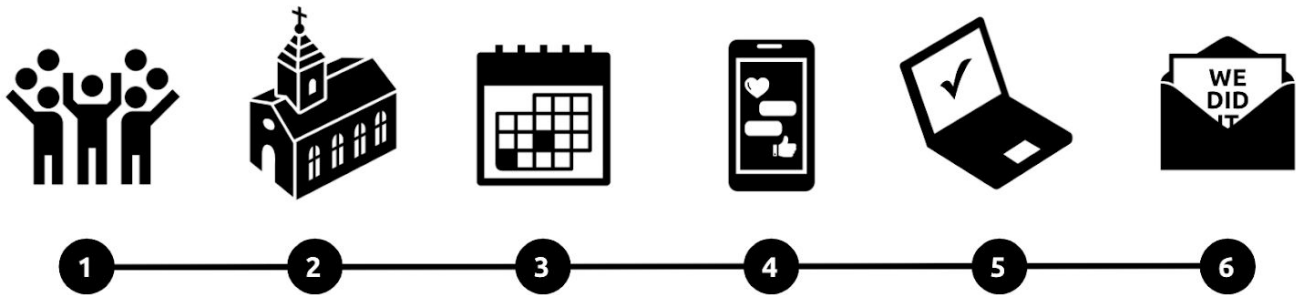
### They're green

- They both provide 100% renewable electricity and carbon neutral gas.

### They're cheap

- The average 2-3 bed household could save £180 per year switching to Bulb, although the exact savings will vary depending on their initial deal.
- They offer the Warm Home Discount. (This is a government scheme that helps people who might struggle to afford their energy bills. It's very important that people who receive this already know they can keep receiving it with Bulb, so please make sure you mention it!)

# The Switch Day journey in 6 steps



## 1. Build a team

- In our opinion, three to four volunteers is perfect.

## 2. Switch your church building (optional)

- Switching to Bulb allows you to use a personalised link that earns credit when referring others to Bulb — up to £50 for you and £50 for the switcher. (Unfortunately London Power doesn't offer this referral scheme at the moment.)

## 3. Plan your Switch Day

- It's best to run your Switch Day immediately after your weekly meeting but other options include using small groups, phone trees, and outreach events.
- Before your Switch Day, make sure all your volunteers know how to help people switch and why they should do it. Have at least one of your team explore the various help pages listed on page 8 of this pack. You don't need to know all the answers, just where to find them when someone asks.

## 4. Get the word out

- You will know the best ways to reach out to your community. We've included some posters for you to print off and slap on your walls and some graphics to use on social media if they might help.

## 5. Run your Switch Day

- Keep count of how many people switch so we can add up our collective impact throughout Stepney.
- Make sure to have DIY Switching Guides to hand (see page 10) for anyone who is interested in switching but doesn't need walking through the process.
- Finally, don't forget to hand out information letters and consent forms!

## 6. Let us know how it went! What worked? What didn't?

## Our experience at St John's Hoxton

As we're all well aware, every church is different. This is especially true post-Covid now every church has its own programme of virtual and physical activities throughout the week. Because of this, it wouldn't be much help for us to give you instructions on how to run a Switch Day. The best we can do is tell you how our in-person Switch Days went in November and March. Hopefully our experiences will be helpful for you in planning a Switch Day in your own context for the coming months.

At both Switch Days we had fairly large teams of volunteers (around 7 or 8), but we didn't need this many. We made sure that every volunteer knew how to use the Bulb, London Power and Uswitch websites and that they understood the benefits of the suppliers we were recommending. All of this information was quick and easy to get through but absolutely vital to being helpful on the day. Sometimes people had unusual or particularly difficult circumstances. In these instances, it was helpful for us to have had a couple of volunteers familiarise themselves with different information pages online before the Switch Day. Then they could sit down with anyone with difficult questions and help them to find the answers. We have listed the best help pages later in this guide.

We planned our Switch Days to take place immediately after the main Sunday service and positioned ourselves near the exit with laptops, ready to help anybody through the switching process that wanted help. We were fortunate to be given a few minutes during the service to quickly explain what we were doing as well as the financial and environmental benefits of switching. This was very helpful in encouraging people to stop on their way out of the service to consider switching. It was also helpful to plug both sides of the campaign (climate crisis and money) as different people have different priorities. We had a few volunteers spare who stood near the coffee table and asked people if they were interested in switching, but we definitely could have run the Switch Day with a smaller team.

All of us were surprised the first time how easy it was to use the switching websites, including those switching. The most tedious part of the process for the switcher was filling in our own consent forms! We had to make sure that volunteer laptops were in incognito/private browsing mode so that they weren't inadvertently saving anyone's personal information.



# How to switch energy supplier

Follow these straightforward steps to switch someone onto fair, cheap and green energy.

1. **Check uSwitch.com** to find out whether Bulb or London Power (Octopus Energy) is better in your area. Also double check that switching will actually save money - if the Switcher is with a 'Big Six' supplier\* and hasn't switched recently, they are most likely overpaying.
2. **Head to the new supplier's website.** Remember to use a referral link if you have one. Enter your postcode and click 'Get a quote'
  - Bulb - [www.bulb.co.uk](http://www.bulb.co.uk)
  - London Power - [mylondonpower.com](http://mylondonpower.com)
3. **Fill out the form** with basic information about your current deal and find out how much you could save.
4. **Sign up to accept the quote.** This will create an account which can be used to follow the progress of the switch.
5. **Explain to the Switcher what happens next...** They will receive a welcome pack by email that explains their tariff. Before the switch goes through, the new supplier will ask them for a meter reading. They will then send this to the old supplier to calculate a final bill (this should arrive in 6 weeks). The new supplier can dispute this final bill if asked to.
6. **The switch will be completed 21 days (Bulb) or 17 days (London Power)** after you request a switch. This is when the first payment will come out if they are on Direct Debit.
7. **Congratulate the Switcher!** They've just saved themselves money, signed up to an ethical supplier, and massively reduced their carbon footprint. Surely that deserves a high five?

*\*Who are these 'Big Six' lot we keep banging on about? British Gas, EDF Energy, E.ON, npower, Scottish Power, and OVO Energy (who now own SSE).*

## Extra help with your energy supplier

Both Bulb and London Power have loads of help on their websites. If you have questions you can't find the answers to on those pages, you can email or call them.

### **Bulb**

**Web:** [help.bulb.co.uk](http://help.bulb.co.uk)

**Email:** [help@bulb.co.uk](mailto:help@bulb.co.uk)

**Phone:** 0300 30 30 635

### **London Power**

**Web:** [mylondonpower.com/help-and-faqs](http://mylondonpower.com/help-and-faqs)

**Email:** [hello@mylondonpower.com](mailto:hello@mylondonpower.com)

**Phone:** 0808 168 8145

**Priority Services Register.** Both suppliers offer free support services to those in need. This includes over-65s, people with a disability or long-term health problem and carers of children under five years old. The services available include paper billing, assistance reading meters, and more. New London Power customers can sign up for this when they join, Bulb customers can register after creating an account. More information available on the help pages listed above.

### **More help and energy advice can be found from Citizens Advice Bureau**

Google 'Citizens Advice - Your Energy Supply'. The first link that comes up will be a Citizens Advice help page with loads of common issues. You can call them on **03454 04 05 06** if you'd prefer.



## Frequently asked questions

### **Will I have to pay to leave my old supplier?**

If you leave your contract early, your old supplier can charge you an exit fee but they can't charge you if you are within 49 days of the end of your contract. If you aren't this close to the end of your contract, London Power will delay your switch by up to a month. Bulb will pay your exit fees for you after your switch is completed (up to £60).

### **What happens if I'm in debt to my old supplier?**

Both Bulb and London Power recommend resolving this before trying to switch. However, Ofgem state you have a right to switch if:

- You've been in debt for less than 28 days (your debt will be added to the final bill)
- or you are on a prepayment meter and your debt is lower than £500 for gas and £500 for electricity (in this case your debt will be transferred to the new supplier)

If you're switching to a cheaper deal, this could help you pay off your debt quicker. For more help with this, call the Citizens Advice line above (or google 'Ofgem switch with debt').

### **Can I keep my Warm Home Discount?**

Yes. You can apply for this through your online account.

### **Can I switch with a smart meter?**

If switching to London Power from OVO, E.ON, First Utility or Utilita, then your smart meter will still work. For everyone else, including people switching to Bulb, your smart meter will stop being 'smart' and you will have to read it yourself like in the old days. Bulb and London Power are rolling out smart meters throughout 2020, although it might be a while before you get one.

### **I've changed my mind and don't want to switch - can I cancel?**

You can cancel the switching process within 14 days through your new online account.

# Resources

The other PDFs in this pack contain all the materials you need to run your Switch Day.

## B. Promotional Materials

This contains a range of graphics and posters to let your members know your Switch Day. This includes **seven posters** for you to choose from that can be printed any size (including as an A5 flier). Most have space for you to add your name, the time and place of your Switch Day, uplifting messages and cheesy jokes. Also included are square graphics for use on **social media** and a **16:9 powerpoint slide**.

## C. Handouts for people who Switch

This is the most important section of the pack - print of copies to staple together and hand out to everyone who switches. It includes an **information letter** explaining what's going on and why, followed by details of where to find **extra help**. Crucially, there are two identical copies of a **consent form** that reminds people that we aren't giving professional advice and that they are free to make their own decisions. **If you help someone to switch you must make sure they complete the consent forms beforehand.** They can keep one for themselves and you can keep the other safe in your own records. Sections 9 and 10 are only relevant if you are using a referral code - if not, you can cross this out.

## D. Handouts for people who want to switch themselves

This is just a condensed version of the guide above. It's useful to hand out to people who are able to switch themselves, but might not know who to switch to. Try to keep track of who you hand these out to. It would be great to follow them up and check if they need any extra advice. If they switch at home with our sheet, make sure to count them in your Switch Day total!

## E. Bible Study

Finally, there's an optional Bible study. This explores what the Bible has to say about our relationship with the planet, social justice and generosity. Feel free to go over it with your group to add a bit more depth to your Switch Day, or ignore it if it's not your thing.