

# The Heat Trust Scheme

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Heat Trust is a voluntary, stakeholder-led customer protection scheme developed specifically for the district and communal heating sector. This customer information sheet provides information on heat networks, a summary of the Heat Trust Scheme, and what to do if you have a complaint about your heat supplier.

## What are heat networks?

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Your home or business gets its heating and hot water from a heat network (also known as communal or district heating). On a heat network, heating and hot water from a local energy centre is delivered to homes and businesses through a network of insulated pipes.

The key difference between heat networks and a conventional heating system is that there is no need to have a separate boiler in each home. Repairs and maintenance of the local energy centre are also taken care of by the heat supplier. Modern heat networks are fitted with devices to help you understand and manage your heating (sometimes called Heat Interface Units or HIUs) so that each customer has as much control over their heating as they would experience with an individual boiler.

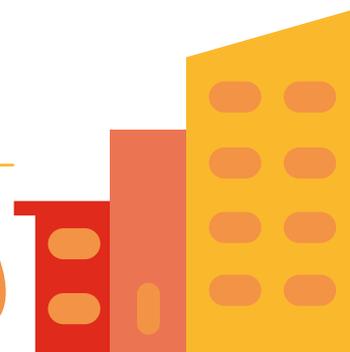
Another key difference is that currently customers cannot switch suppliers of heat networks.



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District and communal heating is becoming more common in large developments, particularly high-rise developments in urban areas. The Government is also providing funding for district heating networks as a step towards decarbonising heating, as part of the UK commitments to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

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# What's the difference between district heating and communal heating?

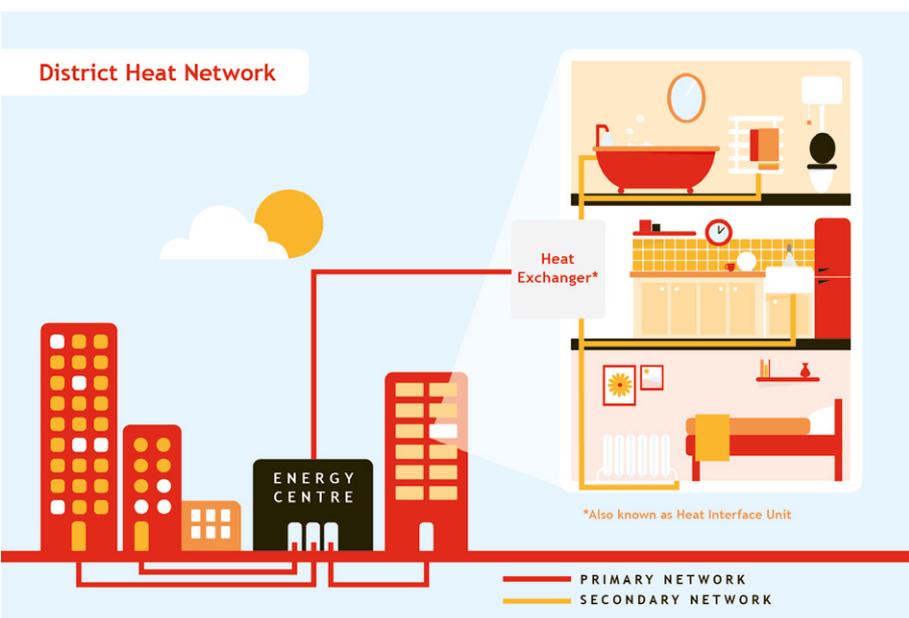
## Communal Heating

Communal Heating involves a central plant supplying heat and hot water to a number of customers within one building, such as a large boiler in the basement of a building, with the heat and hot water distributed through the building via a series of pipes.



## District Heating

District heating involves a local energy centre, or sometimes more than one energy centre, that supplies heat and hot water to customers in **more than one building**. District heating networks can range in size from a few hundred metres supplying just a few homes to several kilometres of pipe supplying heat and hot water to multiple buildings in a development or across a town or city.





## What are the advantages of district heating?

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There are three broad advantages to heat networks:

1. They can operate using a range of fuel sources, including renewable heat (e.g. biomass or heat pumps), waste heat (e.g. from energy from waste facilities) or conventional gas.
2. When designed and operated appropriately, heat networks can utilise economies of scale, helping to lower household bills and lower fuel use by reducing the need for generation of additional energy.
3. Repair and maintenance costs for the system are included.

## What is Heat Trust and what does it do?

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Heat Trust is the national stakeholder-led customer protection scheme for residential and microbusiness customers of heat networks.

It sets a common standard in the quality and level of customer service expected from heat suppliers. It also provides an independent process for settling complaints between customers and their heat supplier through the Energy Ombudsman. The standards of service have been designed to be comparable to those required by Ofgem of electricity and gas suppliers.

## How does Heat Trust work?

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Heat suppliers need to apply to Heat Trust in order to register the heat networks that they manage. Heat suppliers that register with Heat Trust make a commitment to follow and abide by the rules and requirements set by Heat Trust. They are monitored by Heat Trust to ensure that they meet the Scheme's standards.

## Which heat networks are registered with Heat Trust?

Heat Trust is a voluntary scheme. To find out which heat networks are registered with Heat Trust, please see the Heat Trust sites section of our website: [www.heattrust.org/our-members](http://www.heattrust.org/our-members)

## Do you make decisions on the cost of district heating?

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Pricing and contract length are outside the remit of Heat Trust. However, we have developed the Heat Cost Calculator.



## Heat Cost Calculator

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We believe further transparency is important in the sector. To help provide customers with information on the costs associated with heat networks, we have developed a Heat Cost Calculator. This is available on our website: [www.heattrust.org/heat-cost-comparator](http://www.heattrust.org/heat-cost-comparator)

The Heat Cost Calculator provides an indication of what you could expect to pay for heating and hot water in a similar sized property that uses an individual gas boiler. It is not a bespoke assessment; it has been created for information purposes only.

## What do I do if I have a complaint about my supplier?

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If you have a complaint about your heat supplier, the first step is to contact your supplier and explain your complaint. Contact details for your supplier will be on your bill. Heat Trust has set Rules which require suppliers that have registered with the Heat Trust Scheme to have a clear process to manage complaints. We expect suppliers to resolve complaints within eight weeks.

## What if I am not happy with my supplier's response to my complaint?

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If you are not happy with your supplier's final offer to resolve your complaint or it has been over eight weeks since you made your complaint, you can ask the Energy Ombudsman to investigate. This service is free for customers to access.

Heat Trust has put this service in place with Ombudsman Services. They have expertise in dealing with customer complaints and will investigate complaints fairly, by listening to both sides of the story and looking at the facts. They will then decide what action, if any, should be taken.

**They can be contacted via:**

[www.ombudsman-services.org/](http://www.ombudsman-services.org/)

**or Post:** Ombudsman Services: Energy, P.O. Box 966, Warrington, WA4 9DF

**Phone:** 0330 440 1624

**Email:** [enquiry@ombudsman-services.org](mailto:enquiry@ombudsman-services.org)

## Do you investigate complaints?

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Heat Trust's primary role is focused on customer service standards and therefore does not deal directly with, nor investigate, individual customer complaints.

Instead the Heat Trust Scheme provides access to the independent Energy Ombudsman for complaints to be dealt with.

## Does Heat Trust monitor its members?

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Yes, we do. We require heat suppliers that have registered heat networks with Heat Trust to submit reports on performance twice a year. Heat Trust also receives feedback from the Energy Ombudsman.

Additionally, we require each heat network that is registered with Heat Trust to undergo an independent audit every five years. Heat Trust can instruct an audit to take place earlier if reporting shows a significant number of complaints over the previous year, or if we feel an audit would help improve the service to customers.



For more information on heat networks please visit our [website](http://www.heattrust.org).

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