

I run a small business. It's been a very difficult six months for us, we lost a contract with one of our major clients and I just haven't been able to replace it with new business. Now I've just received a huge energy bill. It feels like the last straw and I'm really stressed.

I'm sorry to hear about your problems. The first thing to do is to call the Citizens Advice consumer service on 0808 223 1133. They can often help to resolve problems with energy suppliers.

It's particularly important to do this quickly if you're on a business contract and you've been told you're going to be disconnected. If this happens an extra fee can be added to your bill, and then there'll be another charge for being reconnected.

If you think the bill is wrong, get in touch with your energy company. If you are a microbusiness you can only be charged for gas or electricity you've used in the last 12 months - they can't send you a new bill dating back longer than a year.

If the bill is correct, but you just can't afford it, your energy supplier might agree to a payment plan. Work out a realistic budget so you know you'll be able to afford the payments. Here at Citizens Advice we can help sole traders and individuals, but for other businesses there's the Business Debtline on 0800 197 6026.

Moving forward, if your bills are being estimated you might be paying more than you need to. Set up a reminder on your phone to send monthly meter readings to your supplier or see if you can get a smart meter installed.

You may also find switching energy companies will save you money. You could also try energy efficiency measures such as switching off computers and other equipment overnight, using energy efficient light bulbs or making sure your premises are insulated..