

## **Advice from Citizens Advice on how small businesses can access help on energy bills.**

If a small business receives an energy bill that seems unaffordable, Citizens Advice say the first thing to do is to call their consumer service on 0808 223 1133. They can often help to resolve problems with energy suppliers.

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

If the business thinks the bill is wrong, the advice is to get in touch with the energy supplier. A microbusiness can only be charged for gas or electricity used in the last 12 months - the supplier can't send a new bill dating back longer than a year.

If the bill is correct, but the business just can't afford it, the supplier might agree to a payment plan. It is important to work out a realistic budget where the payments are affordable. Citizens Advice can help sole traders and individuals, but for other businesses there's a Business Debtline on 0800 197 6026.

Moving forward, it is best to avoid estimated bills, so setting up a reminder on the phone to send monthly meter readings to the supplier is helpful, or investigating whether a smart meter can be installed.

Switching energy companies may save money, and trying to introduce more energy efficiency measures such as switching off computers and other equipment overnight, using energy efficient light bulbs or making sure the premises are adequately insulated, all help to reduce bills.