

My elderly father has received huge bills from his energy supplier which are completely wrong. We have tried to phone the company, but they never take any notice and they have now sent a letter saying they are sending his details to a debt collection agency. He is worried sick. What can we do?

Contact your local Citizens Advice immediately to get help with this. Your father is not alone – Citizens Advice nationally has seen a rise in poor practice from energy companies over the past year. In your father's case, this is clearly a mistake, but Citizens Advice is helping increasing numbers of people who are in energy debt. We have seen a surge in harmful debt collection practices, with some suppliers not offering affordable debt repayment plans, using Debt Collection Agencies while consumers are still trying to agree a repayment plan, and taking people to court to recover the money, which causes distress and significantly increases the debt.

Court enforcement may increase now that Ofgem has introduced tougher rules on force fitting of prepayment meters. Some providers do support their customers well, but Citizens Advice is asking Ofgem to protect the most vulnerable consumers, by enforcing the provision of affordable repayment plans, issuing guidance on the use of Debt Collection Agencies, and limiting court action and enforcement where this puts people at risk of harm.

If you are having problems with your energy supplier, or are struggling with debt, contact South Lakes Citizens Advice for free confidential help.

Free, confidential advice and help is available from South Lakes Citizens Advice on any aspect of debt, consumer problems, benefits, housing, employment or any other problems. How to access:

- ***Call 015394 46464 (9.30am – 2pm, Monday – Friday)***
- ***Drop in sessions at Wainwright's Yard, Kendal, LA9 4DP (10am – 2pm, Tuesday and Thursday)***
- ***Adviceline: 0808 2787 984 (9am - 5pm, Monday – Friday)***
- ***email advice via the submission page on our website www.southlakescab.org.uk***