

5. It should be your choice. No illegal break-ins!



Energy companies don't have any right to force entry into your home to recover money. They can only get in to disconnect supplies or put in a prepayment meter, not to seize your possessions, and they **can only get in with your permission or a warrant from a magistrate's court**. (If your meter is outside, however, this won't help.)

They **should not be sending bailiffs** ("enforcement agents") – if they do, don't let them in. Bailiffs are not allowed to force their way in. And they won't solve your problem. **Don't negotiate with the bailiffs – negotiate with the supplier itself.**

Enforcement agents should withdraw, and inform the supplier, if they can see that you are “vulnerable” or if there is only a child under 16 or a “vulnerable” person at your home when they arrive.

The company must not force-fit a meter with a warrant **if this could lead to severe trauma**. This new prohibition is intended to help people who would find the experience especially traumatic “due to their mental capacity and/or psychological state”.

If the company do go to court and do get a warrant, or if they disconnect you from the mains in the road, this will normally cost you extra, and it can also cost a lot to get re-connected later. **The costs of executing a warrant to disconnect are now capped at £150**. However, you should not have to pay this if you are in severe financial hardship. You also should not have to pay if you are “vulnerable” and this prevented you from coming to an agreement before it got this far.

Refusing to let them in is a way to buy time so you can negotiate some way to pay at a rate a bit nearer to what you can afford. Phone the supplier right away. Some codes of practice allow for disconnection to be delayed by a week or two if you tell them you are contacting the DWP or social services for help with the bill.

If they get in, even with a warrant, they **have to leave your home as secure as they found it**, and compensate you for any damage caused.

We are working towards building a network of people prepared to help each other prevent disconnections, or unwanted prepayment meters being imposed. If you need help on the doorstep please get in touch with Fuel Poverty Action.