

Small Business Energy Charter – FAQs

1. Are the commitments in the charter applicable to all non-domestic consumers?

The commitments in the charter are applicable to all small business consumers. A small business consumer is defined as one whose electricity consumption is less than 50 MWh per annum, or whose gas consumption is less than 73.2 MWh per annum. 87% of all electricity business connections are in this small business consumer category¹, and 71% of all gas business connections².

Based on average prices, a typical small business could expect to be paying up to £1,267 per month on electricity, or £549 per month on gas³.

Licence	Term	Definition
Northern Ireland Gas Supply	small business consumers	A business consumer who is supplied with gas and consumes less than 73.2 MWh per annum based on the Annual Quantity of the supply meter point as defined in the Network Code. This does not include a business consumer who is a single legal entity with more than one premises where the total gas consumption of those premises is more than 73.2 MWh per annum.
Northern Ireland Electricity Supply	small business consumers	A non-domestic consumer who is supplied with electricity and consumes less than 50 MWh per annum based on its most recent previous actual 12 months consumption or, where such data is not available, the estimated consumption used for consumer billing or the Actual or Estimated Usage Factor. This does not include a non-domestic consumer who is a single legal entity with more than one premises where the total electricity consumption of those premises is more than 50 MWh per annum.

2. Can I discuss contract renewal options in the middle of a contract?

Options available to you will depend on the terms and conditions of your contract and your supplier can discuss these with you. If you are struggling within a contract, it is important to let your supplier know so that they can provide you with suitable advice.

¹ Based on data reported in [Q2 2024 QREMM report \(UR\)](#) (table 2)

² Based on data reported in [Q2 2024 QREMM report \(UR\)](#) (table 10)

³ Calculated based on the defined maximum consumption for Small Business Consumers (MWh) and average prices for Very Small Connections reported in [Q2 2024 QREMM report \(UR\)](#)

3. What are the alternative options to disconnection?

It is important to engage with your supplier as early as possible when experiencing affordability or debt issues, to allow them to provide support and advice.

Suppliers may be able to offer repayment plans and can discuss alternative contracts and tariff types (where a change can be facilitated contractually). They can also signpost you to other third-party support services and provide practical advice on energy efficiency measures that could help you to reduce your energy bills.

4. Why are the commitments in the Small Business Energy Charter voluntary?

The aim of the charter is to provide enhanced protections to consumers during the winter (between 1 November 2024 and 31 March 2025).

The inclusion of voluntary commitments allows us to review and be responsive to consumer needs each year and to implement these changes quickly. Mandatory commitments would have put this flexibility at risk. This is because mandatory measures are implemented via changes to the supplier licences and this can only take place after a lengthy consultation process.

5. What will be done to make sure suppliers honour their commitments?

Since suppliers have made a voluntary commitment to the charter, there is every reason to believe they will act in accordance with it. Utility Regulator will nevertheless monitor supplier behaviour to ensure they honour the commitments they have made and will remain in touch with them during the charter period. We will also meet with suppliers at the end of this period to discuss the impact of the charter on consumers.

6. What should consumers do if they need any help or support?

You should contact your supplier directly if you need help or support. All the information that you need should be on your supplier's website and this might be the quickest way to get the information that you require.

Useful information is also available on the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland's website. If you are unable to access the information you need through your supplier's website, you should contact your supplier directly via telephone.