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Ombudsman Research

Prepared For:



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A. Introduction

A.1 Background

As well as monitoring customer satisfaction with energy suppliers' handling of customer complaints, Ofgem is currently reviewing the performance of the independent Energy Ombudsman (appointed from October 2008). This review consists of 2 stages; an independent audit of the Ombudsman's processes and procedures against pre-defined criteria and also direct feedback from energy customers who have been in contact with the Ombudsman. This report covers the second stage of the review.

Energy customers contacting the Ombudsman are classified as either 'In terms of reference' or 'Out of terms of reference';

- 'In terms of reference' (ITOR) customers are those referred to the Ombudsman by their energy supplier after their complaint or query has reached a stalemate or stage at which it cannot be resolved, i.e. no agreement has been reached or after a time period of 8 weeks has elapsed
- 'Out of terms of reference' (OTOR) are those customers who have contacted the Ombudsman outside of the official complaints handling process, i.e. they may have made direct contact or have been referred incorrectly.

A.2 Objectives

The overall objective of the research was to:

“Provide quantitative feedback on customer satisfaction with the Ombudsman and their handling of contact from both ITOR and OTOR customers”

In particular the research sought to:

- Assess customers' understanding of the role of the Ombudsman during the process of their contact, i.e. acknowledging and recording contact, explanation of next steps, ability to progress their case, etc.
- Measure satisfaction with the different stages of contact
- Quantify overall satisfaction with the experience of contacting the Ombudsman and satisfaction with the resolution/outcome

A.3 Methodology

A total of 224 telephone interviews were completed with 124 ITOR and 100 OTOR customers.

ITOR customers were all closed cases between the 16th November 2009 and 29th January 2010. Most had contacted the Ombudsman about energy supplied to their home (103/124), with much smaller numbers contacting about an energy issue related to their business¹ (20/124) or a network issue (1/124).

OTOR customers were almost equally split between business (52/100) and home (48/100) and had contacted the Ombudsman between the 15th and 26th February 2010.

There appeared to be some confusion amongst respondents as to where they were in the complaints handling process, i.e. whether or not they had reached 'deadlock'. More customers thought they were ITOR than were classified this way by the Ombudsman and less thought they were outside the official complaints handling process (OTOR). Therefore, in this report we will focus on customers who were classified as ITOR by the Ombudsman and thought of themselves this way (107 respondents) and those that were classified as OTOR and classified themselves similarly (57 respondents). For a more detailed explanation see section C.1.

In all cases, the interview was conducted with the person who had contacted the Ombudsman, either by interviewing the named contact, where provided, or by a screening process. All those contacting the Ombudsman had been given the opportunity to opt out of any research.

A detailed profile of respondents can be found in the Appendix.

Interviews lasted for approximately 15 minutes and were conducted by experienced Consumer and Business to Business interviewers from Harris Interactive using CATI technology (Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing) and used a questionnaire designed by Harris Interactive in full consultation with Ofgem. All interviews took place in March 2010.

Customer sample was provided to Harris Interactive by the Energy Ombudsman following guidelines provided by Ofgem.

Weighting

The data shown in this report has not been weighted.

¹ Businesses were micro businesses, defined as having fewer than 10 employees and an annual turnover and annual account balance sheet total not exceeding 2 million Euros and an annual consumption of electricity of not more than 55,000kWh or an annual consumption of gas of not more than 200,000kWh.

Significant differences between ITOR and OTOR customers have been tested at the 95% confidence level and are highlighted where appropriate.

B. Executive Summary

Method

A total of 224, 15 minute telephone interviews were completed in March 2010 with 124 ITOR and 100 OTOR customers. **ITOR** customers were all closed cases who had contacted the Ombudsman between the 16th November 2009 and 29th January 2010. Most had contacted the Ombudsman about energy supplied to their home with much smaller numbers contacting about an energy issue related to their business. **OTOR** customers were almost equally split between business and home and had contacted the Ombudsman between the 15th and 26th February 2010.

Contacting the Ombudsman

There appeared to be some confusion amongst respondents as to where they were in the complaints handling process, i.e. whether or not they had reached 'deadlock'. More customers thought they were ITOR than were classified this way by the Ombudsman and less thought they were outside the official complaints handling process (OTOR).

When looking at the responses that many customers gave, often they are either not made aware of the procedures to follow by their supplier or do not follow them for whatever reason. Many look to the Ombudsman early for advice, rather than waiting for their supplier to offer a solution or refer their complaint. Frustration with the time taken to respond to issues raised and/or provide satisfactory solutions prompted the OTOR respondents into contacting the Ombudsman. It would also appear that customers sometimes expect their issues to be resolved in a shorter time period than the suppliers are providing.

This confusion is most likely a combination of respondents not understanding where they were in the process, potentially not having the complaints handling process explained to them by their supplier and possibly not having a clear explanation from the Ombudsman when they first made contact about their complaint

Nine out of ten customers had no problems in finding out how to contact the Ombudsman and found the contact details primarily via Google or another search engine, their energy supplier's bill and the Ombudsman's website.

ITOR respondents were most likely to correspond with the Ombudsman in writing and on average had contact 7 times, although four in ten had more than 10 contacts. On average the Ombudsman took 11.5 days to respond to their written complaints, although almost a quarter waited over three weeks for a reply. Where there was a need for more than one contact, the customer was more likely to make contact with the Ombudsman than vice versa and this could explain why there were relatively low satisfaction ratings on "calling back when promised or agreed".

OTOR respondents were more likely to use the telephone and only a very small number contacted the Ombudsman more than once.

The experience of OTOR respondents at the initial contact stage

The two main reasons given by respondents for contacting the Ombudsman were because of frustration with the energy suppliers' inability or unwillingness to address the complaint or because of wanting advice on what options were open to them.

The majority were given details to progress their complaint through the correct channels, were satisfied and felt more knowledgeable about the process following their contact. However, one in ten were given no information to help them take their complaint further and the same proportion were dissatisfied with the way their contact was handled.

Just over three-quarters contacted their energy supplier following their interaction with the Ombudsman but amongst those that did not, very few felt that their complaint had been resolved satisfactorily.

The experience of ITOR respondents

The most common complaints related to billing, followed by meter problems and price-related issues. Far fewer had issues with changing suppliers, sales tactics, debt or problems with the network. Almost two-thirds said that they had not received any explanation from their energy supplier as to why their complaint could not be resolved and was being referred to the Ombudsman.

All ITOR respondents received confirmation that their complaint could be investigated.

In terms of the initial contact with the Ombudsman, 9 out of 10 confirmed that the Ombudsman had asked for their permission to contact their energy supplier in order to discuss their complaint. Slightly more recalled the Ombudsman giving them an explanation of what would happen next in the handling of their issue. The explanation was deemed satisfactory by just under three-quarters who appreciated the clarity of the explanation, the friendly/helpful tone of the communication and the fact that the issue was being dealt with. However, as with OTOR customers about one in seven were dissatisfied mainly because they felt the contact was unfair/unhelpful or that the Ombudsman had sided with the supplier.

Four out of five were provided with a timeframe to which the Ombudsman would adhere and more than half were told that the process would take longer than 21 days.

Satisfaction with specific elements of the written and telephone processes

For those contacting the Ombudsman by **telephone**, satisfaction levels were high (mean scores of 4/5 or more) for all the initial stages of contact and for *"the call handler's knowledge about the next steps"* and *"informing them of the next steps and associated timeframes"*. Satisfaction was lower, although still above 3.5, for two issues where it may be harder for the call handler to perform well consistently given the huge variety of queries and complaints, namely *"knowledge of possible solutions to resolve their complaint"* and *"their proactive approach to resolving the complaint"*. However, there were two other factors which received lower scores and which are not a question of knowledge: *"calling back if promised or agreed"* and *"the call handler taking ownership of their*

complaint". Overall, OTOR respondents were more satisfied with all stages of the process, particularly *"the time in which your call was answered"* and *"their understanding of your complaint or problem"*.

Those contacting the Ombudsman in **writing** were far less satisfied than those telephoning. Around a quarter or more were dissatisfied with seven out of the ten elements of service rated. Only one mean score was over 4, and this was for *"the ease of registering their complaint"* (4.3).

The pattern of the results was similar to those seen amongst the telephone contacts, in that respondents tended to be happier with the initial stages of the process and they were also most dissatisfied with *"the lack of problem ownership"* (3.1) and *"the Ombudsman taking a proactive approach to resolving their complaint"* (2.7). Another major area of dissatisfaction was not being provided with further contact details (2.9).

Overall satisfaction and improvements sought

OTOR contacts were much more satisfied than ITOR contacts with the process overall. Whereas seven out of ten OTOR contacts were satisfied to some degree, only just over a third of ITOR respondents felt this way. The latter were also four times more likely to be not at all satisfied.

Complainants/enquirers who contacted by telephone were also significantly more satisfied than those who contacted in writing. This could be expected to some degree, given that a much higher proportion of those contacting the Ombudsman in writing were ITOR respondents. However, written contact appears to have a negative impact on satisfaction levels irrespective of customer type.

The three main factors driving satisfaction are being provided with helpful/straightforward information, having their issue resolved, and obtaining a quick response. However, the main cause of satisfaction is different depending on customer type. For ITOR contacts, having their complaint resolved in their favour is mentioned much more frequently than anything else. For OTOR contacts it was being provided with the information they needed in a helpful and clear way.

As with the drivers of satisfaction, what made people unhappy differed by customer type. For OTOR respondents, it was that their issue had not been resolved, presumably because they had been referred back to their energy supplier, which some obviously found frustrating. Some also complained about unhelpful service. ITOR respondents tended to be dissatisfied by a series of related factors: when their complaint had not been resolved, where they were unhappy with the outcome, when they felt the Ombudsman was favouring the supplier rather than them and when they felt that their complaint took too long to be investigated or was not read and investigated thoroughly.

Four in ten felt that there were no improvements needed to the Ombudsman's service but this was significantly higher amongst OTOR respondents than ITOR contacts. Several of the improvements desired by ITOR respondents involved better communications: being kept up to date better,

personal contact either face-to-face or on the telephone and having a named contact. OTOR respondents who are at the beginning of the process were more concerned that their complaints should be acted on, that the Ombudsman should be more helpful, and that there should be more personal contact .

C. Main Report

C.1 Confusion Regarding How Customers Were Classified

Respondents were asked what prompted them to initially contact the Ombudsman. Their responses, as shown in the chart below, show that their understanding of where they are in the process does not in many cases match the classification given to them by the Ombudsman. More customers (149) thought they were ITOR, i.e. had reached deadlock, than were classified this way on the sample (124) and less (70 rather than 100) thought they were OTOR, i.e. outside the official complaints handling process.

Only 57% of customers classified by the Ombudsman as OTOR saw themselves to be at this stage, and a third of them had contacted the Ombudsman directly because they thought that their complaint to the energy supplier could not be resolved. Only a small number of ITOR respondents' (14%) assessment of where they were in the process did not tally with the Ombudsman's definition.

Table 1 – What prompted contact with the Ombudsman

<i>% mentioning</i>	Total	ITOR	OTOR
<i>Base:</i>	224	124	100
OTOR			
Contacted before making a complaint to energy supplier	4	2	7
Contacted having made a complaint but before prior to confirmation that it could not be resolved	27	9	50
ITOR			
Referred by energy supplier having made a complaint that could not be resolved	9	10	8
Contacted directly about a complaint to energy supplier that could not be solved	54	72	33
Recommended by 3rd party having made a complaint that could not be resolved	3	4	1
Other	3	3	2
Total	100	100	100

Although not explored in greater detail in the research, this confusion is most likely a combination of respondents not understanding where they were in the complaints handling process i.e. whether they had indeed reached 'deadlock' or not, potentially not having had the complaints handling process fully explained to them by their supplier when registering the complaint or possibly not having a clear explanation from the Ombudsman when they first made contact.

From this point onwards in the report, we will make reference to four groups of respondents as shown below:

- ITOR respondents from the sample who classified themselves as ITOR (107 referred to as ITOR)
- ITOR respondents from the sample who claimed to be OTOR (13 referred to as ITOR/OTOR)

- OTOR respondents from the sample who classified themselves as OTOR (57 referred to as OTOR)
- OTOR respondents from the sample who classified themselves as ITOR (42 referred to as OTOR/ITOR).

We will focus on true ITOR and OTOR respondents and only make reference to the other two groups where there is a noteworthy difference in views. However, given the low bases sizes any differences will be indicative rather than statistically significant.

C.2 Contact with the Ombudsman

C.2.1 Method of Contact

Customers contacted the Ombudsman in many different ways, with telephone being the most popular (used by 75% of respondents). Letters and e-mails were sent by just under and over a third of complainants (37% and 31% respectively). The website was infrequently used as a way of making contact with the Ombudsman (used by only 8%).

When asked about their **main type of contact**, written communication (e-mail, letter or website) was used far more than telephone by ITOR respondents (76% and 21% respectively). However, the reverse was true of OTOR contacts (70% contacted by telephone and only 30% in writing), perhaps because, as will be seen later, many made only one contact.

Table2 – Main type of contact

<i>% mentioning method of contact</i>	Total	ITOR	OTOR
<i>Base:</i>	224	107	57
Telephone	44	21	70*
Letter	34	59	7
E-mail	19	17	21
Website	1	0	2
Any written communication	54	76*	30
Don't know/can't remember	2	3	0
Total	100	100	100

**Significant difference*

The Ombudsman tended to favour written communication when responding to customers, more often by letter (58%) than e-mail (25%), and only contacted them by phone in a quarter of cases (27%). Half (53%) of OTOR complainants did not receive any contact at all from the Ombudsman, most likely because their issue was dealt with on the first contact. However, all ITOR and ITOR/OTOR complainants received a response.

C.2.2 Response Times

On average the Ombudsman took 11.5 days to respond to customers' initial written communications, although 40% received a quicker response, i.e. within a week. A fifth waited over three weeks for a reply. OTOR respondents received quicker replies, presumably because the query was simpler and required no further investigation on the part of the Ombudsman.

Table 3 – Response times to initial written contact

<i>% of respondents having written contact</i>	Total	ITOR	OTOR
<i>Base:</i>	121	81	17
Next day	3	2	6
2-3 days	16	11	24
4-5 days	7	7	12
6-7 days	14	11	12
Between 1 and 3 weeks	28	31	35
Over 3 weeks	20	23	12
Don't know/can't remember	12	15	0
Total	100	100	100

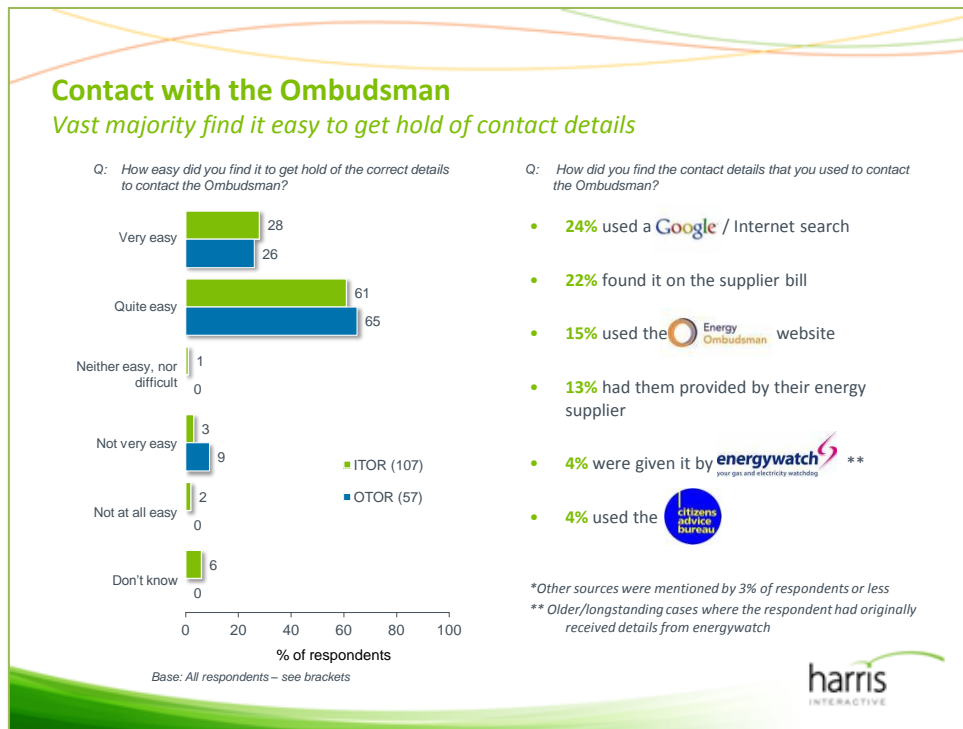
C.2.3 Ease of Contact

The vast majority (91%) had no problems in finding out how to contact the Ombudsman and there was no difference between the four different groups of respondents. They found the contact details in a number of ways, as illustrated on the chart below. The three main sources for both OTOR and ITOR customers were: Google or another search engine (24%), their energy supplier's bill (22%) and the Ombudsman's website (15%). The only significant differences between the two customer types were that OTOR respondents were significantly more likely to have found the contact details on their energy supplier's bill (35% versus 15%). ITOR and OTOR/ITOR customers' energy supplier was more likely to have provided the Ombudsman's contact details.

Only 5% (11 respondents) had difficulty in getting hold of the correct details to contact the Ombudsman and a variety of individual reasons were given including:

- Problems with the search engine not immediately finding the correct site,
- The Ombudsman was not as well publicised as Ofgem,
- The form on the website was difficult to fill in, Had not been sent the number as promised by their supplier, etc.

Chart 1 - Ease of Contacting the Ombudsman



C.2.4 Number of Contacts with the Ombudsman

The number of times energy customers had contact with the Ombudsman varied significantly by customer type, with ITOR customers having had far more contacts. Around 60% of OTOR and OTOR/ITOR customers contacted the Ombudsman only once and none had more than four contacts, giving an average of 1.6/1.5 contacts overall. However, the picture was very different for ITOR and ITOR/OTOR customers, where the average number of contacts was 7/7.1 and almost two-fifths (38%) had 10 or more occasions to contact, or be contacted by, the Ombudsman.

Table 4– Number of contacts with the Ombudsman

% mentioning	Total	ITOR	OTOR
Base:	224	107	57
One	28	3	58*
Two	14	3	28*
Three	5	5	9
Four	8	8	4
Five to nine	18	35	0
Ten	4	8*	0
Ten to twenty	13	22*	0
More than twenty	5	8	0
Mean	4.3	7.0*	1.6
Don't know/can't remember	4	7	2
Total	100	100	100

*Significant difference

Where there was a need for more than one contact to deal with the complaint or query, customers tended to contact the Ombudsman more often than vice versa (an average of 6.2 customer contacts to the Ombudsman versus 4.5 the other way).

C.3 Experience of OTOR Customers

As mentioned previously, although 100 respondents were classified by the Ombudsman as OTOR, only 70 of them believed that they had contacted the Ombudsman before having their complaint fully addressed by their energy supplier, i.e. before reaching 'deadlock'. These were split by true OTOR customers (57) and those who were actually ITOR but claimed to be OTOR (13 ITOR/OTOR).

C.3.1 Reasons for Contacting the Ombudsman

When asked why they contacted the Ombudsman, there was a difference between OTOR and ITOR/OTOR customers. Many more true OTOR customers just needed advice, whereas for ITOR/OTOR customers they felt the process was taking too long to resolve with their supplier.

Table 5 – Reasons for contacting the Ombudsman before complaint had been fully addressed by supplier

<i>% of respondents</i>	Total	OTOR	ITOR/OTOR
<i>Base:</i>	70	57	13
Was getting nowhere with energy supplier	39	37	46
Needed advice/help/unsure what to do	34	40	8
Had no response/communication from supplier	23	23	23
The problem was taking too long to resolve	10	7	23
Was unaware of the required 8 week/deadlock period	3	4	0
Other	21	16	46
Total	*	*	*

*Multiple response, therefore does not add to 100%

It is clear when looking at the responses that many customers are either not being made aware of the procedures to follow by their suppliers or not following them for whatever reason. Many are looking to the Ombudsman for advice early in the process, rather than waiting for their supplier to come up with a solution or refer their complaint. Frustration with the time taken to respond to issues raised and/or provide satisfactory solutions to sometimes long-standing problems galvanised the OTOR respondents into contacting the Ombudsman. It would also appear that these customers expect their issues to be taken seriously and resolved in a shorter time period (weeks rather than months) than their suppliers are providing. Comments made by these respondents included:

"I got nowhere and I wasn't familiar enough with the routine and didn't know there was another step in the way I had to travel, before I could contact the Ombudsman. I went through the first step of the complaints procedure with my energy supplier and they told me very abruptly there was nothing they could do."

(OTOR, Micro Business)

"I thought the Ombudsman would offer assistance. I was looking for help and advice."

(OTOR Domestic)

“Wasn't aware of the procedures and was blanked by the supplier. Only option I felt I had because they were not interested.”

(OTOR, Micro Business)

“I did not hear back from them for weeks. I did not see why it should matter why a number that was incorrect on my meter would affect my moving to another supplier”

(OTOR, Domestic)

C.3.2 Explanation of Next Steps

The vast majority (87%) were told by the Ombudsman of the correct procedure to follow, i.e. that they had to direct their query to their energy supplier and follow its complaints handling procedure before they could have recourse to the Ombudsman's service. However, this was 91% of OTOR and 69% of ITOR/OTOR customers.

The remaining 13% (9 respondents) claimed not to have had the procedure explained to them and, when asked what had happened to their complaint following their contact with the Ombudsman, gave the following responses:

- Dispute was still being investigated (4)
- Dispute had been resolved (3)
- It was a query rather than a complaint (1)
- They were advised to contact the Chief Executive (1)

C.3.3 Information Provided by the Ombudsman

OTOR respondents were given a list of contact information and explanation of the complaints procedure to follow (shown in the table below) and asked which the Ombudsman had provided to them. 11% (6 respondents) claimed that they were not provided with any of this information.

Almost two-thirds (62%) of ITOR/OTOR customers said that they had not been given any of this information.

Table 6 – Information provided to OTOR customers

<i>% of OTOR respondents being given</i>	
<i>Base:</i>	<i>57</i>
Information about the process of making a complaint to their energy supplier	67
Contact address for energy supplier to register complaint	35
E-mail address of energy supplier to register complaint	33
Telephone number of energy supplier to register complaint	21
Contact details of other organisations which could help	12
Energy efficient website	7
None of these	11
Total	*

**Multiple responses given, therefore responses do not sum to 100. Only responses over 5% shown*

C.3.4 Satisfaction with the Ombudsman's Handling of Their Contact and Next Steps

Levels of satisfaction with the way the Ombudsman handled their contact were high, with over three-quarters (79%) of OTOR respondents very or quite satisfied and only 11% dissatisfied. Micro Business respondents appeared to be more satisfied than domestic customers but with the low base sizes the difference cannot be considered statistically significant.

Satisfaction levels were much lower amongst ITOR/OTOR customers, with under half (46%) being satisfied.

Just over two-thirds (70%) of OTOR customers felt more knowledgeable about what to do next as a result of their contact with the Ombudsman, a quarter (26%) felt it had made no difference and only a small number (2 domestic customers) felt in a worse position i.e. less knowledgeable.

Again, the situation was much worse amongst ITOR/OTOR, where less than half (46%) felt more knowledgeable.

Just over three-quarters (77%) contacted their energy supplier following their interaction with the Ombudsman. The remainder (13 respondents) did not and the status of their complaint was as follows:

- Still waiting for information/on hold/not completed (8 respondents)
- Still in the same situation/no difference (2)
- Complaint has been resolved (1)
- Said something different (2)

C.4 Experience of ITOR Customers

As mentioned previously, although 124 respondents were classified by the Ombudsman as ITOR, 149 thought that they were at this stage. These were split by true ITOR customers (107) and those who were actually OTOR but felt they had reached deadlock with their supplier (42 OTOR/ITOR).

C.4.1 Nature of the Complaint with their Energy Supplier

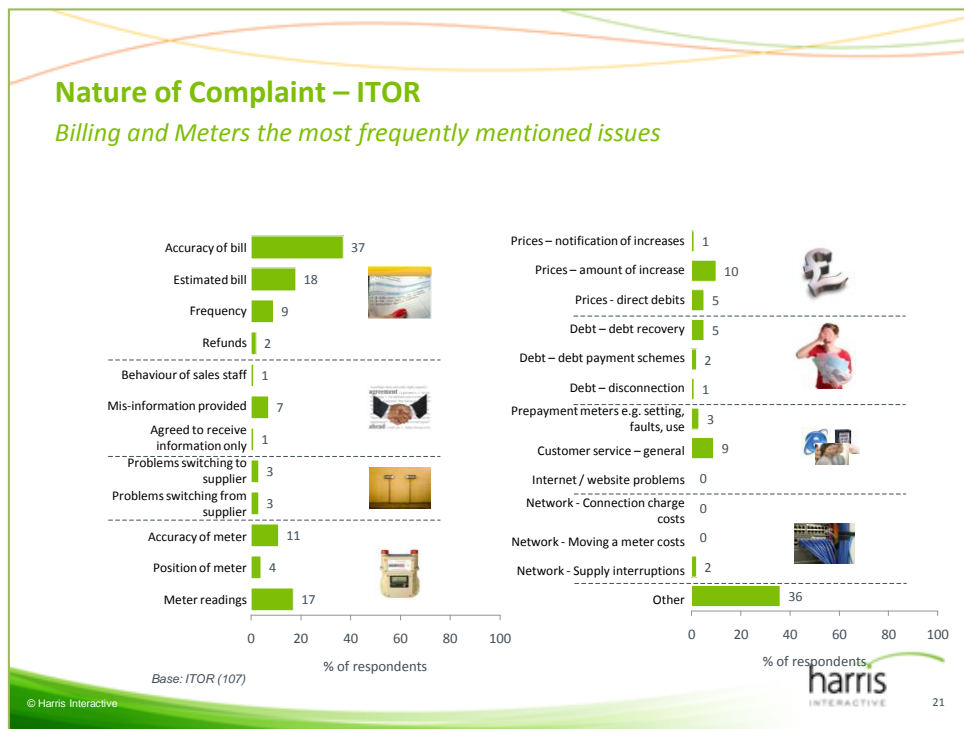
Four in ten (36%) true ITOR respondents complained about the accuracy of a bill, one in seven complained about either an estimated bill (15%), a meter reading (15%) or a price increase (14%) and one in ten complained about the accuracy of their meter. A more detailed breakdown of the nature of the complaints is shown in the chart below which just shows ITOR customers.

OTOR/ITOR customers generally had the same complaints, although OTOR/ITOR customers were significantly more likely to complain about transfer issues (17% versus 5% of ITORs) and indicatively more likely to be raising issues about prices (26% versus 14%).

Some of the other issues which do not fall neatly into any of the categories above and were mentioned by 3% or more were:

- Tariff issues, e.g. wrong tariffs being applied (5%)
- Account problems (set up, admin) (3%)
- Engineers damaged property/possessions (3%)
- Problems caused by changing address/business name (3%)

Chart 2 – Nature of complaints



Almost two-thirds (63%) of true ITOR said that their energy supplier had not explained to them why their complaint could not be resolved and was being referred to the Ombudsman.

Table 7 – energy supplier confirmation of deadlock to ITOR customers

<i>% respondents being informed</i>	Total	ITOR	OTOR/ITOR
<i>Base:</i>	149	107	42
Yes - in writing	19	21	12
Yes - over the telephone	18	16	24
Yes – by e-mail	4	3	7
Yes – by another means	2	2	0
No	64	63	67
Total	107	105	110

**Multiple responses given*

C.4.2 Registration of Complaint/Query and Explanation of Next Steps

Nearly all respondents were asked for contact details and the nature/history of their complaint. The Ombudsman was more likely to ask ITOR respondents for their **address and telephone number and the history of the complaint** than OTOR/ITOR respondents.

Table 8 – information requested and recorded from contacts

<i>% respondents being asked</i>	Total	ITOR	OTOR/ITOR
<i>Base:</i>	149	107	42
Name	96	97	93
Full address	93	97**	81
Telephone number	93	96**	83
Nature of complaint	95	95	93
History of complaint with supplier	88	93**	76
Case/reference number	1	2	0
Other	2	1	5
Total	*	*	*

**Multiple responses given, therefore responses do not sum to 100*

*** Significant difference*

All ITOR customers received confirmation that the Ombudsman could investigate the complaint. However, interestingly 62% of OTOR/ITOR also claimed to have had confirmation.

C.4.3 Satisfaction with the Ombudsman’s Initial Handling of Complaint/Query

Nine out of ten (89%) ITOR respondents confirmed that the Ombudsman had asked for their permission to contact their energy supplier in order to discuss their complaint, Almost all (96%) recalled the Ombudsman giving them an explanation of what would happen next in the handling of their issue.

The explanation they were given was deemed satisfactory by just under three-quarters (74%) of ITOR respondents who received one (compared with 89% of OTOR/ITOR). As shown in chart 3 below, complainants appreciated the clear, straightforward explanation (46%), the friendly/helpful

tone of the communication (34%) and the fact that the issue was being dealt with or resolved (29%). A flavour of the comments is shown below.

“Clear what they are going to do, clear expectations and explained their limitations.”
(ITOR, Domestic)

“The Ombudsman was very helpful and said they would help in any way to get this issue resolved.”
(ITOR, Domestic)

“Very clear at what he was doing and time scales. Always updated within time scales.”
(ITOR, Domestic)

However, there were some people who were happy with the explanation but less happy with the outcome.

“The explanation was very good, but what they did for me was very poor. The 14 point document had errors, i.e. dates, reading, missing payments. I wrote to them to complain about these errors and did not receive an acceptable reply.”
(ITOR, Domestic)

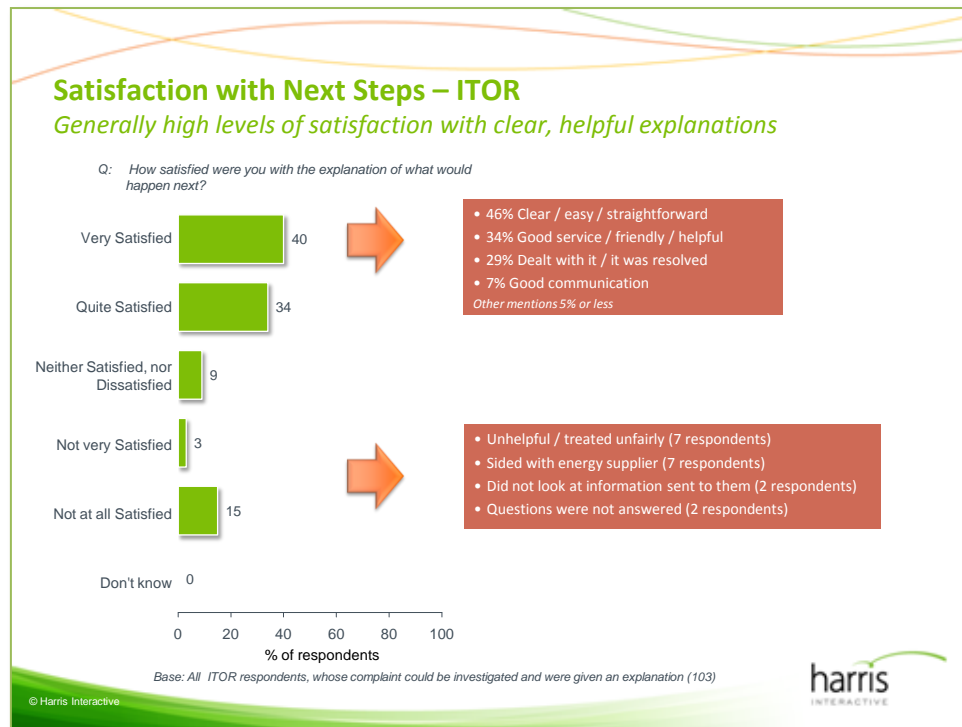
Although only 14% (18 true ITOR respondents) were dissatisfied with the handling of their initial contact with the Ombudsman, the vast majority of them were **not at all** satisfied. The main reasons they gave, and an example of the comments given, were that:

- the service was unhelpful/they were treated unfairly (7 respondents)
- the Ombudsman sided with the energy supplier (7)
- the Ombudsman did not look at the information they provided (2)
- their questions were not answered (2).

“Not impressed with the Ombudsman, or the company. They put their hands in the air and I don't feel they are on the side of the consumer.”
(ITOR, Domestic)

“The Ombudsman seemed to ignore all the information I provided and sided with the supplier.”
(ITOR, Domestic)

Chart 3 – Satisfaction with Explanation of Next Steps



C.4.4 Timeframes and Other Sources of Help/Advice

Eight out of ten (81%) ITOR customers were provided with a timeframe to which the Ombudsman would adhere. More than half (53%) were told that the process would take longer than 21 days, over a third (37%) could not remember the exact timescale and the rest were all told between 8-10 and 21 working days.

Table 9 – Timeframe provided to ITOR contacts

<i>% of ITOR customers, whose complaint could be investigated and were given a timeframe</i>	Total
Base:	87
Less than 8 working days	0
8-10 working days	1
11-14 working days	5
15-21 working days	5
Longer than 21 working days	53
Don't know/can't remember	37
Total	100

Only 8 respondents, split equally between ITOR and OTOR/ITOR, were provided with the name and contact details of any other organisations that they could speak to regarding their complaint or query. Three of these people could not remember to whom they had been referred, three mentioned their energy supplier and the only other organisations recalled were Consumer Direct (2 mentions), Consumer Focus and the Citizen’s Advice Bureau (1 mention each)

C.4.5 Anything Else the Ombudsman Could Have Done

Over a third (35%) of ITOR customers felt that the Ombudsman had, at this stage in the process, done everything they expected them to do in handling their issue. A host of other issues were mentioned and those mentioned by more than 5% are shown in the table below. The main comments centred on perceived unfairness/siding with the supplier, better communications and a quicker process.

OTOR/ITOR complainants were happier, with over half (54%) feeling that the Ombudsman had done what they could.

Table 10 – Unmet Expectations of Complaint/Query Handling

<i>% of ITORs and whose complaint could be investigated</i>	Total
<i>Base:</i>	107
To be more helpful/fairer	24
Favour the customer/be on the customers' side	18
To investigate the complaint further/have no restrictions	13
Better communications/kept up to date	7
Unhappy with the outcome/conclusion	7
Quicker resolution	6
Take more notice of information provided	6
Total	*

**Multiple responses given, therefore responses do not sum to 100. Only responses over 5% shown*

C.4.6 Experience of Customers Whose Complaints Could Not Be Investigated

The main reasons given to the 11% (16 OTOR/ITOR respondents) who were told that the Ombudsman could not investigate their complaint was that they needed to contact, or go back to, their supplier first (7 respondents) or that they had waited too long to take up the complaint (3 respondents). Just under half (7 respondents) of these contacts were provided with information about how to process a complaint with, or contact details of, their energy supplier.

The status of the complaint amongst the 16 respondents was as follows:

- Still ongoing/awaiting reply from supplier (7)
- Given up/no resolution (4)
- Resolved (2)
- Other (3)

C.5 Satisfaction with the Ombudsman’s Service

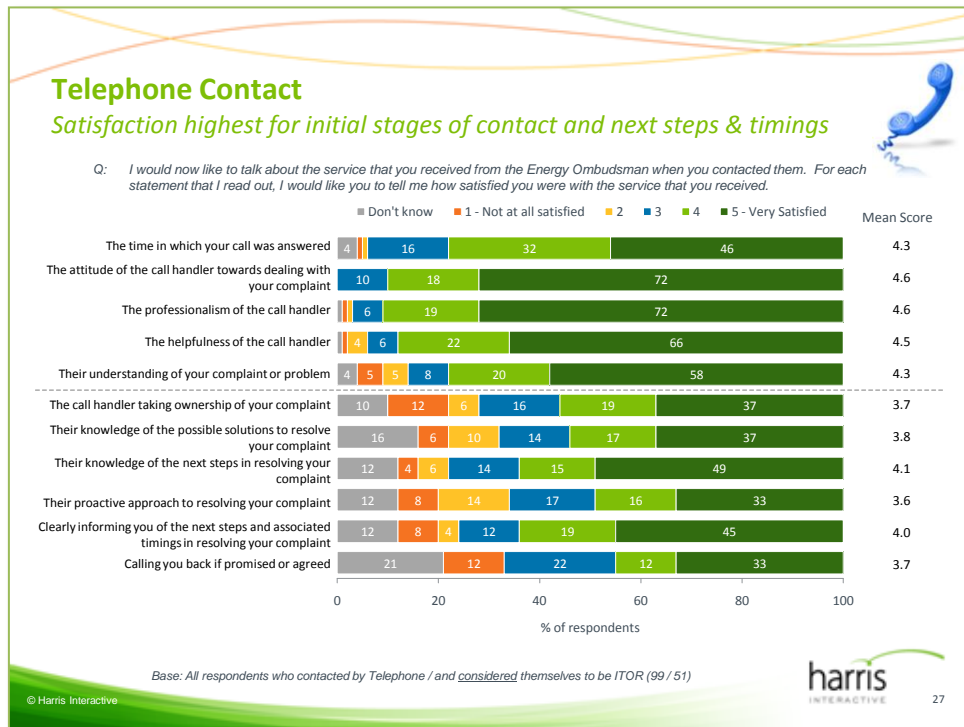
C.5.1 Satisfaction with Telephone Contact

All those whose main method of communication with the Ombudsman was by telephone (99 respondents) were asked how satisfied they were with the service received when they called. In addition, all types of ITOR respondents were asked further questions about the handling of their specific complaint or query.

Satisfaction levels were high for all the initial stages of contact, with mean scores of at least 4.3 out of 5 for the time taken to answer the call, the attitude/professionalism/helpfulness of the call handler and their understanding of the customers’ complaint or query. Nine out of ten callers were quite or very satisfied with the call handlers attitude, professionalism and helpfulness. Scores were also high for their knowledge of the next steps (4.1) and informing the caller of the next steps and the associated timeframes (4.0).

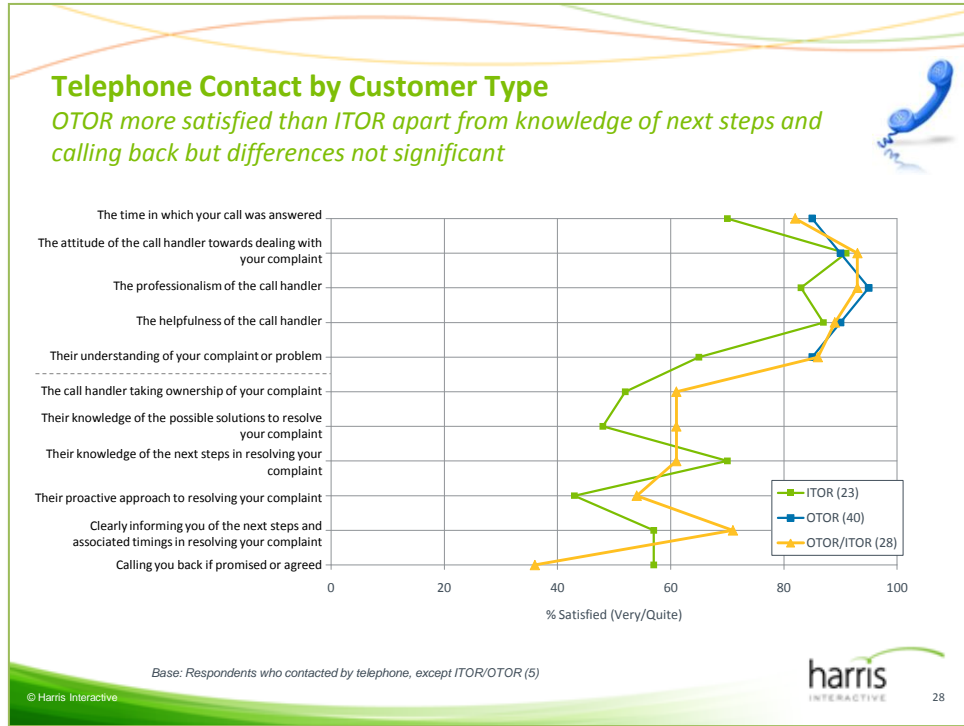
Satisfaction was lower, but still above 3.5, for two issues where it is harder for the call handler to always perform well given the huge variety of queries and complaints, namely knowledge of possible solutions to resolve their complaint (3.8) and their proactive approach to resolving the complaint (3.6). However, there were two other issues which were scored lower and which are not a question of knowledge: calling back if promised or agreed (3.7) and the call handler taking ownership of their complaint (3.7).

Chart 4 –Satisfaction with Telephone Contact



OTOR callers (both true OTOR and OTOR/ITOR) were more satisfied than ITOR callers on all but two aspects of call handling: calling back when agreed and knowledge of the next steps in the complaints process but these differences were indicative rather than significant.

Chart 5 – Satisfaction with Telephone Contact by Customer Type



C.5.2 Satisfaction with Written Contact

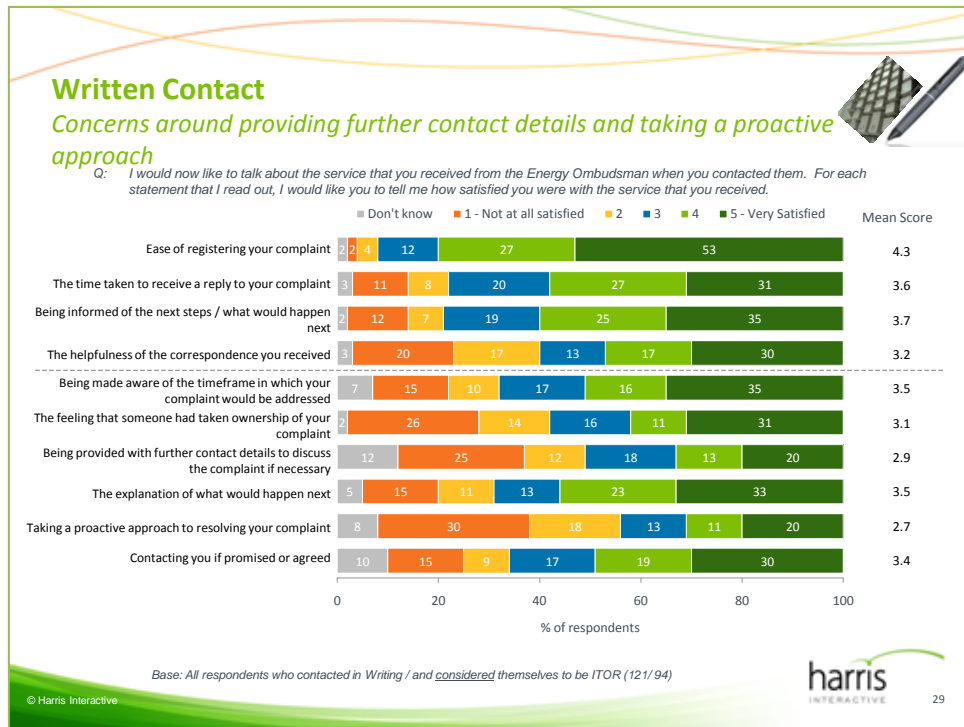
All those whose main method of communication was in writing (121 respondents) were asked how satisfied they were with the service they received when they contacted the Ombudsman. In addition, all three groups of ITOR respondents were asked further questions about the handling of their specific complaint or query.

The most important thing to note is that satisfaction levels were far lower than for those contacting the Ombudsman by telephone. **As can be seen from chart 6, around a quarter or more were dissatisfied (not at all or not very) with seven out of the ten elements of service rated.** Only one mean score was over 4, and this was for the ease of registering their complaint (4.3).

The pattern of the results was similar to those seen amongst the telephone contacts, in that respondents tended to be happier with the initial stages of the process and they were also most dissatisfied with the lack of problem ownership (3.1) and the Ombudsman taking a proactive approach to resolving their complaint (2.7). Another aspect of the service that displeased those communicating in writing was not being provided with further contact details to discuss their complaint, if this was required (2.9) and the helpfulness of the correspondence they received (3.2). Like those contacting by telephone, they were relatively happy with being informed of the

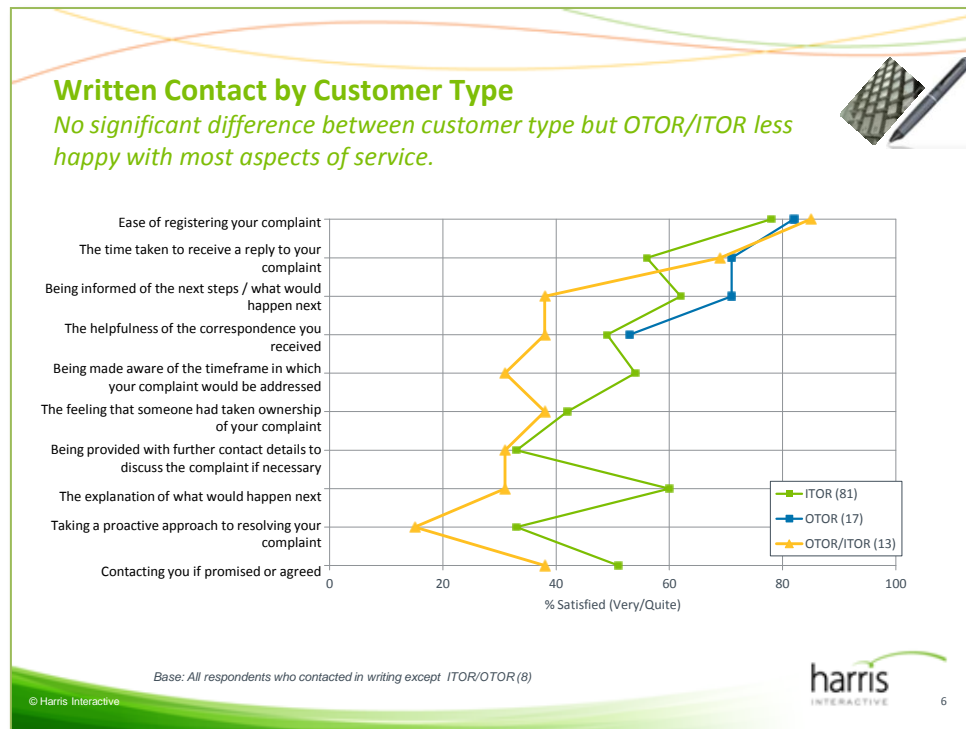
timeframe in which their issue would be addressed (3.5) and the explanation of what would happen next (3.5).

Chart 6 –Satisfaction with Written Contact



There were no significant differences in satisfaction levels by customer type. However, ITOR respondents were generally more satisfied with the service, except for the time it took for them to receive a reply to their complaint. In particular, they were more satisfied with explanations of the process (next steps and timeframe).

Chart 7 – Satisfaction with Written Contact by Customer Type



C.5.3 Overall Satisfaction with the Way Complaint Was Handled

OTOR and OTOR/ITOR respondents were significantly more satisfied with the way their complaint had been handled than were ITOR people (both groups). Whereas around two-thirds of OTOR contacts were satisfied to some degree, a quarter to a third of ITOR respondents felt this way. Over half ITOR respondents were dissatisfied (52%) compared to less than a fifth of OTORs (18%).

Table 11 – Overall satisfaction with complaint handling by customer type

% being	Total	ITOR	ITOR/ OTOR	OTOR	OTOR/ ITOR
<i>Base:</i>	224	107	13	57	42
Very satisfied	31	23*	8	51*	36
Quite satisfied	18	12*	15	19	29*
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	10	11	15	7	10
Not very satisfied	14	18	23	9	12
Not at all satisfied	24	35*	38	9*	10*
Don't know/can't remember	3	1	0	5	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Mean	3.2	2.7*	2.3	4.0*	3.7*

**Significant difference*

It has already been shown in section C.5.2 above that satisfaction with the various aspects of the complaints process was lower amongst those mainly communicated with the Ombudsman in writing than those who used the telephone. The same picture is repeated for overall satisfaction with the way their complaint was handled, with two-thirds of those communicating by telephone being

satisfied and only just over a third (35%) of those writing in to the Ombudsman expressing any degree of satisfaction.

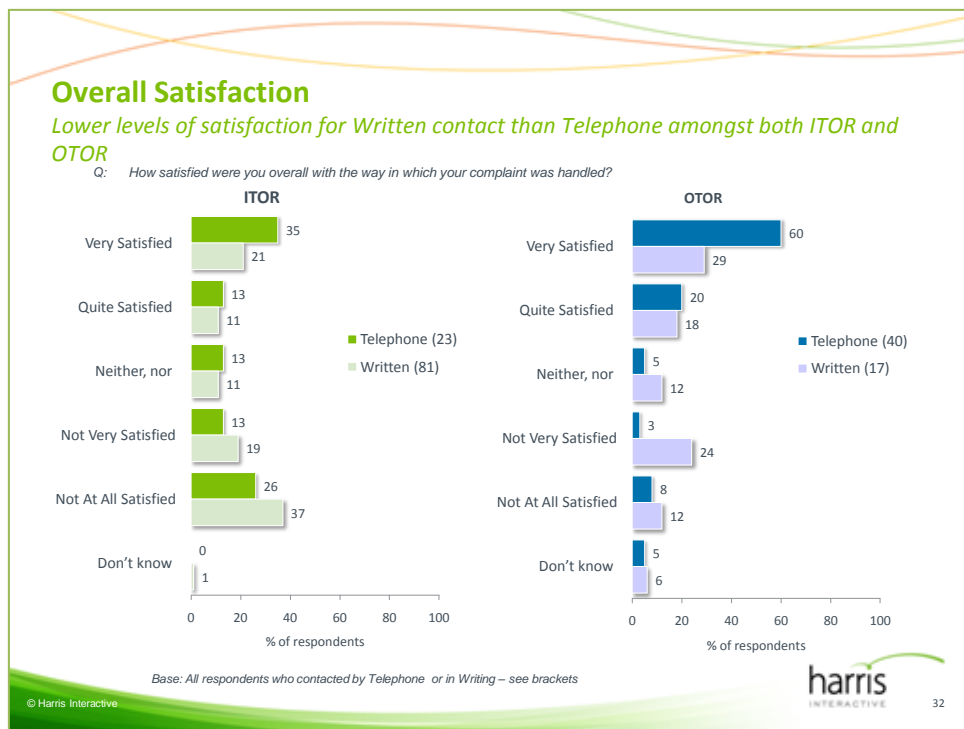
Table 12 – Overall Satisfaction with Complaint Handling by Type of Communication

% being	Total	Written	Telephone
Base:	224	121	99
Very satisfied	31	21*	44*
Quite satisfied	18	14	22
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	10	10	10
Not very satisfied	14	19*	8*
Not at all satisfied	24	34*	11*
Don't know/can't remember	3	2	4
Total	100	100	100
Mean	3.2	2.7*	3.8*

*Significant difference

Chart 8 clearly shows that written contact has a negative impact on satisfaction levels at each end of the scale, irrespective of customer type. Only ITOR and OTOR responses are shown but OTOR/ITOR were as positive as OTOR and ITOR/OTOR were the most negative group of respondents.

Chart 8 - Overall Satisfaction by Customer Type and Method of Contact



C.5.4 Drivers of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

Satisfaction

The three main factors driving satisfaction are being provided with helpful/straightforward information (54%), having their issue resolved (43%) and obtaining a quick response (16%). However, the main cause of satisfaction is different depending on customer type. For ITOR contacts, having their complaint resolved in their favour is mentioned much more frequently than anything else (68%). For OTOR contacts it was being provided with the information they needed in a helpful and clear way (79%).

Typical comments are shown below.

“Well because it was just finally resolved and sorted out, which was a great help to me as it had been a real worry to me. I thought that it was very professional and I felt like I was being listened to for the first time by them.”

(ITOR, Domestic)

“It went on for months and as soon as it was referred to the Ombudsman it was sorted out.”

(ITOR, Domestic)

“We got a judgement and the supplier paid us £125 as compensation.”

(ITOR, Micro Business)

“They gave me good advice that resolved the situation with my energy supplier.”

(OTOR, Domestic)

Table 13 – Drivers of satisfaction by customer type

<i>% being very satisfied</i>	Total	ITOR	OTOR	OTOR/ ITOR
<i>Base:</i>	70	25	29	15
Helpful/straightforward/provided required information	54	27	70	53
Efficient/resolved the complaint	43	69	27	47
Quick response	16	19	14	13
Professional/knowledgeable	4	4	5	0
Listen to the customer	4	4	5	0
Total	*	*	*	*

**Multiple responses given, therefore responses do not sum to 100*

Dissatisfaction

As with the drivers of satisfaction, what made people unhappy differed to some degree by customer type. For **OTOR** respondents, their dissatisfaction largely stemmed from the fact that their issue had not been resolved, presumably because they had been referred back to their energy supplier, which some obviously found frustrating. A third of OTOR/ITOR respondents were dissatisfied because the process was still ongoing.

However, some also complained about unhelpful service:

“I have been given no help, dissatisfied with the manner of the person who I spoke to, felt they did not have time, were dismissive of my complaint and customer service was poor.”
(OTOR, Domestic)

“Because I was referred back to the energy supplier.”
(OTOR, Domestic)

“All still going round and round, it’s confusing the layout does not make it easy, and the Ombudsman leant more in favour of the supplier.”
(OTOR, Domestic)

“They did not help me, fobbed me off back to my energy supplier. I called them as I had nothing else to do in resolving it, but they just said to go back to the supplier which resulted in me getting nowhere.”
(OTOR, Micro Business)

ITOR respondents (both ITOR and ITOR/OTOR) tended to be dissatisfied by a series of related factors: when their complaint had not been resolved, where they were unhappy with the outcome and when they felt the Ombudsman was favouring the supplier rather than themselves. One of these three issues were mentioned by nearly all (95%) ITOR respondents and all ITOR/OTORs. A fifth were dissatisfied with the length of the whole process and 16% complained that the Ombudsman did not seem to have looked at the information they provided (again hinting at siding with the supplier).

“Because they didn't do anything, all they did was shuffle papers around, never offered any help to resolve the problem, all they did was delay the problem and then filed the complaint away as if completed.”
(ITOR, Domestic)

“I felt too long a process, no consistency with a member of staff, hard to understand language.”
(ITOR, Domestic)

“The reason the Ombudsman upheld the energy supplier’s decision was flimsy. Don't feel that they understood or looked at my complaint in the right context. Statements from myself and the energy company provided were not taken into consideration before the Ombudsman made their decision.”
(ITOR, Domestic)

Table 14 – Drivers of dissatisfaction by customer type

<i>% being dissatisfied</i>	Total	ITOR	OTOR
<i>Base:</i>	85	56	10
Not helpful/didn't resolve complaint	46	41	80
Favoured/sided with the supplier	25	30	0
Unhappy with the outcome	18	23	0
Took too long to complete	18	25	10
Did not look at the info/evidence sent to them	13	16	10
Still ongoing/process not finished	6	2	10
Poor customer service	6	5	0
Not kept up to date/lack of communication	5	4	10
Not professional/not knowledgeable	5	7	0
Total	*	*	*

**Multiple responses given, therefore responses do not sum to 100. Only responses given by more than 5% are shown*

C.6 Improvements Sought

Four in ten felt that there were no improvements needed to the Ombudsman's service. This was much higher amongst OTOR and OTOR/ITOR respondents than ITOR and ITOR/OTOR (53%/62% versus 29%/23%). There was no one over-riding improvement sought by either customer type – it was more a question of improvements to a number of issues that had already been raised.

Several of the improvements desired by ITOR respondents involved communications:

- being kept up to date better (14%)
- personal contact either face-to-face or on the telephone (10%)
- having a named contact (10%).

Other improvements mentioned by 10% were quicker resolution of their complaint and that it should be investigated/acted on. OTOR respondents who were at the beginning of the process were more concerned that their complaints should be acted on (9%), that the Ombudsman should be more helpful (7%) and that there should be more personal contact (5%).

Table 15 – Ways contact with the Ombudsman could have been improved

<i>% mentioning</i>	Total	ITOR	ITOR/ OTOR	OTOR	OTOR/ ITOR
<i>Base:</i>	224	107	13	57	42
Should investigate/act on complaint	10	7	31	11	7
Better communication/being kept up to date	9	11	23	5	2
Personal response/voice or face-to-face contact	8	12	0	5	5
Quicker response/resolution	8	11	8	7	0
Named contact/one contact	5	11*	0	0**	0**
Look at evidence/info sent	4	5	0	4	2
Be more helpful	4	1	8	7	7
Provide more information	4	4	8	2	2
Do not side with the energy supplier	4	5	15	2	0
Nothing/satisfied	40	29**	23	53**	62**
Total	*	*	*	*	*

**Multiple responses given, therefore responses do not sum to 100. Only responses over 4% shown*

***Significant differences*

C.7 Expectations

Given the overall satisfaction levels reported earlier (with only half being satisfied with the way their complaint was handled) it is not surprising that respondents were almost equally divided on the question of whether their contact with the Ombudsman met their expectations. On the positive side the following comments were made (only those made by more than 2% of respondents are shown):

- 36% felt it had met expectations but gave no further details (twice as many OTOR as ITOR felt this way – 56% versus 28%)
- 9% felt it had because the help/advice was given efficiently (mentioned most by OTOR/ITOR – 17%)
- 4% had received a clear explanation as expected (all OTOR or OTOR/ITOR except one ITOR)

On the negative side, the following reasons were given:

- 17% felt their expectations had not been met but gave no further details (significantly less (7%) OTOR respondents felt this way than OTOR/ITOR (21%) and ITOR (19%))
- 11% felt they received an unhelpful/unfair/poor service (more ITOR and ITOR/OTOR 12% and 31% versus 7% of both OTOR groups)
- 7% said the complaint was not investigated sufficiently
- 7% felt that the Ombudsman favoured the supplier (all ITOR customers)
- 6% felt the process took too long
- 4% said it did not meet expectations as the complaint is still unresolved (almost all OTOR or OTOR/ITOR)
- 4% wanted better compensation (all ITOR or ITOR/OTOR)

C.8 Complaint Resolution

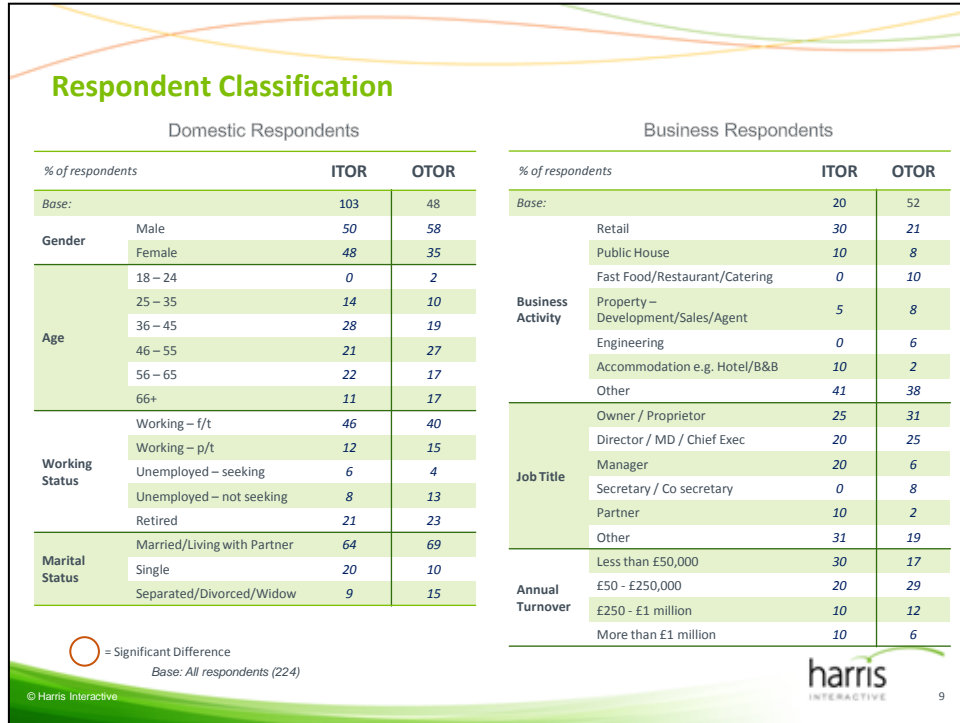
Three-fifths (60%) of those who considered their complaint to be 'In Terms of Reference' felt their complaint had been fully resolved. Not surprisingly, the figure is very different according to customer type (77% among ITOR and 17% among OTOR/ITOR customers). A small number (5%) felt that their issue was only provisionally resolved and over a third (35%) felt that it was still ongoing. However, again there was a big difference by customer type (17% among ITOR and 81% among OTOR/ITOR respondents).

Those whose complaint was fully or provisionally resolved (97 respondents) were asked when their complaint was first referred to the Ombudsman. Over half (55%) said sometime during 2009 or early 2010, a quarter (26%) said it dated back to 2008. Only a handful (6%) had complaints going back prior to 2008 and 14% were not exactly sure.

Satisfaction levels with the length of time it took to resolve their complaint were low, with more being dissatisfied (47%) than satisfied (39%). Not surprisingly, length of time since the complaint had been registered impacts satisfaction. Those who had registered their complaint with the Ombudsman in 2008 were less satisfied (57% dissatisfied with the length of time taken and 23% satisfied) than those who had registered it in 2009 (42% dissatisfied and 47% satisfied). Only 3 respondents had registered their complaint in 2010 – 1 was dissatisfied with the time taken to resolve it and 2 were satisfied.

D Appendices

D.1 Respondent Profile



D.2 Questionnaire

**Ofgem
Ombudsman Research (7766)**

Questionnaire – v3

Sample Information

- S1. Sample Source
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. In Terms of Reference (ITOR) | N = 130 |
| 2. Out of Terms of Reference (OTOR) | N = 100 |
- S2. Customer Type
1. Consumer/Domestic
 2. Micro Business
- S3. Network Business
1. Yes
 2. No
- S4. Sample Source/Customer Type
1. Consumer/Domestic ITOR
 2. Micro Business ITOR
 3. Network ITOR
 4. OTOR
- S5. Complaint Source
1. Customer
 2. Consumer Direct
 3. Consumer Focus
 4. Citizens Advice Bureau
 5. Supplier
 6. Network company
 7. Other
- S6. Complaint Status
1. Open
 2. Closed

Questionnaire - Introduction

All respondents with a named contact

Q1 Good morning/afternoon. Could I please speak to [INSERT NAME FROM SAMPLE]?

Good morning/afternoon. My name is and I am calling from Harris Interactive, a market research consultancy based in Stockport. We are currently carrying out a project on behalf of the energy regulator Ofgem into the handling of customer complaints among people who have recently contacted the Energy Ombudsman.

[IF ITOR “I believe that the Ombudsman made a decision on your complaint between November and January”, IF OTOR “I believe that you contacted the Ombudsman in February of this year”], is that correct?

- 1. Yes
 - 2. Yes – on behalf of someone else
 - 3. No
- SEEK REFERRAL & REPEAT IF NECESSARY OR THANK
& CLOSE

All respondents with no named contact

Q2 Good morning/afternoon. My name is and I am calling from Harris Interactive, a market research consultancy based in Stockport. We are currently carrying out a project on behalf of the energy regulator Ofgem into the handling of customer complaints among people who have recently contacted the Energy Ombudsman.

[IF ITOR “I believe that the Ombudsman made a decision on a complaint from [CONSUMER/DOMESTIC “your household”, IF MICRO BUSINESS “your business”] between November and January” IF OTOR “I believe that someone [IF CONSUMER/DOMESTIC “in your household”, IF MICRO BUSINESS “from your business”] contacted the Ombudsman in February of this year”], is that correct?

- 1. Yes
 - 2. No
 - 3. Not a business
- SEEK REFERRAL
THANK & CLOSE
CHECK IF DOMESTIC CUSTOMER

INTERVIEWER: IF YES (CODE 1), ASK TO SPEAK TO COMPLAINANT AND REPEAT AS IF WITH NAMED CONTACT

All respondents

Q3 Was the contact that you made with the Energy Ombudsman related to the energy supplied to your home or a business or related to a network business?
INTERVIEWER: NETWORK BUSINESSES OWN/MANAGE THE WIRES & CABLES RATHER THAN THE SUPPLY OF ENERGY

1. Home
2. Business
3. Network Business

1. Home ITOR	N = 100
2. Home OTOR	N = 100
3. Business ITOR	N = 20
4. Network ITOR	N = 10
5. Business OTOR	N = 100

GET CODE 1 IF Q3/1 AND S1/1
GET CODE 2 IF Q3/1 AND S1/2
GET CODE 3 IF Q3/2 AND S1/1
GET CODE 4 IF Q3/3 AND S1/1
GET CODE 5 IF Q3/2 AND S1/2

All respondents

Q4 Ofgem would like to understand a little about your experience of contacting the Energy Ombudsman and how satisfied you were with both the process of contacting them and the way in which your contact was handled. We would greatly appreciate your help.

Could you please spare between 10 and 15 minutes to answer some questions?

INTERVIEWER: REASSURE THE RESPONDENT THAT THE INTERVIEW IS CONFIDENTIAL AND THAT WE ARE NOT SELLING ANYTHING

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Yes | CONTINUE |
| 2. Yes – but not now | MAKE APPOINTMENT |
| 3. No – need to speak to someone else | SEEK REFERRAL |
| 4. Refusal – satisfied with complaint handling | THANK & CLOSE |
| 5. Refusal – opted out of research | |
| 6. Refusal – no reason given | |
| 7. Refusal – no time | |
| 8. Refusal – not interested | |
| 9. Refusal – other reason | |

Main Questionnaire

All respondents

Q5 Thank you, I'd like to begin by understanding how and why you first contacted the Energy Ombudsman.

Can you tell me what prompted you to contact the Ombudsman in the first place?
DO NOT READ OUT BUT CODE MOST APPROPRIATE BELOW
SINGLE CODE

1. Contacted directly before making a complaint to [IF Q3/1-2 "energy supplier", IF Q3/3 "network"] i.e. not completing suppliers complaints handling procedure
2. Contacted having made a complaint to [IF Q3/1-2 "energy supplier", IF Q3/3 "network"] but prior to [IF Q3/1-2 "energy supplier", IF Q3/3 "Network Business"] confirming complaint could not be resolved
3. **Referred by** [IF Q3/1-2 "energy supplier", IF Q3/3 "network"] having made a complaint that could not be resolved i.e. had received an 8 week letter or a Deadlock letter to say complaint could not be resolved
4. **Contacted directly** about a complaint made to [IF Q3/1-2 "energy supplier", IF Q3/3 "network"] that could not be resolved i.e. had received an 8 week letter or a Deadlock letter to say complaint could not be resolved
5. **Recommended by 3rd party organisation** having made a complaint to [IF Q3/1-2 "energy supplier", IF Q3/3 "network"] that could not be resolved i.e. had received an 8 week letter or a Deadlock letter to say complaint could not be resolved (**please specify 3rd party organisation**)
6. Other (**please specify**)

All respondents

Q6 In which of the following ways did you contact the Ombudsman?

READ OUT
RANDOMISE
MULTI CODE

1. Telephone
2. Email
3. Letter
4. Fax
5. Website
6. Face to face
7. Other (**please specify**)
8. Don't know

All respondents

Q7 In which of the following ways did the Ombudsman contact you?

READ OUT
RANDOMISE
MULTI CODE

1. Telephone
2. Email
3. Letter
4. Fax
5. Website
6. Face to face
7. Other (**please specify**)
8. Ombudsman did not contact me
9. Don't know

All respondents with multiple contact methods (Q7 multiple responses)

Q8 And which of these was your main type of contact?

DO NOT READ OUT BUT PROMPT IF NECESSARY
IF ONLY ONE RESPONSE AT Q6, FILL Q8 WITH THAT CODE
RANDOMISE
SINGLE CODE

1. Telephone
2. Email
3. Letter
4. Fax
5. Website
6. Face to face
7. Other (please specify)
8. Don't know

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman in writing (Q8/2-5)

Q9 When you contacted the Ombudsman, approximately how long did it take to receive a reply to your initial contact?

READ OUT

SINGLE CODE

1. Next day
2. 2 – 3 days
3. 4 – 5 days
4. 6 – 7 days
5. 8 – 10 days
6. 11 – 14 days
7. 15 – 21 days
8. More than 3 weeks

All respondents

Q10 How did you find the contact details that you used to contact the Ombudsman?

DO NOT READ OUT

MULTI CODE

1. Provided by [IF Q3/1-2 “energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “network”]
2. Energy supplier bill
3. [IF Q3/1-2 “Energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “Network”]complaints handling procedure
4. [IF Q3/1-2 “Energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “Network”]website
5. Ombudsman website
6. Ofgem website
7. Other website (**please specify**)
8. Word of mouth / friends or family
9. Advice agency (**please specify**)
10. Other (**please specify**)

All respondents

Q11 How easy did you find it to get hold of the correct details to contact the Ombudsman?

READ OUT

1. Not at all easy
2. Not very easy
3. Neither easy, nor difficult
4. Quite easy
5. Very easy
6. Don't know

All respondents finding it very easy or difficult (Q11 codes 1, 2 or 5)

Q12 Why do you say that?

PROBE FULLY

MANDATORY TEXT BOX – 5 LINES

All respondents

Q13 How many times have you had contact with the Ombudsman regarding your complaint?

DO NOT READ OUT

1. Once only
2. Twice
3. Three times
4. Four times
5. More than four (please specify)
6. Don't know

All respondents who had more than one contact (Q13/2-5)

Q14 And approximately how many times did the Ombudsman contact you and how many times did you contact them to resolve your complaint?

1. Ombudsman contacted ---
2. Respondent contacted ---
3. Don't know

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman before complaint reached deadlock/8 weeks (Q5 code 1-2, 6)

Q15 You say that you contacted the Ombudsman [IF Q5 CODE 1 “before making a complaint to [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network business”] “ IF Q5 CODE 2 “having made a complaint to your [IF Q3/1-2 “energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “network business”]but prior to them confirming that it could not be resolved”].

Why did you contact the Ombudsman before your complaint had been fully addressed by [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network”]?

PROBE FULLY

MANDATORY TEXT BOX – 5 LINES

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman before complaint reached deadlock/8 weeks (Q5 code 1-2, 6)

Q16 Did the Ombudsman explain to you that your query had to be directed to [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network”] and their own complaints handling procedure before being dealt with by the Ombudsman?

1. Yes
2. No

All respondents who did not have complaints procedure explained to them (Q16 code 2)

Q17 What happened to your complaint once you had contacted the Ombudsman?

PROBE FULLY

MANDATORY TEXT BOX – 5 LINES

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman before complaint reached deadlock /8 weeks (Q5 code 1-2, 6)

Q18 And how satisfied were you with the way in which it was handled?

READ OUT

1. Not at all satisfied
2. Not very satisfied
3. Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied
4. Quite satisfied
5. Very satisfied

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman before complaint reached deadlock/8 weeks (Q5 code 1-2, 6)

Q19 Were you provided with any of the following once it was explained that your complaint could not be dealt with by the Ombudsman?

READ OUT

MULTI CODE

1. Contact telephone number for [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network business”] to register complaint
2. Contact address for [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network business”] to register complaint
3. Email address of [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network business”] to register complaint
4. Contact details of other organisations who could help (**please specify other organisations**)
5. Information about the process of making a complaint to your [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network business”]
6. Other (**please specify**)

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman before complaint reached deadlock /8 weeks (Q5 code 1-2, 6)

Q20 Having contacted the Ombudsman about your complaint, did you feel more or less knowledgeable about what to do next?

1. Less knowledgeable
2. More knowledgeable
3. No difference

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman before complaint reached deadlock/8 weeks (Q5 code 1-2, 6)

Q21 And did you contact [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network”] having contacted the Ombudsman?

1. Yes
2. No

All who did not contact energy supplier (Q21 code 2)

Q22 What is happening to your complaint now?

PROBE FULLY

MANDATORY TEXT BOX – 5 LINES

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman following a complaint to their supplier (Q5 codes 3-5)

Q23 What was the nature of the complaint that could not be resolved with [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network business”] that prompted you to contact the Ombudsman?

DO NOT READ OUT BUT CODE ACCORDINGLY

MULTI CODE

1. Billing – accuracy of bill
2. Billing – estimated bill
3. Billing – frequency
4. Billing – refunds
5. Sales – behaviour of sales staff
6. Sales – mis-information provided
7. Sales – agreed to receive information only
8. Transfer – problems switching to supplier
9. Transfer – problems switching from supplier
10. Meters – accuracy of meter
11. Meters – position of meter
12. Meters – meter readings
13. Prices – notification of increases
14. Prices – amount of increase
15. Prices - direct debits
16. Debt – debt recovery
17. Debt – debt payment schemes
18. Debt – disconnection
19. Prepayment meters e.g. setting, faults, use
20. Customer service – general
21. Internet / website problems
22. Network - Connection charge costs
23. Network - Moving a meter costs
24. Network - Supply interruptions
25. Other (**please specify**)
26. Don't know / can't remember

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman following a complaint to their supplier (Q5 codes 3-5)

Q24 Had [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network”] explained to you, either by telephone, in writing, by email or some other means, why your complaint could not be resolved and was being referred to the Ombudsman?

MULTI CODE

1. Yes – over the telephone
2. Yes – in writing
3. Yes – by email
4. Yes – another means
5. No

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman following a complaint to their supplier (Q5 codes 3-5)

Q25 When you contacted the Ombudsman did they ask for and record any of the following pieces of information?

READ OUT

MULTI CODE

1. Your name
2. Your telephone number
3. Your full address
4. Nature of your complaint
5. History of complaint made with supplier
6. Other (**please specify**)

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman following a complaint to their supplier (Q5 codes 3-5)

Q26 Did the Ombudsman confirm to you that they could investigate your complaint?

1. Yes
2. No

All whose complaint could not be investigated (Q26 code 2)

Q27 Why could your complaint not be investigated?

PROBE FULLY

MANDATORY TEXT BOX – 5 LINES

All whose complaint could not be investigated (Q26 code 2)

Q28 Were you provided with any of the following once it was explained that your complaint could not be dealt with by the Ombudsman?

READ OUT

MULTI CODE

1. Contact telephone number for [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network business”] to register complaint
2. Contact address for [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network business”] to register complaint
3. Email address of [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network business”] to register complaint
4. Contact details of other organisations who could help (**please specify other organisations**)
5. Information about the process of making a complaint to your [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network business”]
6. Other (**please specify**)

All whose complaint could not be investigated (Q26 code 2)

Q29 What is happening to your complaint now?

PROBE FULLY

MANDATORY TEXT BOX – 5 LINES

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman following a complaint to their supplier and where complaint could be investigated (Q5 codes 3-5 and Q26 code 1)

Q30 And did they ask for your permission to contact [IF Q3/1-2 “your energy supplier”, IF Q3/3 “the network business”] to discuss the complaint?

1. Yes
2. No

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman following a complaint to their supplier and where complaint could be investigated (Q5 codes 3-5 and Q26 code 1)

Q31 Did the Ombudsman give you an explanation of what would happen next in the handling of your complaint or query?

1. Yes
2. No

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman following a complaint to their supplier and where complaint could be investigated (Q5 codes 3-5 and Q26 code 1)

Q32 And how satisfied were you with the explanation of what would happen next?

READ OUT

1. Not at all satisfied
2. Not very satisfied
3. Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied
4. Quite satisfied
5. Very satisfied

All respondents very satisfied or dissatisfied (Q32 codes 1, 2 or 5)

Q33 Why do you say that?

PROBE FULLY

MANDATORY TEXT BOX – 5 LINES

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman following a complaint to their supplier and where complaint could be investigated (Q5 codes 3-5 and Q26 code 1)

Q34 Did the Ombudsman provide you with a timeframe that they would work to?

1. Yes
2. No

All respondents given a timeframe (Q34 code 1)

Q35 What timeframe were you given?

DO NOT READ OUT BUT PROMPT IF NECESSARY

SINGLE CODE

1. Within 3 working days
2. 4 – 5 working days
3. 5 – 7 working days
4. 8 – 10 working days
5. 11 – 14 working days
6. 15 – 21 working days
7. Longer than this

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman following a complaint to their supplier and where complaint could be investigated (Q5 codes 3-5 and Q26 code 1)

Q36 Did the Ombudsman provide you with the names and contact details of any other organisations to speak to about your complaint or query?

1. Yes
2. No

All respondents provided with details of other organisations (Q36 code 1)

Q37 Which organisations were these?

1. Consumer Direct
2. Consumer Focus
3. Citizens Advice Bureau
4. Age Concern
5. Other (**please specify**)

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman following a complaint to their supplier and where complaint could be investigated (Q5 codes 3-5 and Q26 code 1)

Q38 Was there anything else that you expected the Ombudsman to do in handling your complaint or query?

PROBE FULLY

MANDATORY TEXT BOX – 5 LINES

All respondents

Q39 I would now like to talk about the service that you received from the Energy Ombudsman when you contacted them.

For each statement that I read out, I would like you to tell me how satisfied you were with the service that you received using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means that you were not at all satisfied and 5 means you were very satisfied.

1. Not at all satisfied
2. Not very satisfied
3. Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied
4. Quite satisfied
5. Very satisfied

All who contacted by telephone (Q8 code 1)

1. The time in which your call was answered
2. The attitude of the call handler towards dealing with your complaint
3. The professionalism of the call handler
4. The helpfulness of the call handler
5. Their understanding of your complaint or problem

ONLY IF Q5 CODES 3-5

6. The call handler taking ownership of your complaint
7. Their knowledge of the possible solutions to resolve your complaint
8. Their knowledge of the next steps in resolving your complaint
9. Their proactive approach to resolving your complaint
10. Clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings in resolving your complaint
11. Calling you back if promised or agreed

All who contacted in writing (Q8 codes 2-5)

1. Ease of registering your complaint
2. The time taken to receive a reply to your complaint
3. Being informed of the next steps / what would happen next
4. The helpfulness of the correspondence you received

ONLY IF Q5 CODES 3-5

5. Being made aware of the timeframe in which your complaint would be addressed
6. The feeling that someone had taken ownership of your complaint
7. Being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint if necessary
8. The explanation of what would happen next
9. Taking a proactive approach to resolving your complaint
10. Contacting you if promised or agreed

All who contacted Face to Face (Q8 code 6)

1. The attitude of the representative towards dealing with your complaint
2. The professionalism of the representative
3. The helpfulness of the representative
4. Their understanding of your complaint or problem

ONLY IF Q5 CODES 3-5

5. The representative taking ownership of your complaint
6. Their knowledge of the possible solutions to resolve your complaint
7. Their knowledge of the next steps in resolving your complaint
8. Their proactive approach to resolving your complaint
9. Clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings in resolving your complaint
10. Contacting you back if promised or agreed

All respondents

Q40 Taking into account everything that we have talked about so far regarding your contact with the Ombudsman, how satisfied were you overall with the way in which your complaint was handled?

READ OUT

1. Not at all satisfied
2. Not very satisfied
3. Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied
4. Quite satisfied
5. Very satisfied

All respondents who are very satisfied or dissatisfied (Q40 code 1, 2 or 5)

Q41 Why do you say that?

PROBE FULLY

MANDATORY TEXT BOX – 5 LINES

All respondents

Q42 Are there any ways in which you feel that your contact with the Ombudsman could have been improved?

PROBE FULLY

MANDATORY TEXT BOX – 5 LINES

All respondents

Q43 Did your contact with the Ombudsman meet your expectations?

PROBE FULLY FOR EXPECTATIONS AND THOSE MET/NOT MET

MANDATORY TEXT BOX – 5 LINES

All respondents who contacted Ombudsman following a complaint to their supplier (Q5 codes 3-5)

Q44 Has your complaint been resolved or provisionally resolved by the Ombudsman or is it still ongoing?

1. Fully resolved
2. Provisionally resolved
3. Still ongoing

All respondents whose complaint is resolved (Q43 codes 1-2)

Q45 And when was your complaint first referred to the Ombudsman?

MANDATORY TEXT BOX – 3 LINES

All respondents whose complaint is resolved (Q44 codes 1-2)

Q46 How satisfied are you with the length of time taken to resolve your complaint?

1. Not at all satisfied
2. Not very satisfied
3. Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied
4. Quite satisfied
5. Very satisfied

Classification

All Consumer/Domestic respondents (S2 code 1)

Q47 Gender

INTERVIEWER RECORD – DO NOT READ OUT

1. Male
2. Female

All Consumer/Domestic respondents (S2 code 1)

Q48 And finally for classification purposes only, could you tell me which of the following age bands you fall into?

READ OUT

1. 18 - 24
2. 25 - 35
3. 36 - 45
4. 46 - 55
5. 56 - 65
6. 66+
7. Decline to answer

All Consumer/Domestic respondents (S2 code 1)

Q49 Which of the following best describes your current working status?

READ OUT

1. Working - full time (30+hrs)
2. Working - part time (8 - 29hrs)
3. Unemployed seeking work
4. Unemployed not seeking work
5. Retired
6. Decline to answer

All Consumer/Domestic respondents (S2 code 1)

Q50 And finally, what is your marital status?
READ OUT

1. Married/living with partner
2. Single
3. Separated/divorced/ Widowed
4. Decline to answer

All Micro Business respondents (S2 code 2)

Q51 And finally, for classification purposes and so that we can analyse our results by different type of business, could you please tell me your primary business activity?

MANDATORY TEXT BOX – 3 LINES

All Micro Business respondents (S2 code 2)

Q52 And your job title within the business?

MANDATORY TEXT BOX – 3 LINES

All Micro Business respondents (S2 code 2)

Q53 What is your companies' approximate annual turnover?

1. Less than £25,000
2. £25,000 to £50,000
3. £50,001 to £250,000
4. £250,001 to £500,000
5. £500,001 to £1 million
6. £1 million to £2 million
7. More than £2 million
8. Decline to answer

All Micro Business respondents (S2 code 2)

Q54 And how many full time employees do you have?

1. Number of employees ---
2. Don't know

Thank you for your help. Can I just remind you that this interview is part of a market research survey being carried out by Harris Interactive. If you want to verify that we are a bona fide agency, I can give you the Freephone number of the Market Research Society to ring.

GIVE NUMBER IF REQUIRED (0500 396 999)