

## South Seeds response to Ofgem's 22-23 Forward Work Programme

Many thanks for recently circulating [Ofgem's 22-23 draft forward work programme](#) and inviting comments. South Seeds is a community-led charity based on the heart of Glasgow's southside. As part of our aim to support residents to live a more sustainable life, our energy officers meet face to face with residents, to help them save energy at home. South Seeds' energy work is funded by the Energy Redress scheme and we are able to employ two part time energy officers. Our response to your forward work programme is therefore based on the real experience of working with residents here who have issues with energy. We are committed through our Energy Redress project to continue to work with residents on energy issues for another two years, so we are particularly keen to see the energy market effectively regulated going forwards.

We welcome Ofgem's concern with the future of retail and the customer experience. At South Seeds we are concerned that currently many consumers have a poor experience of service from their energy provider. Most of our clients we work with have issues with their energy provider. We make on average 20 calls to energy companies every weekday and have been doing for the last 10 years. In the last year, we have found that calls to energy companies are much less satisfactory. The two most common issues are not being able to get through to an energy provider and not getting accurate information from their provider. We would like to know more about how you can enable energy companies give their customers a better service.

While customers are paying so much for their energy, it is essential that customer service improves rather than deteriorates. We can give you plenty of examples where energy companies have failed consumers from web chat functions not being available to erroneous billing which has been in place for years. We welcome you exerting your power as a regulator and we feel that the market should improve if you kept a closer eye on the real customer experience.

The outcome we all want is for energy companies to be in full compliance of the regulations and if this was the case, fines would not be issued. In this event, the Warm Home Discount would be the main method for supporting the most vulnerable consumers. It is therefore vital that any change to the Warm Home Discount is a positive change for customers. We are surprised that companies like Utilita are still able to open their Warm Home Discount scheme for only a week or so in August. As you will know the Warm Home Discount is a barrier for low income consumers to switch. We are aware that social tariffs are an alternative used by some European countries and we would like to know why they are not an option in the UK.

Lucy Gillie

South Seeds

2 February 2022

For further information contact [Lucy@southseeds.org](mailto:Lucy@southseeds.org)

