



Making a positive difference
for energy consumers

Supplier CEOs and Directors of Regulation

Email: Neil.Lawrence@ofgem.gov.uk

Date: 3 February 2023

Dear colleagues,

Treatment of non-domestic customers by suppliers during debt management and disconnection

We wrote to you on 20 December 2022¹ to set out our expectations for how you should engage with your customers along debt and disconnection pathways. This included how we would expect you to work with business customers in payment difficulty, conducting site visits where appropriate, the application of reasonable charges through the disconnection process, expectations of compensation where disconnections have occurred in error, and how you or your agents act in circumstances where there is shared occupancy of non-domestic premises with domestic customers. For the avoidance of doubt, this extends to agents acting on your behalf.

We are extremely concerned by the findings presented by *The Times* in the article 'British Gas breaking into homes of the vulnerable', published on 1 February 2023². *The Times* investigation contains extremely serious allegations about how a domestic energy supplier and their third-party enforcement agent were treating some of their most vulnerable customers, including forcing customers onto pre-payment meters. Given the seriousness of

¹[Open letter: Good practice expectations for non-domestic suppliers on issues surrounding debt management and disconnection of customers | Ofgem](#)

²[Exposed: How British Gas debt agents break into homes of vulnerable | News | The Times](#)

the allegations, whilst the article focuses on one agent and one supplier, we are keen to ensure that similar practices are not being carried out on behalf of other suppliers.

We recognise that the non-domestic market is complex and varied, and expectations and obligations differ to the domestic market. Nevertheless, this highlights the importance of the issues we wrote to you about in December.

I am writing to you again to remind you we expect all suppliers to meet our expectations to treat their customers fairly, including supporting those customers who are particularly vulnerable. This is especially relevant where there might be domestic end users at the end of a non-domestic contract, or microbusiness customers – as per your licence conditions.

Further to our outstanding request for information, due 14 February, we would **additionally like your board to review your policies and procedures against the expectations set out in the Annex to our December letter, and set out if and how you meet them.** If your review identifies shortcomings against what we set out in our letter, please set out the steps you will take, by when, to increase customer standards. We would like this response to be sent alongside your response to our request for information, also by email to: NonDomesticRetailPolicy@ofgem.gov.uk.

We will consider your responses to this as part of our analysis into the non-domestic market more broadly, as we consider whether and where non-domestic customers are not being adequately protected through the market and what interventions may be needed.

In order to support business consumers during this time of high energy prices and the difficult macro-economic issues, we expect suppliers to do their utmost to support their customers. We will take further action, including swift enforcement action, if we see suppliers falling short of their obligations.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Lawrence
Director of Retail