

014 Wales and west utilities

I am responding on behalf of Wales & West Utilities, a registered gas Transporter. As such, not all the questions are directly relevant to us but we do have similar obligations to identify and provide services to priority customers, and work with partners who report frustrations when dealing with the customers energy suppliers. We are therefore answering questions in that context.

Questions relating to our approach to addressing priority customer service issues –

Chapter 3

- 1.1. Question 1: Do you agree with our assessment on what good looks like for the issues consumers are facing relating to the priority issues of contact ease and identification and support/advice for consumers struggling with their bills. Are there any issues missing?

The call centre at Wales & West Utilities regularly takes calls from energy supplier customers. Customers have either become frustrated at not being able to get through to their supplier so come to us asking for advice and help. We also get regular cases where the supplier has referred the customer to us for issues that are not ours (amending billing addresses, changes to meters).

Suppliers need to not only ensure phone lines are well resourced but also ensure that full training / tools are provided to staff to answer a wide range of queries.

- 1.2. Question 2: Do you have any views on potential options to address priority issues and do you agree with the extra requirements we are proposing?

We support the introduction of a freephone line for all customers. Our experience publishing a specific number for priority customers is that other customers will use it if they are frustrated due to long delays in answering other phone lines. With up to 40% of customers being eligible for the PSR use a freephone number for all customers and ensure resources and skills are right to deal with all customers.

- 1.3. Question 3: Do you have any evidence that suggests that we should be considering additional and/or different rules beyond what we have proposed?

No other comments

- 1.3. Question 4: Do you agree with our proposed approach of introducing reputational incentives in our priority areas? Questions relating to Assessment and Monitoring of Options –

The GDNs have all obtained either the British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision (BS18477) or the new ISO22458 standard and Kitemark. This provides external audit and assessment of the companies identification and services for priority customers and should be a requirement in the suppliers licence

Chapter 4

- 1.5. Question 5: Do you agree with what we have set out in the assessment chapter? Please provide supporting evidence with your views. For evidence regarding additional costs, please provide quantitative data.

- 1.6. Question 6: Using the list of prospective data items we present in the monitoring chapter as a guide, what other additional data items could we aim to collect and from what data sources? Do you consider there are any challenges you may face when collecting/providing these? If so, please provide any supporting evidence you have. Consumers Standards Framework –

The GDNs have both Customer satisfaction incentives (reward and penalty) and a Complaints metric (penalty only). The complaints metric measures:

Complaints outstanding after one working day

Complaints outstanding after 31 working days

% repeat complaints

% complaints ruled against the company by the Ombudsman.

This metric has transformed our approach to complaints with around 80% now resolved in one working day and 96% in 31 working days.

Chapter 5

1.7. Question 7: Do you have any comments on the factors that should be considered in determining whether to use principle-based or rule-based approach to setting standards?

No further comments

1.8. Question 8: Do you agree with our early view of reputational based incentive options for winter 2023 and the potential incentive options for development over the longer-term? Please provide explanations to support your responses

No comments