

Jemma Baker
Future Retail Markets
10 South Colonnade
Canary Wharf
London
E14 4PU
By email to RetailStakeholderTeam@ofgem.gov.uk

23 August 2023

Dear Jemma,

SSEN Distribution response: Consumer standards statutory consultation

SSEN Distribution welcomes the opportunity to respond to Ofgem's statutory consultation on the framework for consumer standards to address priority customer service issues in the retail market. SSEN Distribution is the trading name of Scottish Hydro Electrical Power Distribution plc (SHEPD) and Southern Electric Power Distribution plc (SEPD). This response is being submitted on behalf of those licensees.

With a network reach to over 3.8 million households and businesses in the North of Scotland and Central Southern England, working alongside Ofgem and other stakeholders is a priority that remains unwavering. We welcome initiatives that seek to improve the general levels of service and the standards that customers receive.

As noted in our response to Ofgem's opening consultation from May 2023, we are broadly supportive of the amendments that Ofgem is proposing as part of this consultation regarding the requirement for suppliers to increase their standards of customer service, including relevant provisions for customers in vulnerable situations. We are particularly supportive of the proposed requirements for suppliers in relation to 24/7 contact provision for customers experiencing an interruption to their power due to a supplier related issue. We agree that it is proportionate for the relevant party who is responsible for the equipment, and therefore able to resolve the problem, to be available for the customer in the same way that DNOs are available for customers experiencing network issues.¹ It is important that this provision from suppliers is with staff who are appropriately trained to deal with customer meter- related issues over the phone. We also agree that your proposals will deliver benefits to customers and make it easier for them, in particular customers in vulnerable situations, to contact their supplier.

The communication of this provision by suppliers to customers will be key to effectivity of delivery and positive outcomes for customers. This means unambiguous sign posting from suppliers to customers about what types of emergencies are applicable for suppliers to resolve, as well as quick resolution and communication from suppliers for customers.

¹ A DNO is responsible for its Distribution Network and an Electricity Supplier is responsible for the meter, as per Schedule 7, part 1 and Schedule 7 part 10, Electricity Act 1989.

As we noted in our previous response to Ofgem, we welcome the direction of this consultation and that it is crucial that this service also includes a requirement for suppliers to have appropriately trained meter operatives available to resolve meter issues out of hours that are preventing customers being able to use electricity at their property. The current Retail Energy Code (REC) RFI to support the progression of R0053 – 24/7 Emergency Metering Service, a Change Proposal that is currently being progressed, emphasises the same problems.² We agree with the comments that Ofgem has made in support of this progress, and are working to continue to progress this in order to align both workstreams to a comprehensive resolution for customers.

We are grateful for the openness that Ofgem has undertaken during this wider consultation process and have found the workshops particularly helpful. We support Ofgem's proposals within this statutory consultation, and will continue to work with Ofgem in its wider support of customers.

If you have any questions in relation our response, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Rose Tresidder
Regulation Manager – SSEN Distribution

² [R0053 Request For Information - REC Portal](#) - 24/7 Emergency Metering Service, originally raised in June 2022. It proposes that Energy Suppliers should provide a 24 hour, 7 days a week (24/7), metering service to consumers to ensure that, where the fault is related to metering, it can be addressed in a timely manner.