

Minutes of Customer Journey Workshop Group held at BERR on 17 June 2008

Overview

As part of the transition process from energywatch to the new NCC and Consumer Direct, Ofgem and BERR jointly chair fortnightly workshops that bring together representatives from the new NCC, energywatch, other consumer groups, Consumer Direct, the energy retailers and network companies and agencies. The workshops are designed to facilitate a greater dialogue and allow input from all stakeholders on key issues.

1. Present

Age Concern	Gretel Jones
BERR	Paul Bland
Bizzenenergy	Alison Hughes
British Gas	Angela Mancini
Consumer Direct	Peter Hives
Consumer Direct	Tom Ballard
E4B	Robert Eynan
E.ON	Tina Pearce
EDF Energy	Ann Neate
Energy Ombudsman	Sue Jackson
energywatch	Audrey Gallacher
energywatch / new NCC	Neil Avery
Energy Retail Association	Frances Williamson
npower	Siobhan O'Loughlin
npower	Chris Johns
Ofgem	Maxine Frerk
Ofgem	Marcus Clements
Ofgem	Lisa Taylor
Scottish and Southern Energy	Gareth Shields
Scottish Power	Grant Tierney

2. Apologies

Citizens Advice Bureau	Tony Herbert
Cornwell Energy Association	Ed Reed
Ecotricity	Trevor Saunders
Energy Retail Association	Duncan Sedgewick
Energy Retail Association	Russell Hamblin-Boone
National Grid	Chris Shanley
npower	Liz Gibson
Scottish and Southern Energy	Frances Muller
Scottish and Southern Energy	Tony Keeling
Scottish and Southern Energy	Jacqui Maxwell

3. Minutes from last meeting

3.1. Draft minutes were circulated before the meeting and accepted.

4. Agenda Item 1: Definition of a micro business customer

4.1. Main comments on Paul Bland's paper were on: awareness of the statutory redress scheme amongst micro business customers, determination of kilowatt usage number and when the scheme should come into force.

4.2. It is up to each supplier to raise awareness of the scheme, though information on the complaint handling procedure has to be on each supplier's website (which will include a definition of what a micro business is). This will also be on the Ombudsman and BERR's websites. It was not clear what role Consumer Direct would play in relation to business contacts and it therefore did not seem appropriate to require their details to appear on the back of bills.

4.3. BERR and Ofgem are in discussions on what kilowatt usage number will determine whether a customer is a micro business or not.

4.4. Ofgem has concerns about complaints raised prior to the redress scheme coming into force on 1 October. Suggestion is to have a voluntary agreement to start before 1 October.

Action	Person – By
Place complaint handling sign posting (with definition of micro business) on Ofgem website once definition agreed.	Marcus Clements
Maxine Frerk asked Consumer Direct to write a note on what they can do for micro businesses, what their (legal and regulatory) constraints are and circulate it to the group.	Peter Hives – 3 July
Kilowatt figure: BERR and Ofgem to let the group know what figure has been agreed.	Paul Bland – 3 July
Ombudsman to let the group know if they can take on micro business redress cases before the 1 October, and whether suppliers who have both domestic and business customers need to have two scheme memberships.	Sue Jackson – 3 July
BERR to take legal advice on the implementation of the scheme before 1 October and circulate final paper on micro business definition.	Paul Bland – 3 July

5. Agenda Item 2: Update from Consumer Direct

5.1. A contractual agreement between Consumer Direct and Dataforce was agreed on 6 June. Consumer Direct are now looking at an implementation plan and are confident they can provide the service from 1 October.

5.2. Consumer Direct, new NCC, Ofgem and energywatch met last week as part of the Codes sub group. The codes cover two aspects; the actions that Consumer Direct take (e.g. advice/referral) and the issue the consumer calls about. Consumer Direct have taken energywatch's original codes with input from others.

5.3. New NCC hoped that it would be able to get information from suppliers, on direct complaints, on a basis that could be aligned with Consumer Direct codes. Suppliers flagged issues such as complaints being given more than one code in their system. It was agreed this was not an issue for 1 October and new NCC will not expect suppliers to change their systems.

5.4. There will be a six month review of the codes to see if they are 'fit for purpose'. Suppliers will be invited to the six month review. In order for them to comment at the meeting new NCC will need to provide the information to suppliers monthly during this period.

Action	Person - By
Add to agenda for next meeting: discussion on agreed set of codes for information gathering for new NCC.	Lisa Taylor
Look at legality if new NCC can share information gathered with suppliers (given Consumer Direct will have passed it to them under Enterprise Act).	Paul Bland - 3 July
Suppliers want to know what information they can get, from whom and how often.	Paul Bland - 3 July

6. Agenda Item 3: future working arrangements paper

6.1. The group was split into three groups and looked at three sections of the tasks list: vulnerable customer journey, Consumer Direct journey and information.

6.2. The groups were asked to clarify what the tasks meant, put in deadlines, risks and see if anything was missing. Paul Bland will consolidate the comments from the groups.

Action	Person - By
Updated paper to be circulated amongst the group.	Paul Bland - 3 July
Compile list of contact information/operating hours for the six main suppliers, new NCC, Consumer Direct and the Ombudsman. Circulate amongst group for comment.	Frances Williamson - 3 July
Write note on referral arrangements for advice agencies to escalated teams within suppliers for case resolution and registration for priority series.	Frances Williamson - 3 July
Energywatch to provide list of advice agencies.	Audrey Gallacher - 3 July

7. Agenda Item 4: new NCC information requirements from suppliers

7.1. Neil Avery spoke about his paper 'Draft new NCC's proposals for the publication of energy complaints performance data'. This paper will be going to the new NCC's board meeting on 3 July, so comments welcome before then.

7.2. Neil noted that the paper was intended to give an indication of the sort of information new NCC would want to enable suppliers to develop their systems. There would be further consultation on the specific measures to be published by new NCC. Neil agreed to make this clear in the paper.

Action	Person - By
Comments on potential pitfalls and how they can be addressed to Neil Avery.	Suppliers - 24 June

8. A.O.B

8.1. ERA and their members met with Age Concern and Citizens Advice and agreed that the big six suppliers will provide these two advice agencies with dedicated help lines. This number will be given to key advisors only within the agencies. New NCC welcomed this work and looked forward to it being rolled out to other agencies. **To be discussed further at the wider stakeholder meeting with advice agencies and CJWG (Lisa Taylor to organise).**

8.2. ERA and Age Concern asked that data protection matters be progressed with the Information Commissioner as a matter of urgency. **Lisa Taylor to talk to Jude Cummins (Ofgem) about this.**

8.3. Suggested agenda items for future meetings were discussed. Actions from this include:

Sue Jackson to confirm if the Energy Ombudsman can attend the meeting on the 29 July to give an update on their readiness for 1 October.

Lisa Taylor to add 'reviewing the tasks log' to each meeting agenda and ensure log has date on it to allow issue control.

Maxine Frerk to decide on the timing and format of a wider stakeholder meeting.

8.4. Ofgem are due to publish the final complaint handling standard shortly and expected all suppliers to start to prepare. Ofgem noted that they would not be producing detailed guidance. However **Frances Williamson** will, with suppliers, compile a note on best practice with regards to Complaint handling and share with the group.

8.5. **Tom Ballard** will give the group Karen Chilvers details, suppliers to contact Karen to find out what information Consumer Direct wish to have shown on the back of energy bills.

9. Date of next meeting – Thursday 3 July at BERR