

Electricity Distribution: Consumer Issues Working Group for DPCR5

Background

Ofgem and the DNOs agreed to set up a Working Group to assist Ofgem in the development of its broader measures and telephony for the fifth electricity distribution price control (DPCR5)

Purpose

The purpose of this working group is to assist Ofgem in the development of proposed customer satisfaction measures for DPCR5, including the refinement of the existing telephony scheme and a new broad measure. Input on refining the Customer Service Reward Scheme and any relevant Guaranteed Standards of Performance issues, not currently dealt with by the QOS working group or other working groups¹, will also be required. Ofgem will provide a forum where industry representatives can constructively discuss ideas in an open environment and develop and carry out joint work on customer satisfaction issues relating to Ofgem's DPCR5 options and proposals. There will be opportunities for Ofgem and industry representatives to give presentations on options and proposals and contribute work on relevant issues.

The group does not have to reach consensus views and will not have decision making power. The group's discussions will not preclude a full and open consultation on relevant issues in due course. The group's areas of work are restricted to the following:

Broader Measure

- Detailed development of the proposed broader measure of customer satisfaction, including the merits and practicalities of surveying a variety of customer interfaces and survey attributes.
- Sharing the experience of individual DNO approaches to surveying customer satisfaction
- Reviewing the format/design of a new incentive and how DNOs should be rewarded or penalised
- Considering which party should conduct the survey and how it could be funded
- Trialling different survey approaches and feeding back the pros and cons to the group
- Input on any other ad-hoc Ofgem consumer research projects
- Reviewing how much revenue should be exposed to the scheme and how it should be split between the various areas
- Development of Regulatory Instructions and Guidance ("RIGs") definitions for the broader measure

Telephony

- Explore the practicalities of the proposed telephony refinements:

¹ The current unlimited liability under GS2 in respect of a large event for which DNOs do not have an exclusion is being dealt with by the Quality of Service group. Guaranteed standards in respect of connections will be reviewed by the Electricity Connections Steering Group ("ECSG") sub-groups.
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- Streamlining the survey attributes from 5 to 3 and running in parallel with the broader measure for the early part of DPCR5
- Including messaged calls in the survey
- Determining weighting and definitions of unsuccessful calls
- Exploring the proposed single tender contract on telephony
- Reviewing the current Regulatory Instructions and Guidance (“RIGs”) definitions for telephony

Membership

The group will be chaired by an Ofgem representative. The membership of this group will be fixed, but individual members may be allowed to send substitutes, provided the Chair is notified in advance.

Membership of this group will comprise distribution network operators (DNOs) and consumer representatives.

Organisation

Ofgem expects that the group will meet normally on one to two monthly basis (subject to diary constraints and/or as required). However, Ofgem may need to call meetings more frequently if the natures of the matters arising require it to. Dates and locations for each meeting will be set in advance by agreement between group members. Ofgem will not meet the expenses of any individuals invited to participate on the working groups and no funds are available for the commissioning of studies etc.

Ofgem will perform a secretariat role for the working group and will produce a detailed minute of the meetings which will be circulated to members to ensure views have been accurately reflected. Where possible, the minute will be circulated one week after each meeting. Ofgem will update the QOS Working Group on this working group’s progress/findings.

Where possible, agendas and any materials for discussion will be circulated to group members one week prior to each meeting.

Members are not under any confidentiality requirement and will be free to report back to other parties on the issues that have been discussed.

Deliverables

Ofgem intends to publish its DPCR5 Initial Proposal’s document in mid-July 2009 and its Final Proposals document at the beginning of November/December 2009 with a potential interim deliverable of an update paper in mid September. The working group must complete its brief one month prior to each milestone. To ensure that these deadlines are met, we will agree a schedule of meeting dates with the group during its first meeting.