

May 2009
Ref: J7334

Customer Complaints Handling Research

Prepared For:



Table of Contents

A. Introduction	1
A1. Background & the Need for Research	1
A2. Research Objectives.....	2
A3. Methodology	2
B. Executive Summary.....	4
C. Main Report.....	8
C1. Respondent Profile	8
C.1.1 Domestic Customer Profile	8
C.1.2 Micro Business Customer Profile.....	10
C.1.3 Complaints History & Confidence.....	11
C.1.4 Complaint Topic	11
C.1.5 Seriousness of complaint.....	12
C2. Contact with Suppliers	13
C.2.1 Frequency of Contact.....	13
C.2.2 Main Method of Contact	14
C3. Complaints Resolution	15
C.3.1 Resolution	15
C.3.2 Resolution by Complaint Topic	16
C.3.3 Satisfaction with the Need for Additional Contact.....	17
C.3.4 Additional Contact – Information Provided.....	17
C.3.5 Additional Contact – Resolution	19
C.3.6 Additional Contact – Referral to a Manager.....	20
C.3.7 Referral of complaints to Energy Ombudsman/Unresolved by Supplier	22
C4. Complaints Handling Process.....	25
C.4.1 Complaints Handling Process – General Themes	25
C.4.2 Telephone Complaints – Domestic customers	26
C.4.3 Telephone Complaints – Domestic Customer Case Studies	29
C.4.4 Telephone Complaints – Micro Business customers	31
C.4.5 Written Complaints – Domestic customers.....	33
C.4.6 Written Complaints – Micro Business customers.....	36
C.4.7 Case Study Interviews – Verbatim Comments.....	38
C.4.8 Face to Face Complaints	41
C5. Overall Satisfaction with Complaints Handling Process	42
C6. Resolution	47
D. Appendix	50
D1. Quantitative Questionnaire.....	50
D2. Qualitative Discussion Guide.....	82

A. Introduction

A1. Background & the Need for Research

Ofgem, as the regulator of Britain's gas and electricity markets, has the principal objective to protect the interests of consumers, wherever appropriate by promoting effective competition. Ofgem also has a statutory duty to have regard to the interests of customers who are disabled, chronically sick, of pensionable age, on low incomes or living in rural areas.

The nature of consumer representation in the energy sector changed in October 2008 to introduce a three tier system comprising;

- Consumer Direct providing a single point of contact for consumers covering all markets for information and advice;
- the extension of redress schemes (Energy Ombudsman), approved by the Authority (Ofgem), to cover all energy complaints; and
- a new consumer advocacy body (the new National Consumer Council, known as Consumer Focus) dealing with individual complaints relating to disconnection or involving a vulnerable customer.

In these new arrangements there is a greater emphasis on consumers being able to resolve their complaints at the first port of call with their gas or electricity company. The success of the arrangements depends largely on how successful energy companies are at handling complaints.

To support this change in emphasis, Ofgem was required to make regulations prescribing standards for the handling, by its regulated companies, of consumer complaints made to them. The Complaints Handling Standards Regulations were published on 1st July and came into force on 1st October 2008. They apply to complaints from domestic consumers and micro businesses to gas and electricity supply companies and also to network companies (gas transporters and electricity distributors).

The standards are designed to provide effective protection for customers and comprise a number of key requirements to which suppliers and network companies must adhere when a customer makes a complaint. If suppliers are found to be in breach of these obligations, Ofgem has the power to impose a financial penalty of up to 10 per cent of the company's turnover.

The Consumers, Estate Agents and Redress Act 2007 (CEAR) requires Ofgem to collect information with respect to the levels of compliance with the standards. Consumer Focus is required, under CEAR, to publish statistical information relating to the level of compliance with the standards.

A2. Research Objectives

The overall objective that the research aimed to address was:

‘To assess energy suppliers adherence to Ofgem’s complaints handling standards by measuring customers recollections of the process and satisfaction with the handling of their complaint’

Within this overall objective there were a number of overarching aims that the research sought to achieve:

- To gauge customers satisfaction with the six main energy suppliers complaints handling process;
- To identify whether the experiences of customers indicate that gas and electricity suppliers are dealing with their complaints in accordance with the complaints handling standards set out by Ofgem in October 2008;
- To identify areas of good practice in the application of the complaints handling standards;
- And identify areas of weakness in supplier’s complaints handling processes in order to identify areas where improvements need to be made.

A3. Methodology

A total of 3,016 telephone interviews were conducted with customers who made a complaint to their energy supplier during December 2008. The research focused on customers of the six main suppliers in the GB energy market as follows:

- Centrica (British Gas)
- EDF Energy
- E.on UK
- RWE npower
- Scottish & Southern Electric (SSE)
- Scottish Power

Across these six suppliers, two core groups were identified to participate in the research:

- Domestic customers
- Micro businesses, defined as:
 - Having fewer than 10 employees and an annual turnover and annual account balance sheet total not exceeding 2 million Euros.
 - An annual consumption of electricity of not more than 55,000kWh or an annual consumption of gas of not more than 200,000kWh.

In all cases, the interview was conducted with the person who made the complaint, either personally or on behalf of someone else to focus on their first hand, personal experience of the complaints handling process. As such, the nature and status of all complaints referred to in this report relates to

the customers' own definition and recollection of their complaint and not the suppliers definition. Where customer and supplier definitions differ, they are clearly highlighted.

Customers who could not recall making the complaint, or who were unfamiliar with the details of the complaint and/or the process were excluded from the research.

Interviews lasted for approximately 15 minutes and were conducted by experienced Consumer and Business to Business interviewers from Harris Interactive using CAPI technology (Computer Aided Personal Interviewing) and used a questionnaire designed by Harris Interactive in full consultation with Ofgem. All interviews took place between 2nd March and 21st March, 2009.

Throughout the interview customers referred to their energy supplier by name. However, for analysis purposes, all results are presented at a combined, parent-company, level. For example, SSE includes customers of Scottish & Southern Electric, Southern Electric, Scottish Hydro, Atlantic and Swalec.

Customer sample was provided to Harris Interactive independently by each of the six energy suppliers and equal numbers of interviews were completed for each supplier.

Weighting

Domestic customer data was weighted, based on market share figures for the GB domestic energy market, to ensure the results of the study were reflective of the market as a whole. Micro Business data has not been weighted but is presented at the overall level, i.e. based on all completed Micro Business interviews – Micro Businesses make up only a small proportion of the UK energy market.

Significant differences between customer groups (Domestic and Micro Business) and between suppliers have been tested at the 95% confidence level and are highlighted where appropriate.

Qualitative follow up interviews

Further to the initial interviews, 36 respondents were followed up with a more in-depth, case study interview aimed at examining in detail some of the key elements of their complaint handling experiences. These interviews focused on both positive and negative experiences and were spread across a mix of Domestic and Micro Business customers across all six suppliers.

Where relevant, extracts from these case study interviews are included within this report to illustrate and support the findings. These extracts have been recorded as either Domestic or Micro Business but have not been attributed to individual suppliers.

Questionnaires

Copies of the Quantitative questionnaire and the Qualitative follow up interview Discussion Guide are appended to this report for reference.

B. Executive Summary

Methodology

3,016, fifteen minute telephone interviews were conducted with customers who had made a complaint to one of the six main energy suppliers in GB during December 2008. All customers were classified as either Domestic or Micro Business and contact details were provided independently by each of the six energy suppliers.

Domestic customer data was weighted, based on market share figures, to represent the GB domestic energy market.

36 respondents were followed up with a more in-depth, case study interview to further explore the key elements of their complaint handling experience.

Complaints Handling Process

Across the GB energy market as a whole there were low levels of satisfaction among Domestic and Micro Business customers with the process of handling customer complaints. These were consistent for complaints registered/handled by telephone and also those which were in written form - letter, email or fax.

Across all complaints, satisfaction was higher for the initial stages of the complaints handling process (receiving and initially handling the complaint) and lower for the latter stages (taking action, informing customers of next steps and calling back as/when promised). Suppliers' performance was highest in terms of the professionalism and attitude of their staff as well as the ease of registering the complaint with much lower satisfaction with their ability to take ownership of a complaint and, often proactively, find a resolution.

Among all suppliers, SSE performed the strongest for both Telephone and Written complaints whilst E.on and Scottish Power had some, relative, strengths for telephone complaints. npower and EDF performed poorly for both telephone and written complaints as a whole.

Although the most common complaint topics among Domestic and Micro Business customers were Billing and Price related, no significant differences in satisfaction existed by topic. No single type of complaint elicited significantly higher or lower levels of satisfaction than others.

Overall satisfaction with the complaints handling process was relatively low amongst all customers who complained by telephone. At no point in the process did more than one in five customers claim to be 'very' satisfied with the service that they received and the highest average score for any single attribute, as perceived by all Domestic customers, was only 3.0 out of 5.0

Although almost half of customers who registered their complaint in writing (letter, email, fax or website) were satisfied with the initial stage of registering their complaint, the levels of satisfaction

with all other elements of the process were relatively low. As with telephone complaints, levels of satisfaction declined throughout the latter stages of the complaints handling process.

Of all Domestic customers surveyed, only 13 registered their complaint face to face, representing less than half a percent of all Domestic complaints. However, customers who made a complaint face to face typically rated all aspects of the process more positively than telephone and written complainants.

Across the research as a whole, Micro Business customers tended to rate the process as less satisfactory than Domestic, whether their complaint was made by telephone or in writing. Micro Business customers also tended to consider their complaints to be more serious (significantly more so 'very' serious) than Domestic and were more likely to pursue a resolution to their complaint. This took the form of contacting the supplier directly but also taking action with other organisations such as the Ombudsman.

Whilst it is important that energy suppliers offer a complaints handling process that is customer friendly i.e. it is prompt, professional, offers understanding and keeps customers informed at all stages, it is also fundamental that a resolution is found that is satisfactory to each customer. Those customers who considered that their complaint had been resolved by their supplier were significantly more likely to view the process in a favourable light than customers who considered that their complaint remained unresolved.

Overall Satisfaction

The majority of customers were dissatisfied with their overall experience of the complaints handling process. Almost half of Domestic customers and over half of Micro Businesses were 'very' dissatisfied. Levels of overall satisfaction were similar regardless of whether the complaint was made by telephone or in writing.

By supplier, satisfaction was highest among E.on, SSE and Scottish Power customers, however, still less than a third were satisfied.

Among Domestic and Micro Business customers, the key drivers of satisfaction were the assistance/helpful attitude of staff, the complaint being dealt with or resolved promptly and having the problem resolved at all.

Conversely, the drivers of dissatisfaction were not having the complaint dealt with or resolved, the process taking too long, unhelpful staff and a lack of, or poor, communication.

Although satisfaction with the different elements of the process and the process overall was low, customers were more positive about the resolution that they had received with slightly over half of Domestic and almost three-fifths of Micro Business customers whose complaint had been resolved claiming to be satisfied.

npower customers were the least satisfied (almost half 'very/quite' satisfied) and SSE and Scottish Power customers the most satisfied – almost three-fifths of customers for each supplier were 'quite/very' satisfied.

Contact with suppliers

Across all complaints, only a quarter of Domestic customers had contact with their supplier on a single occasion and only one in ten Micro Business customers had a single contact with their supplier. Among both customer types, customers on average contacted their supplier four times more often than their supplier contacted them.

Telephone was by far and away the most widely used method of making a complaint and was used in over three-quarters of cases. Written complaints such as letter or email accounted for a relatively small proportion of all complaints to GB energy suppliers. Face to face contact accounted for an insignificant number of complaints – the channel being used in less than 1% of cases. The only significant difference by supplier saw E.on and Scottish Power being more likely than others to receive email complaints.

Where additional contact was required to resolve a complaint, npower were more likely than other suppliers to offer a copy of their complaints handling procedure, provide information for subsequent contact and promise a timeframe in which the complaint would be resolved. However, npower were the least likely of all suppliers to keep to the promised timescales.

The energy suppliers were not felt by their customers to be taking action to deal with unresolved complaints or offer further steps to seek a resolution – it may well be the case that this is due to the discrepancy between supplier and customer definition of a resolved complaint. However, in cases where a customer complaint was not deemed by the customer to be resolved by the supplier, only one in ten suppliers were felt to have taken any further action to aid the customer in finding a resolution.

Complaints Resolution

There was a significant discrepancy between the proportion of complaints that each of the suppliers considered to be resolved and the proportion considered to be resolved in the eyes of the customer. Approximately two-fifths of all complaints made that were considered by the suppliers to be resolved, were not resolved in the eyes of the customer. This figure was consistent between Domestic and Micro Business customers and also between the different suppliers within the Domestic market.

The proportion of complaints made to GB energy suppliers that remained unresolved in the eyes of the customer, around two-fifths, was consistent between suppliers and between Domestic and Micro Business customers.

Within the Domestic market, the proportion of resolved complaints was relatively similar by supplier. However, Centrica and E.on were significantly more likely to resolve the complaint on the first contact whilst other suppliers were more likely to resolve on subsequent contact.

Exploring the resolution further, little more than one in ten Domestic customer complaints (14%) were considered by the customer to have been resolved on the first and only contact and only one in twenty Micro Business complaints (6%).

For both customer groups requiring more than one contact with their supplier, slightly over half were 'very' dissatisfied with the fact that they required additional contact.

With regards to re-contacting the supplier, two-fifths of Domestic customers, and a third of Micro Business, were provided with no information with which to re-contact their supplier.

Two-fifths of Domestic customers stated that they had to refer their complaint to a manager or senior member of staff whilst seeking a resolution. This was a significantly lower proportion than amongst Micro Business customers where almost three-fifths referred their complaint to a senior member of staff.

C. Main Report

C1. Respondent Profile

In total, the six main energy suppliers in GB provided contacts for all customers who had made a complaint to their gas or electricity supplier in December 2008.

From these records, a total of 3,016 interviews were completed, comprising 2,708 interviews with Domestic customers and 308 interviews with Micro Business customers. By supplier, these interviews were divided as follows:

Table 1 – Proportion of interviews by customer type and supplier

	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.on UK	RWE nPower	SSE	Scottish Power	Total
Domestic	433	471	430	444	492	438	2,708
Micro Business	68	29	69	72	8	62	308
Total	501	500	499	516	500	500	3,016

C.1.1 Domestic Customer Profile

Slightly under half (47%) of all Domestic customers were male and slightly over half (53%) were female with the most common age bands being ages 36 – 46 (23% of Domestic customers) and 46 – 55 (22% of Domestic customers). Only 1 in 20 complainants were aged between 18 and 34 (4%) with the remaining complainants being split evenly between the 25 – 35, 56 – 65 and 66+ age groups.

This picture was broadly similar across all suppliers, however, E.on and npower complainants were more likely to be male than other suppliers (54% and 51% respectively). npower customers who registered a complaint were also more likely than others to be aged 25 – 35 (22% compared to 17% overall) and E.on and SSE complainants were more likely than others to be aged 66 or over (21% and 20% respectively compared to an overall figure among all domestic customers of 16%).

The profile of all Domestic customers is shown in the table below:

Table 2 – Domestic Customers by gender, age, working status & marital status

<i>% of Domestic Customers</i>	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.on UK	RWE nPower	SSE	Scottish Power	Total
<i>Base:</i>	433	471	430	444	492	438	2,708
Gender							
Male	42	44	54*	51*	47	46	47
Female	58	56	46	49	53	54	53
Age							
18 – 24	4	4	2	6	3	2	4
25 – 35	16	20	14	22*	14	16	17
36 – 45	24	26	20	26	22	21	23
46 – 55	25	20	21	18	20	21	22
56 – 65	14	15	21*	17	18	21*	17
66+	15	13	21*	8	20*	17	16
Working Status							
Working – full time	41	45	40	50*	34	42	42
Working – part time	15	16	15	15	17	16	16
Unemployed – seeking work	4	6	3	6	5	4	4
Unemployed – not seeking	15*	13	10	10	11	7	12
Retired	22	20	29*	18	30*	28*	24
Marital Status							
Married/Living with Partner	59	59	70*	67*	60	70*	63
Single	19	22	13	18	20	13	18
Separated / Divorced / Widowed	19	16	14	12	18	15	16

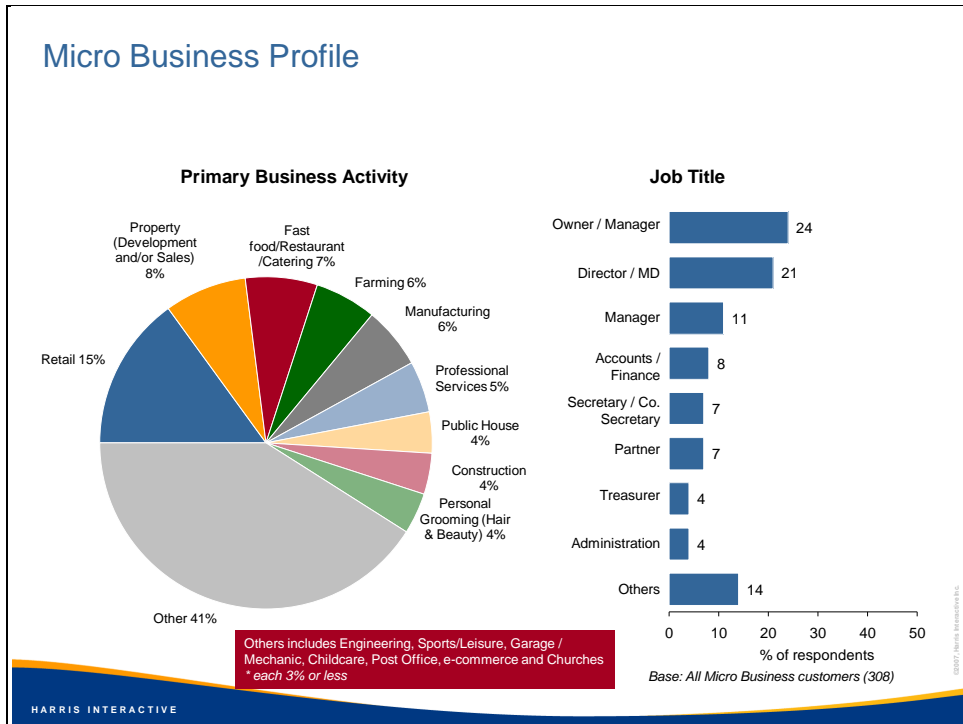
** Significant difference*

C.1.2 Micro Business Customer Profile

Within the Micro Business interviews a range of business types were surveyed. The most common business type was Retail, accounting for 15% of all Micro Business interviews, followed by Property (8%) and Fast Food/Catering/Restaurants (7%). As highlighted on the chart below, two-fifths (41%) of Micro Business customers were classified as 'Other'. This category contains business types which individually accounted for 3% or less of the total and includes such areas as Sports/Leisure facilities, Mechanics/Garages, Engineering firms, Childcare and Churches/Religious organisations.

Micro Business customers who made a complaint, as a result of having 10 or less employees, were typically senior individuals within each organisation. The most common job title, accounting for a quarter (24%) of customers, was Owner/Manager, followed by Director/Managing Director which accounted for a further fifth of complainants (21%).

Chart 1 – Micro Business Customer Profile



C.1.3 Complaints History & Confidence

Customers were classified by whether or not they had made a complaint to an organisation other than the energy supplier to whom their existing complaint related in the last 12 months, and by their degree of confidence in making such complaints. Micro Business customers were significantly more likely than Domestic to have made another complaint in the last 12 months – 41% claimed to have done so compared to 33% of Domestic customers. However, Domestic customers appeared to be more confident in making complaints with three-fifths (62%) claiming to be confident when making complaints, significantly more than the half (54%) of Micro Business customers who were confident.

Among the different suppliers, E.on Domestic customers were the most confident (67% stated they were confident compared to an average of 62%) and Centrica customers the least confident (30% not confident vs. an average of 27%).

C.1.4 Complaint Topic

The nature of each complaint was established with each individual customer and then classified into one of seven pre-determined categories – Billing, Sales, Transfers, Meters, Prices, Debt and Other.

Among all Domestic customers surveyed the most common topics of complaint were Billing and Prices – each mentioned by a third of customers (31%). Billing complaints were predominantly focused on accuracy (23% of all complaints related to the accuracy of the bill) with only a minority complaining about other aspects of billing – Estimates (5%), Frequency (4%), and Refunds (4%). Within Prices, a fifth of customers (21%) complained about the amount of increase, one in eight (13%) about Direct Debits and one in twenty (4%) about the notification of increases that had been received.

One in five Domestic customers complaint related to their Meter – relatively equally split between Meter Readings (11%) and Meter Accuracy (9%). One in ten customers' complaint related to Transfers to/from a supplier and Sales respectively and one in twenty to Debt. A third (36%) of Domestic customers complained about something else.

Among the six energy suppliers, the proportion of complaints related to Billing was relatively consistent, although npower had a significantly higher proportion than the others (40%). E.on and Scottish Power had significantly more Price related complaints than others (50% and 45% respectively). E.on subsequently had significantly less complaints relating to Meters, Sales or Transfers than other suppliers.

Table 3 details the topic of complaint by supplier among Domestic customers.

Table 3 – Domestic Customer topic of complaint

<i>% of Domestic Customers</i>	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.on UK	RWE nPower	SSE	Scottish Power	Total
Base:	433	471	430	444	492	438	2,708
Billing	32	30	28	40*	31	24	31
Prices	26	20	50*	24	27	45*	31
Meters	20	22	13	19	18	13	18
Sales	5	17	4	11	12	9	9
Transfer	9	12	4	14	11	9	9
Debt	4	3	3	4	4	3	4
Other	42	40	26	37	35	31	36

* Significant difference

The rank order of topic of complaint between Domestic and Micro Business customers was consistent, as was the detail within each overall category. However, Micro Business customers were significantly more likely than Domestic to have made a complaint about Billing – two-fifths of complaints (40%) related to Billing. They were also more likely to register complaints related to Transfer (14%) and to Other issues (51%). Within the ‘Other’ category complaints related to a range of topics including General Customer Service, Meter Faults/Settings and Disconnection/Loss of service.

C.1.5 Seriousness of complaint

In referring to their complaint, almost half of Domestic customers (48%) considered their complaint to have been ‘very’ serious and a further quarter (23%) considered it to have been ‘quite’ serious. Only one in ten customers felt that their complaint was not serious (3% ‘not very’ and 7% ‘not that’ serious).

By supplier, npower and EDF customers’ complaints were felt to be the most serious – 55% and 51% respectively stating that their complaint was ‘very’ serious. E.on customers were the least likely to consider their complaints to be ‘very’ serious – only two-fifths (42%) rated their complaint in this way.

When compared to Domestic customers, Micro Business complainants were significantly more likely to consider their complaint to have been ‘very’ serious – three-fifths (62%) stated that it was ‘very’ serious and a fifth (20%) felt that it was ‘quite’ serious. Less than one in ten Micro Business customers felt that their complaint was not serious (2% ‘not very’ and 5% ‘not that’ serious).

C2. Contact with Suppliers

C.2.1 Frequency of Contact

Across all complaints made to their energy supplier in December 2008, only a quarter (24%) of Domestic customers had contact with their supplier about their complaint on a single occasion. The remaining three-quarters required further contact.

Of those customers who had contact with their supplier more than once, almost half (45%) had contact between two and five times and one in ten (11%) had contact six to ten times and 11 to 20 times respectively.

Among the suppliers, customers of npower and Centrica were significantly more likely to have had contact with their supplier on more than one occasion. One in three (35%) E.on customers had contact only once, followed by SSE customers (29%) and EDF (27%).

Among Micro Business customers, only one in ten (9%) had a single contact with their supplier regarding their complaint, the remaining 91% required contact on more than one occasion. A third (36%) of Micro Business customers had contact between two and five times and a quarter (25%) had contact between six and ten times.

Within both Domestic and Micro Business, customers on average contacted their supplier four times more often than their supplier contacted them.

The average number of times that a customer had contact with their supplier was as follows:

Table 4 – Amount of contact with supplier

All Domestic Customers	4.0
<i>British Gas</i>	<i>4.4*</i>
<i>EDF Energy</i>	<i>3.9</i>
<i>E.on UK</i>	<i>3.0</i>
<i>RWE npower</i>	<i>5.5*</i>
<i>Scottish & Southern Electric</i>	<i>3.6</i>
<i>Scottish Power</i>	<i>3.7</i>
Micro Business Customers	5.8*

** Significant difference*

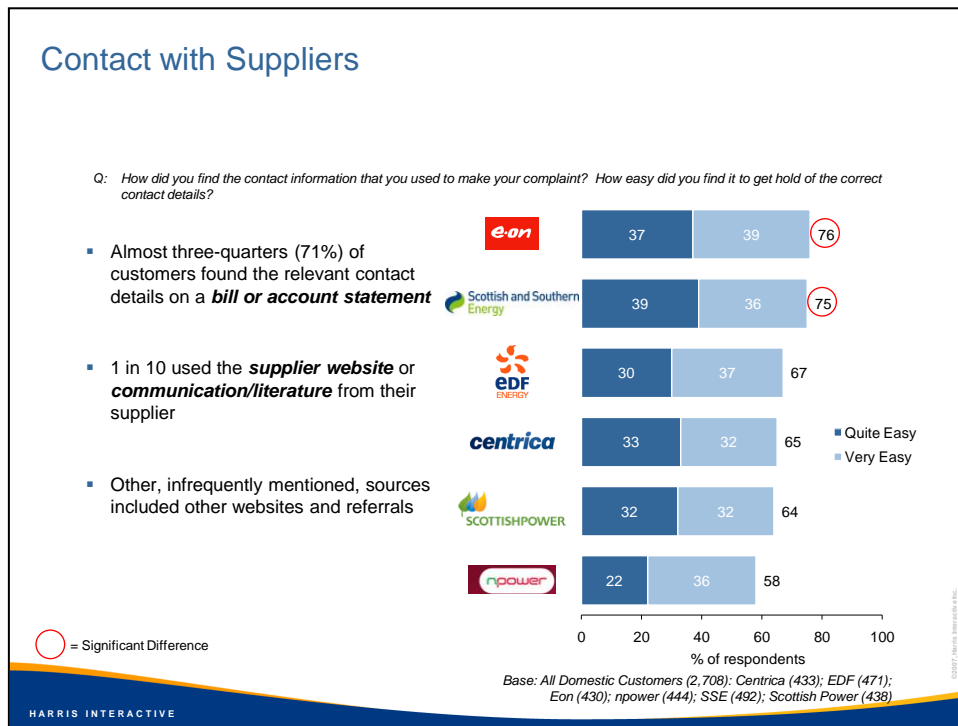
C.2.2 Main Method of Contact

For both Domestic and Micro Business customers, the main method of contacting their supplier was by far and away telephone (86% for Domestic and 77% for Micro Business customers). Around one in ten Micro Business customers used a Letter or Email as their main contact (10% and 9% respectively) compared to one in twenty Domestic customers (4% and 6% respectively).

Equal proportions of Domestic customers of all suppliers used telephone as their main contact method with the only notable differences being that E.on and Scottish Power customers were significantly more likely than others to contact their supplier via Email (7% and 12% respectively).

The main source of contact information when registering a complaint was a Bill or Account Statement, used by almost three-quarters (71%) of customers. E.on and SSE customers found locating contact information the easiest, three-quarters claiming to have found it very/quite easy to find. Around one in three customers of Centrica (65%), EDF (67%) and Scottish Power (64%) found it very/quite easy – a notably lower proportion of npower customers found it easy (58%). This is shown in the chart below.

Chart 2 – Contact with Suppliers – Sources & Ease of Finding Contact Information



C3. Complaints Resolution

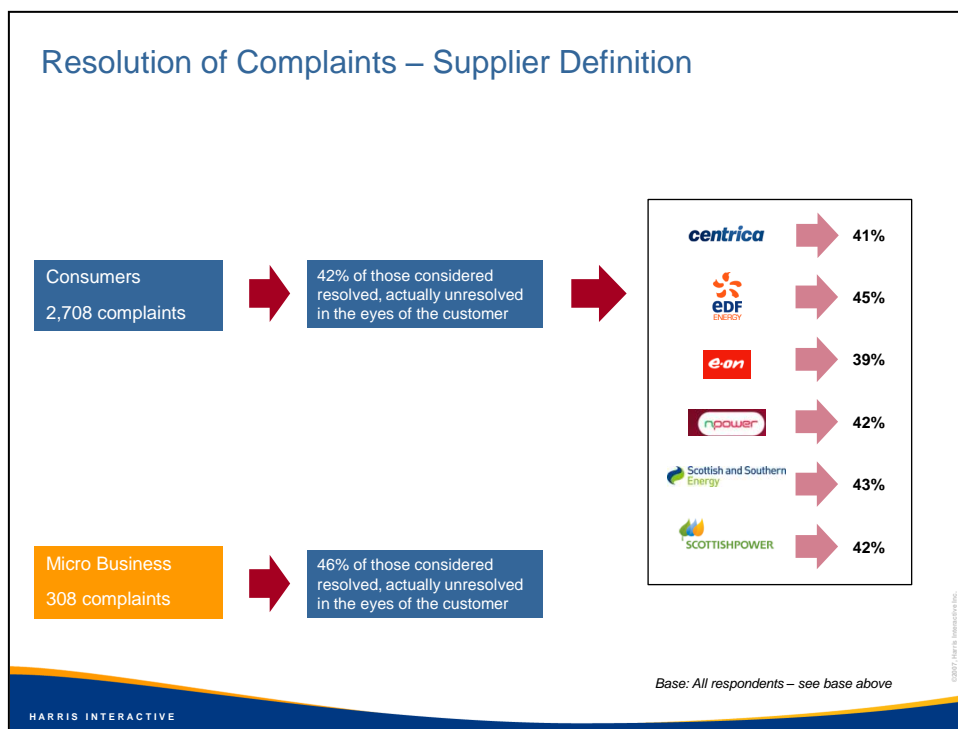
C.3.1 Resolution

In looking at the process of resolving customer complaints, there was a significant discrepancy between the proportion of complaints that each of the six major suppliers considers to be resolved and the proportion considered to be resolved in the eyes of the customer.

For both Domestic and Micro Business customer complaints, less than half of all complaints classified as being resolved by the supplier were actually considered by the individual customer to have been resolved – 42% for Domestic and 46% for Micro Business customers.

Among Domestic customers, the figures were relatively consistent between each supplier as seen in chart 3.

Chart 3 – Resolution of Complaints – Supplier vs. Customer definition



To avoid uncertainty between supplier and customer definitions of resolved complaints, the research focused solely on the customers' opinion of whether or not their complaint was resolved.

Slightly less than three-fifths (57%) of Domestic customer complaints were resolved by the supplier and only 1% of complaints were referred to and resolved by the Ombudsman. However, over two-fifths of Domestic customer complaints were not resolved – 36% were not resolved and in 6% of cases the customer was unsure of the current status of their complaint.

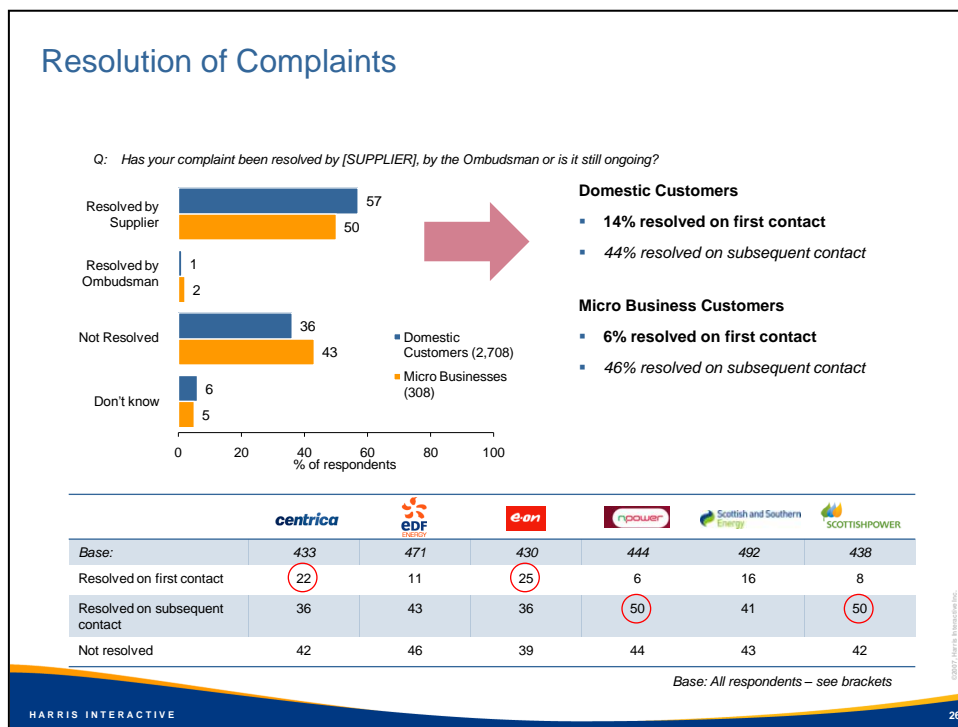
Exploring the resolution further, little more than one in ten (14%) Domestic customer complaints were considered by the customer to have been resolved on the first and only contact. The remaining two-fifths (44%) were felt to have been resolved following additional contact between customer and supplier.

Whilst the proportion of resolved complaints was consistent among all suppliers, Centrica and E.on were significantly more likely to resolve them on the first contact – 22% and 25% respectively. npower and Scottish Power were more likely than other suppliers to resolve complaints on subsequent contact – 50% for each.

Among Micro Business customers, half (50%) of complaints were resolved by the supplier but only one in twenty (6%) were resolved on the first contact. Almost half (48%) of Micro Business complaints were unresolved – 43% unresolved and 5% where the customer was unsure of the status.

The proportion of resolved and unresolved complaints, as well as the proportion resolved on first contact, can be seen in the chart below.

Chart 4 – Resolution of Complaints on First Contact



C.3.2 Resolution by Complaint Topic

Looking at the different complaint topics and the proportion of each resolved on the first contact, suppliers were significantly more likely to resolve Domestic customers’ complaints about Prices than all others – 21% resolved on first contact.

By supplier, Centrica, E.on and SSE were the most likely to resolve Price complaints first time (29%, 34% and 24% respectively) – significantly more likely than others. These three suppliers were also more likely to resolve Billing complaints on the first contact (16%, 14% and 18%) with E.on also more likely than other suppliers to resolve Sales (22%) and Meter (21%) complaints and Centrica more likely than others to resolve Transfer complaints on the first contact (26%).

Among Micro Business customers, Sales complaints were the most likely to be resolved on the first contact however, only one in ten were resolved first time. None of the 14 Micro Business Debt complaints were resolved on the first contact.

The proportion of complaints that were resolved on the initial contact with the supplier can be seen in the following table.

Table 5 – Complaints resolution on first contact by nature of complaint

<i>% resolved on first contact</i>	Micro Business	Domestic Customers	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.on UK	RWE nPower	SSE	Scottish Power
Billing	4	10	16*	7	14*	3	18*	5
Sales	10	13	9	17	22*	10	12	8
Transfers	5	10	26*	9	5	8	6	8
Meters	4	9	16	8	21*	2	8	5
Prices	7	21*	29*	16	34*	8	24*	12
Debt	0	8	-	-	-	-	-	-

* *Significant difference*

- Base too low for analysis

C.3.3 Satisfaction with the Need for Additional Contact

Two-fifths (44%) of Domestic and almost half (46%) of Micro Business customers required contact with their supplier on more than one occasion before their complaint was resolved.

For both customer groups, slightly over half (53% and 54% respectively) of customers were ‘very’ dissatisfied with the fact that they required additional contact and a further fifth were ‘quite’ dissatisfied. Among the individual suppliers, npower and EDF customers were the most dissatisfied with having to have additional contact – 62% of npower and 60% of EDF customers were ‘very dissatisfied’.

C.3.4 Additional Contact – Information Provided

Only one in three customers who required additional contact to resolve their complaint was given an explanation as to why this was the case. There were no significant differences between the two customer types or among suppliers. The remaining two-thirds were not given an explanation.

Although a requirement of the complaints handling standards, only one in ten customers recalled being offered a copy of their suppliers' Complaints Handling Procedure, either as a free copy or by being directed to the suppliers' website. Among the suppliers, only npower stood out as being more likely than others to offer this – 20% of npower customers claimed to have been offered a copy compared to a market average of 7% as shown in the table below.

Table 6 – Supplier Actions – Unresolved complaints

<i>% offered</i>	Micro Business	Domestic Customers	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.on UK	RWE nPower	SSE	Scottish Power
<i>Base:</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>1,100</i>	<i>198</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>150</i>	<i>206</i>	<i>195</i>	<i>189</i>
Directed to complaints procedure on website	7	5	5	7*	5	5	3	8*
Offered copy of complaints procedure	7	7	4	6	6	20*	3	5
Neither of these	82	85	89	86	84	69	92	82
Don't know	6	5	4	2	7*	8*	3	6*

* Significant difference

With regards to re-contacting the supplier, two-fifths (43%) of Domestic customers were provided with no information with which to re-contact their supplier. By supplier this figure was highest among SSE customers, slightly over half of whom (52%) were provided with no information and significantly lower for npower customers, of whom only a fifth (22%) were provided with no details for re-contacting.

The most common information to be provided was a telephone number (31%), a reference number (30%) and a named contact (30%). npower again stands out from the rest, being significantly more likely to provide customers with a telephone number (45%), a reference number (59%) and contact hours (20%) to use when re-contacting. SSE were significantly less likely than others to provide a reference number – offered to only 16% of customers overall.

Micro Business customers were more likely than Domestic to be provided with information for further contact – only a third of Micro Business customers were provided with no information compared to two-fifths of Domestic. Micro Business customers were more likely to be provided with a telephone number (39%), a reference number (41%) or a named contact (50%). They were also more likely to be provided with an email address – 21% vs. 9% for Domestic customers.

Table 7 below outlines the information provided to customers.

Table 7 – Further contact information provided

<i>% offered</i>	Micro Business	Domestic Customers	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.on UK	RWE nPower	SSE	Scottish Power
<i>Base:</i>	138	1,100	198	162	150	206	195	189
Telephone number	39*	31	28	28	29	45*	26	34
Reference number	41*	30	27	22	23	59*	16*	31
Named contact	50*	30	27	28	32	30	30	34
Contact hours	12	13	13	12	10	20*	7	15
Email address	21	9	8	7	11	13	5	15*
None of these	34	43*	45	49	43	22*	52	41

** Significant difference*

Four fifths of Domestic customers who had additional contact with their supplier to resolve their complaint had some record of the complaint retained for subsequent contact. Three-quarters (73%) had their contact details recorded and three-fifths (60%) had a record of the complaint. However, only half (52%) claimed that the supplier held a full and correct record of the complaint. Again, npower were significantly ahead of the other suppliers – over two-thirds (69%) of npower customers claimed that they had a record of the complaint. However, a similar proportion to other suppliers (55%) stated that they held a full and complete record of the complaint. Scottish Power were more likely than others to hold a full and complete record of the complaint – 60% compared to 52% overall.

The figures for Micro Business customers were consistent with those of Domestic customers. Three-quarters (76%) had the correct contact details held and slightly over three-fifths (64%) had a record of the complaint – half of customers (54%) stated that a full and complete record of the complaint was held.

C.3.5 Additional Contact – Resolution

Micro Business customers were more likely than Domestic to state that they received confirmation from their supplier that their complaint had been resolved – three-fifths (61%) of Micro Business customers claimed to have received confirmation compared to only half (50%) of Domestic.

Whilst the proportion of Micro Business and Domestic customers who received a confirmation email or telephone call was relatively similar (23% vs. 19% telephone and 31% vs. 33% letter), Micro Business customers were significantly more likely than Domestic to receive confirmation by email (14% vs. 3%).

Among Domestic customers, npower customers were more likely than others to receive confirmation (78% receiving confirmation compared to 50% overall) and within this were more likely to receive a confirmation letter than others (63% compared to 33% overall).

Two-thirds of customers who required additional contact with their supplier to resolve their complaint (66% Domestic and 70% Micro Business) were given no timescale in which the supplier would resolve the issue.

Among the suppliers, npower was significantly more likely to provide a timescale to the customer than others – almost half (46%) of npower customers were given a timescale in which their complaint would be resolved.

For both Domestic and Micro Business customers, in three-fifths (61%) of cases the supplier met the timings that had been promised. Although npower were more likely to provide a timescale to customers, they were significantly less likely than others to keep to that timescale when resolving the complaint. Only two-fifths (40%) of npower customers claimed that their supplier had met the timescales that had been promised.

C.3.6 Additional Contact – Referral to a Manager

Two-fifths (41%) of Domestic customers stated that they had to refer their complaint to a manager or senior member of staff whilst seeking a resolution. This was a significantly lower proportion than amongst Micro Business customers where almost three-fifths (57%) referred their complaint to a senior member of staff.

Among Domestic customers, npower and EDF customers were more likely than others to escalate their complaint to a senior person (59% and 47% respectively). E.on customers were the least likely to seek a referral – only one in three (30%) referring their complaint to a senior member of staff.

The Qualitative interviews conducted after the main telephone surveyed indicated that whilst customers were dissatisfied with the need to refer their complaint to a senior member of staff, they were often very pleased with the Manager/Supervisors approach to resolving the complaint, their attitude towards taking ownership and their ability to find a resolution and make decisions or take action to seek a resolution.

The following case studies detail two customers who referred their complaint to a Manager and their associated reaction to the actions taken.

Consumer Case Study – The Referral to a Manager

Complainant believed an unpaid bill should have been covered by standing order payments

Complainant expected to be called back by supplier after making first contact

“He called back on my house phone but not the mobile. Very unprofessional to not make contact with all means available. He admitted he didn’t use my mobile number and I was annoyed I had been passed to debt collection agency as a result of this”

No information was provided on next steps of action to be taken

“He didn’t give me any information of where to take it. He didn’t tell me what was going to happen next, I didn’t hear a thing or anything after that”

Complaint only resolved when referred to a manager

“She actually listened and admitted there was a problem ... She gave me the impression she was very professional. Resolved it within 1½ hours, she appreciated the severity of the complaint and she took ownership”

Customer left with poor impression of supplier’s customer service

“What is the point of training the people if you have to go to managers to get it resolved? They should have the authority to do it”

Micro Business Case Study – the Manager’s Touch

Complainant received notification of an increase in prices and requirement to give 90 days notice to cancel contract

Customer service experience varied depending on contact dealing with complaint

“First was not very good but second was efficient as they knew what they were talking about”

Customer was advised by Ombudsman to escalate complaint to a manager/director to resolve

“A manager called me to offer a solution. Initially they could have referred it to him, better than waiting 2-3 days. They had all the information for me and it took less than 15 minutes to resolve”

Only with the managers assistance was the complaint resolved within one phone call

“He did apologise to me ... Once he fixed my prices for 12 months, I was passed onto the sales team, dealt within the same phone call from then on ... Only one person could take action, that was a problem ... Authority should be given to everybody so that a solution can be achieved initially”

“They called me back, the manager did make the effort to call me back and provide a solution”

C.3.7 Referral of complaints to Energy Ombudsman/Unresolved by Supplier

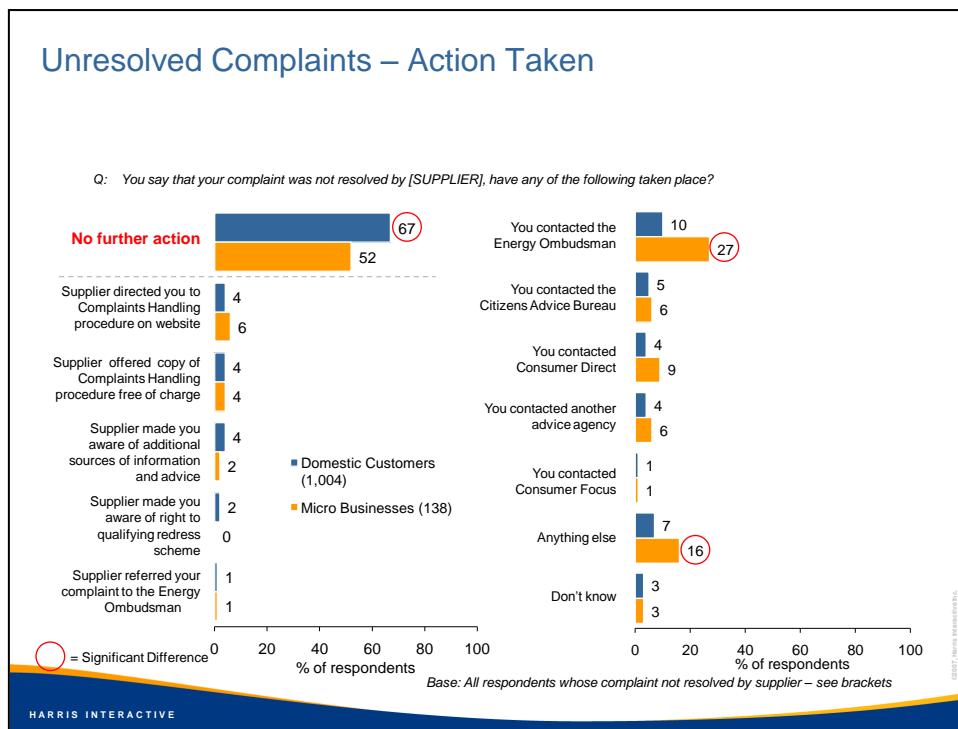
Slightly over one in three (37%) Domestic customers' complaints and almost half (45%) of Micro Business customers' complaints were not resolved by their supplier.

Only one in three of these Domestic customers' complaints received further action and a significantly higher proportion, almost half (48%), of Micro Business customers' complaints saw further action taking place.

Although there were no differences between Domestic and Micro Business customers in terms of the further actions taken by suppliers, Micro Business customers were more likely to pursue further action themselves – one in four (27%) contacted the Energy Ombudsman themselves and one in six (16%) pursued another course of action.

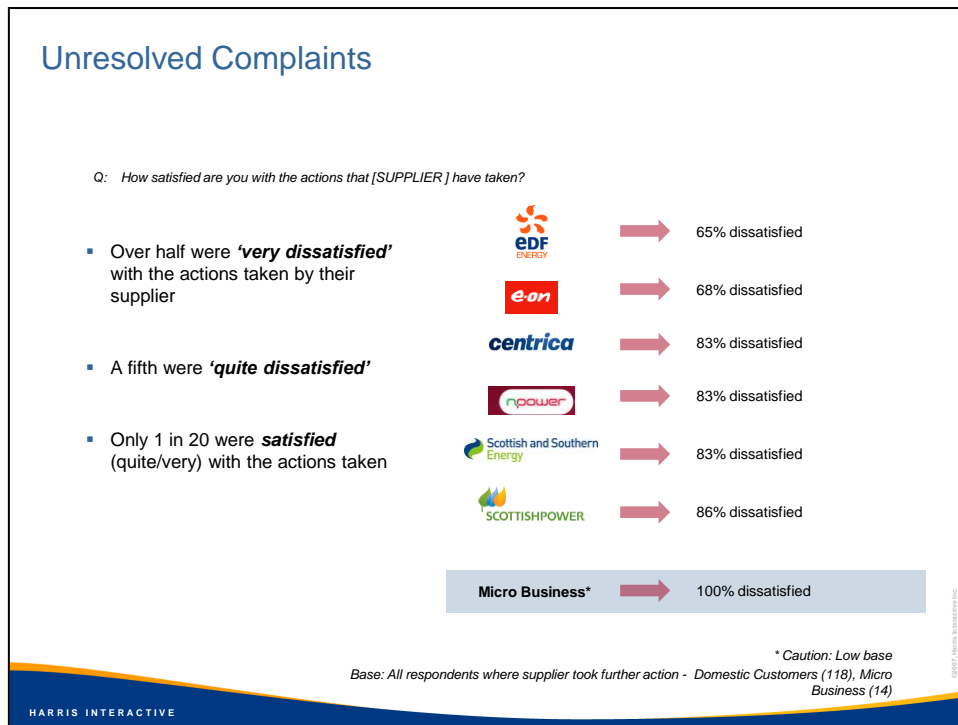
The actions taken by the supplier and/or the customer themselves are highlighted in the chart below.

Chart 5 – Unresolved Complaints – Action Taken



Where the supplier did take action, only 14 Micro Business complaints (10%) and 118 Domestic complaints customers (12%), were mostly dissatisfied with the actions taken. Only one in twenty customers were satisfied with the actions taken – the proportions who were dissatisfied can be seen in the chart below.

Chart 6 – Unresolved Complaints – Satisfaction with Supplier Actions



All customers whose complaint had not been resolved (1,004 Domestic customers and 138 Micro Business customers) were asked the question, “What is happening with your complaint now?”.

Domestic customers gave the following responses;

- 4% Given up
- 23% Nothing
- 5% Don't know
- 6% Just been left/they don't care
- 2% Nothing can be done
- 14% Ongoing/need to contact/trying to do something
- 10% Changed supplier
- 4% Going to change supplier
- 7% Supplier demanding payment/increased their tariffs & costs/still charging too much
- 6% Must pay the bill/more bills
- 5% Result but not as expected/hoped for
- 4% Waiting for next bill
- 4% Waiting for discount/credit/compensation
- 2% Waiting for meter reading/engineer

Micro Business customers gave the following responses;

- 1% Given up
- 19% Nothing
- 1% Don't know
- 1% Just been left/they don't care
- 1% Nothing can be done
- 13% Ongoing/need to contact/trying to do something
- 2% Changed supplier
- 2% Going to change supplier
- 9% Supplier demanding payment/increased their tariffs & costs/still charging too much
- 7% Must pay the bill/more bills
- 7% Result but not as expected/hoped for
- 2% Waiting for next bill
- 3% Waiting for discount/credit/compensation
- 2% Waiting for meter reading/engineer
- 7% Taking it to the Ombudsman/court

C4. Complaints Handling Process

In assessing the overall process of handling complaints, customers were asked to rate their satisfaction with their suppliers' performance on a series of attributes relating to their main form of contact.

The numbers of customers using each method of contact, and subsequently rating their satisfaction, were as follows:

Domestic Customers

	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.on UK	RWE nPower	SSE	Scottish Power	Total
Telephone	374	425	357	385	438	337	2,316
Written *	43	24	61	46	43	80	297
Face to face	6	3	-	-	3	1	13
	423	452	418	431	484	418	2,625**

Micro Business Customers

	Total
Telephone	211
Written *	58
Face to face	1
	270**

*Written includes Letter, Email, Fax or Website

**A proportion of customers were unsure or could not recall the main method of contact with their supplier, hence totals in these tables are lower than the total number of respondents in the survey

C.4.1 Complaints Handling Process – General Themes

Across both telephone and written complaints, satisfaction was typically higher for the initial stages of the complaints handling process (receiving and initially handling the complaint) and lower for the latter stages (taking action, informing customers of next steps and calling back as/when promised). This was true when looking overall and at the performance of individual suppliers and, whilst differences did exist between individual suppliers' performance, the overall trend was consistent regardless of supplier or complaint method.

Satisfaction has also been analysed by the nature of complaint but no significant differences exist with no one type of complaint eliciting significantly higher or lower levels of satisfaction ratings than others.

Unsurprisingly, satisfaction with the complaints handling process was directly linked to the resolution status of each complaint. All customers, Domestic or Micro Business, who considered their complaint

to have been resolved, rated all elements of the process, telephone or written, significantly higher than those whose complaint had not been resolved. The implication being that whilst the resolution and the complaints handling process do not work hand in hand i.e. it is possible to handle a resolution well but still not resolve it to the customers' satisfaction, the overall outcome of the complaint will affect the customers' perception of the process.

C.4.2 Telephone Complaints – Domestic customers

Overall satisfaction with the complaints handling process was relatively low among all customers who complained by telephone. At no point in the process did more than one in five (18%) customers claim to be 'very' satisfied with the service that they received and the highest average score for any single attribute, as perceived by all Domestic customers, was only 3.0 out of 5.0

Looking at the individual attributes in turn, just under two-fifths (36%) of Domestic customers were satisfied with their suppliers performance for **the attitude of the call handler towards dealing with your complaint**. Equal proportions were 'very' and 'quite' satisfied – 18% for each. However, a quarter (26%) of customers were 'not at all' satisfied with their suppliers performance on this attribute.

The attribute with the highest overall satisfaction was **the professionalism of the call handler** for which two-fifths (39%) of customers claimed that they were satisfied with their suppliers performance. However, an almost equal proportion claimed to be dissatisfied – 22% 'not at all' satisfied and 15% 'not very' satisfied.

Only a third of customers were satisfied with their suppliers' performance for **their understanding of your complaint or problem** – again, a relatively equal proportion claimed to be 'very' and 'quite' satisfied (17% and 16% respectively). However, a third (32%) of customers who complained were 'not at all' satisfied with this attribute.

Satisfaction with **the call handler taking ownership of your complaint** was almost identical to their understanding of your complaint or problem. 16% of customers were 'very' and 'quite' satisfied respectively with slightly over a third (35%) claiming to be 'not at all' satisfied.

Their knowledge of possible solutions to resolve your complaint and knowledge of next steps in resolving your complaint were also almost identical in terms of customer satisfaction. A quarter of customers were satisfied (13% 'very' and 13% 'quite', 12% 'very' and 13% 'quite' respectively) and two-fifths (40%) were 'not at all' satisfied.

Supplier performance for **the call handlers ability to make decisions there and then and their proactive approach to resolving your complaint** were also very similar. For both attributes, slightly over two-fifths of customers claimed to be 'not at all' satisfied (43% for each) and a quarter were satisfied. For the call handlers ability to make decisions, 14% were 'very' satisfied and 11% were

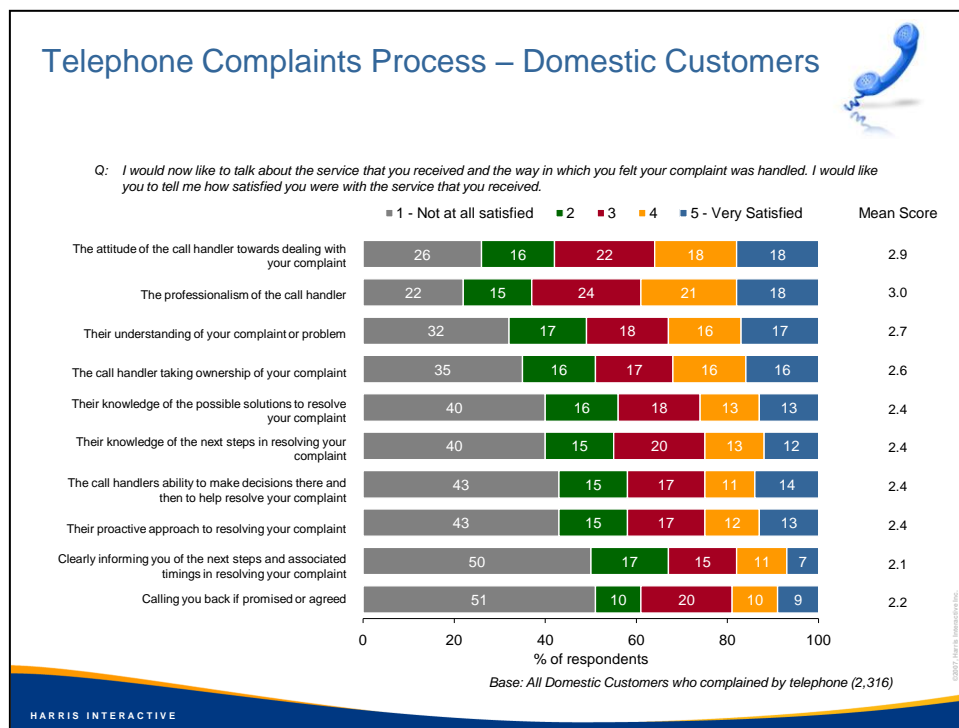
‘quite’ satisfied and for their proactive approach, 13% and 12% were ‘very/quite’ satisfied respectively.

The attribute where customers were least satisfied was **clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings** where half were ‘not at all’ satisfied (50%) and a further fifth (17%) were ‘not very’ satisfied. Less than one in five customers were satisfied – only 7% ‘very’ and 11% ‘quite’ satisfied.

Finally, for **calling you back if promised or agreed**, half (51%) of customers were ‘not at all’ satisfied and a further tenth (10%) were ‘not very’ satisfied. Again, only one in five (19%) were satisfied – 9% ‘very’ and 10% ‘quite’ satisfied.

The overall pattern of results for Domestic customers can be seen in the following chart.

Chart 7 – Telephone Complaints Handling Process – Domestic Customer Satisfaction



By supplier, customers of E.on and SSE were the most satisfied, significantly more so than all others on almost all elements of the process. In terms of the proportion of satisfied customers, they both performed consistently ahead of the other suppliers for the **attitude of the call handler**, their **professionalism**, their **understanding of the customers’ complaint or problem**, the **call handler’s ability to make decisions** and their **proactive approach to resolving the complaint**. E.on also performed ahead of SSE for the **complaint handlers’ knowledge of possible solutions and next steps**.

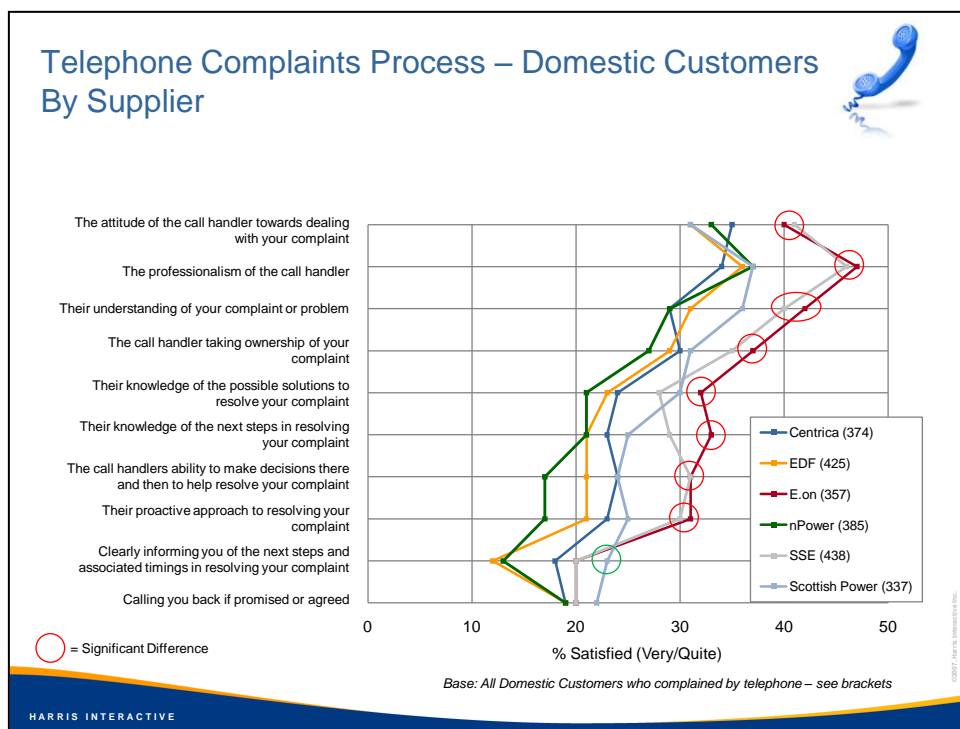
npower and EDF had the lowest proportion of customers claiming to be satisfied with the different stages of the complaints handling process on almost all elements. Centrica also performed towards

the lower end having the lowest proportion of satisfied customers for the professionalism of the call handler, understanding the complaint and calling back as promised or agreed

Scottish Power performed closest to the overall market average, albeit with some areas of strength/weakness. They had the lowest proportion of satisfied customers for **attitude of the call handler** but the highest, ahead of E.on and SSE, for **informing customers of the next steps and calling back if promised or agreed**.

The performance of each supplier on each of the individual attributes is highlighted in the following chart.

Chart 8 – Telephone Complaints Handling Process – Domestic Customer Satisfaction by Supplier



C.4.3 Telephone Complaints – Domestic Customer Case Studies

The follow up case study interviews explored in further detail elements of the complaints handling process where customers were either particularly satisfied or dissatisfied with the service that they had received from their supplier. The following case studies relate to positive/negative experiences of Domestic customers who registered their complaint by telephone.

Consumer Case Study – the Good Listener

Complainant received a red bill before receiving an original bill

Supplier listened to the complainant and gave them confidence

“They listened, didn’t interrupt, let me say what I needed to say, no arguments. I did feel confident because I felt she was listening to me and recording it as well”

Complaint was handled professionally and courteously

“She was polite, she was friendly ... It was nice to speak to somebody intelligent”

Supplier took ownership of both the problem and the resolution

“She didn’t try to avoid responsibility. She took on board what I said and acted on it”

“Said straightaway they would sort it out. Impact made it so much easier, didn’t have to be taken to anybody else, dealt with in 1 phone call”

Compared to a poor experience with BT where the customer had been left on hold for over an hour and been made to “jump through hoops the experience with supplier was like ...

“Comparing a Rolls Royce to a rusty bicycle”

Consumer Case Study – the Excellent Call Handler

Complainant received notification of an incorrect increase in charges

A professional service was received from the outset

“Dealt with by a very helpful person who did all he could. Personal. Absolutely spot on. They took the problem on board and dealt with it on the first contact. Professional, calm under pressure, understanding and thorough, listened and had a personable approach ... he did everything he could to help me”

Ownership of the problem

“His attitude was ‘let’s see what we can do’, he laid out all the costs in writing as I had requested, he made a decision there and then without referring it to somebody else, he took ownership of the complaint”

Contact details were provided and details of the complaint were passed on

“Direct line, name, possible email contact given, he didn’t hide behind the system. It was a comfort factor, I could have gone back to him at any point ... When he wasn’t available the team leader knew all about the complaint, their policy seemed to be that they wanted a bit of honesty”

Consumer Case Study – the Lack of Knowledge

Customer complained about £50 discount he was promised but did not receive (offer was for Direct Debit customers only – customer was on a prepayment meter)

Difficulty experienced in making initial complaint

“I phoned the general enquiries line, it just kept ringing, tried for 10 minutes in case somebody answered. Got sent to 3 different departments and explained the case every time”

Complainant felt passed from pillar to post while no one took ownership

“I had to start from the beginning on every single occasion ... told ‘sorry, it’s not my department’”

“I felt they wanted to get rid of the complaint as quickly as possible. I felt they weren’t particularly interested and just passed me from one person to the other so that they didn’t have to solve the problem”

Limited product knowledge amongst staff increased the time taken to handle the complaint

“They had little or no knowledge of the products they were dealing with or the offer I had taken up”

“I got what I originally wanted but it took 4½ months to get it. They just weren’t interested”

Consumer Case Study – the Lack of Ownership

Customer contacted supplier about constantly changing Direct Debits and sent an email to register the complaint

Having received no response, he contacted supplier again but they had no knowledge of the complaint or record of his previous contact

“They didn’t know about the email ... it made me feel as if I was banging my head against a brick wall”

Confirmation was received of a change to the Direct Debits but ...

“Supplier made it sound as if they had done it, ‘We have reviewed your account’ was their wording to me. I received no apology at all in the letter”

Supplier was not apologetic and seemed reluctant to take any ownership of the complaint

“I sent my original complaint in over 3 months ago ... supplier just said they had a backlog of complaints”

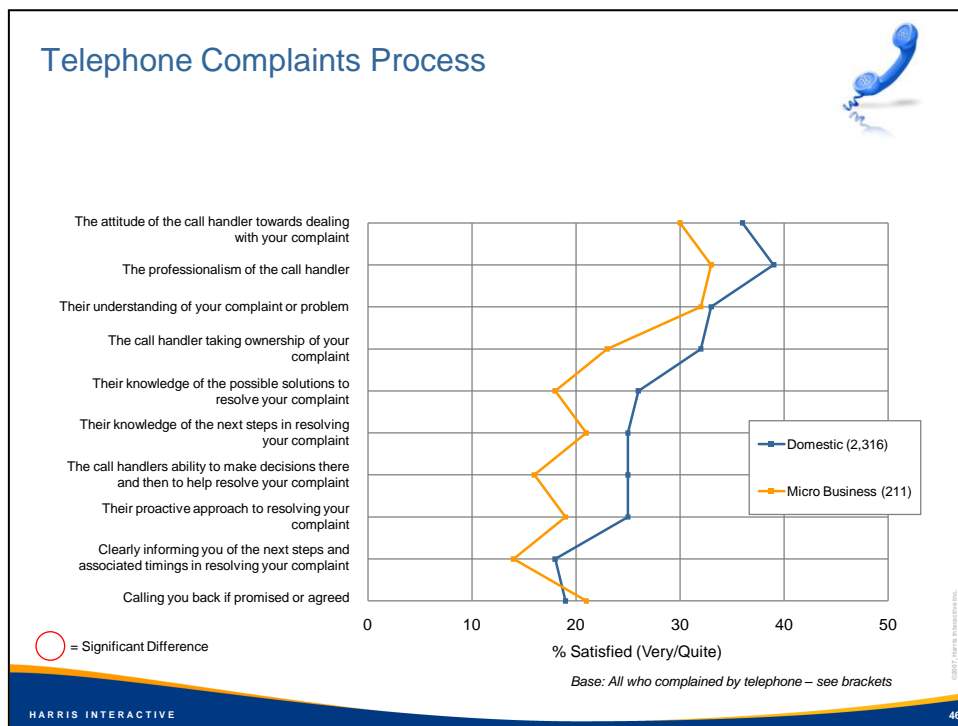
“Supplier knew what my complaint was but didn’t want to resolve it”

C.4.4 Telephone Complaints – Micro Business customers

Micro Business customers were less satisfied than Domestic customers with all aspects of the telephone complaints handling process. The overall trend however, was consistent between both customer types – that being that satisfaction was higher with the initial stages of the process but lower with the latter stages.

The comparison between Domestic and Micro Business customers is illustrated in the chart below.

Chart 9 – Telephone Complaints Handling Process – Domestic vs. Micro Business Customer Satisfaction



Less than a third (30%) of Micro Business customers were satisfied with their suppliers’ performance for **the attitude of the call handler towards dealing with your complaint**. This figure split evenly between ‘very’ and ‘quite’ satisfied – 16% and 14% respectively. The same proportion (29%) were ‘not at all’ satisfied with this element of the process and a further fifth (18%) stated that they were ‘not very’ satisfied.

Satisfaction was slightly higher for **the professionalism of the call handler** with a third of customers satisfied with this attribute (17% ‘very’ and 16% ‘quite’ satisfied). Only a quarter (26%) of customers were ‘not at all’ satisfied and a further fifth (20%) were ‘not very’ satisfied.

A similar proportion as above were satisfied with their supplier for their **understanding of your complaint or problem** – 16% for each of ‘very’ and ‘quite’ satisfied. However, a higher proportion were ‘not at all’ satisfied (33%) and a further fifth (20%) were ‘not very’ satisfied.

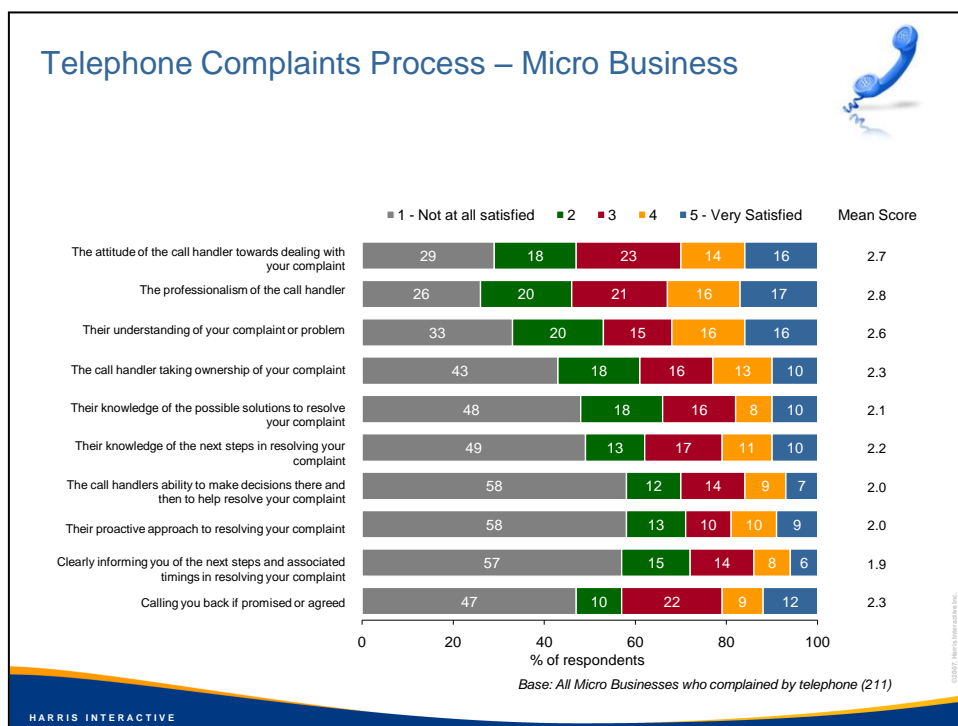
Satisfaction was significantly lower for **the call handler taking ownership of your complaint** as only a quarter (25%) of Micro Business customers claimed to be satisfied – one in ten (10%) ‘very’ satisfied and one in eight (13%) ‘quite’ satisfied. Slightly over two-fifths (43%) were ‘not at all’ satisfied and a fifth (18%) were ‘not very’ satisfied.

As with Domestic customers, levels of satisfaction were similar for the suppliers’ **knowledge of possible solutions to resolve your complaint** and **knowledge of next steps in resolving your complaint**. Half of Micro Business customers were ‘not at all’ satisfied for each of these attributes – 48% and 49% respectively and only one in ten (10%) were ‘very’ satisfied.

The next three elements of the complaints handling process, **call handlers ability to make decisions there and then, their proactive approach to resolving your complaint** and **clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings**, perform consistently in terms of the level of dissatisfaction. Nearly three-fifths of customers (58%, 58% and 57% respectively) were ‘not at all’ satisfied and 12%, 13% and 15% were ‘not very’ satisfied. There were however, some minor, albeit not significant, differences in the levels of satisfaction with one in six (16%), one in five (19%) and one in seven (14%) satisfied – very/quite satisfied.

Satisfaction increased marginally for the final element of service, **calling back if promised or agreed**. Slightly under half of Micro Business customers (47%) were ‘not at all’ satisfied and one in five were satisfied – 12% ‘very’ and 9% ‘quite’ satisfied. The increase in overall satisfaction was driven by one in five (22%) claiming to be neither satisfied, nor not satisfied rather than an increase in the proportion of customers claiming to be satisfied. The overall results for Micro Business customers can be seen in the following chart.

Chart 10 – Telephone Complaints Handling Process – Micro Business Customer Satisfaction



C.4.5 Written Complaints – Domestic customers

Although almost half of customers (47%) who registered their complaint in writing (letter, email, fax or website) were satisfied with the initial stage of registering their complaint, the levels of satisfaction with all other elements of the process were relatively low – only between a fifth and a quarter of customers claimed to be satisfied. As with telephone complaints, levels of satisfaction declined throughout the latter stages of the complaints handling process.

A quarter of customers (27%) were ‘very’ satisfied with the **ease of registering the complaint** and a further fifth were ‘quite’ satisfied – significantly higher than for all other attributes. Around one in four customers (23%) were ‘not at all satisfied’ and one in ten (10%) were ‘not very’ satisfied.

Slightly over one in three (37%) customers were ‘not at all’ satisfied with their suppliers’ performance for **being informed of the next steps/what would happen next** and one in five (18%) were ‘not very’ satisfied. Only a fifth (21%) of customers were satisfied, split evenly between ‘very’ and ‘quite’ satisfied – 10% and 11% respectively.

Although satisfaction with **being made aware of the timeframe in which the complaint would be addressed** was similar to the previous attribute (11% ‘very’ satisfied, 12% ‘quite’ satisfied) the proportion of customers who stated that they were ‘not at all’ satisfied was significantly higher – over two-fifths (44%). A further one in seven customers were ‘not very’ satisfied with their suppliers’ performance on this attribute.

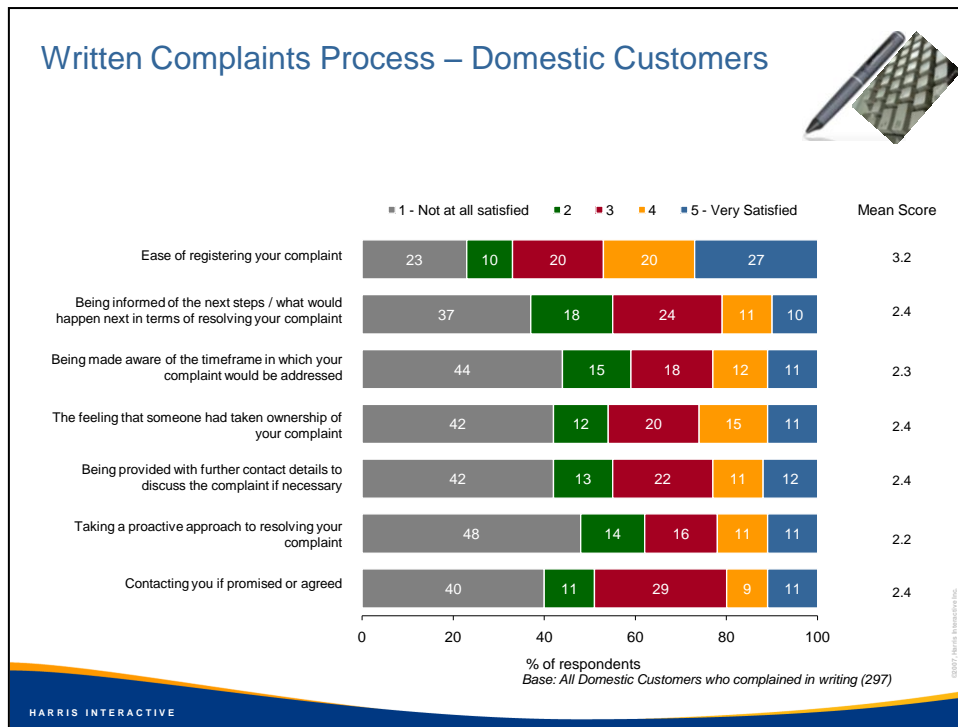
Levels of dissatisfaction for **the feeling that someone had taken ownership of the complaint** and **being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint** were the same for both attributes. Two-fifths (42%) of customers were ‘not at all’ satisfied and around one in ten (12% and 13% respectively) were ‘not very’ satisfied. Satisfaction was marginally higher for taking ownership (26% satisfied – 11% ‘very’ and 15% ‘quite’) than for further contact details (23% satisfied – 12% ‘very’ and 11% ‘quite’).

The greatest proportion of customers were ‘not at all’ satisfied with suppliers **taking a proactive approach to resolving the complaint** – almost half (48%). However, satisfaction for this attribute was consistent with the others – one in five (22%) customers stating that they were satisfied (11% ‘very’ and 11% ‘quite’).

Finally, two-fifths (40%) of customers were ‘not at all’ satisfied with their supplier for **contacting you if promised or agreed** and one in ten (11%) were ‘not very’ satisfied. Satisfaction was relatively similar to the previous attributes – one in five (20%) claimed to be satisfied (11% ‘very’ and 9% ‘quite’).

The overall pattern of results for Domestic customers who complained in writing can be seen in the following chart.

Chart 11 – Written Complaints Handling Process – Domestic Customer Satisfaction

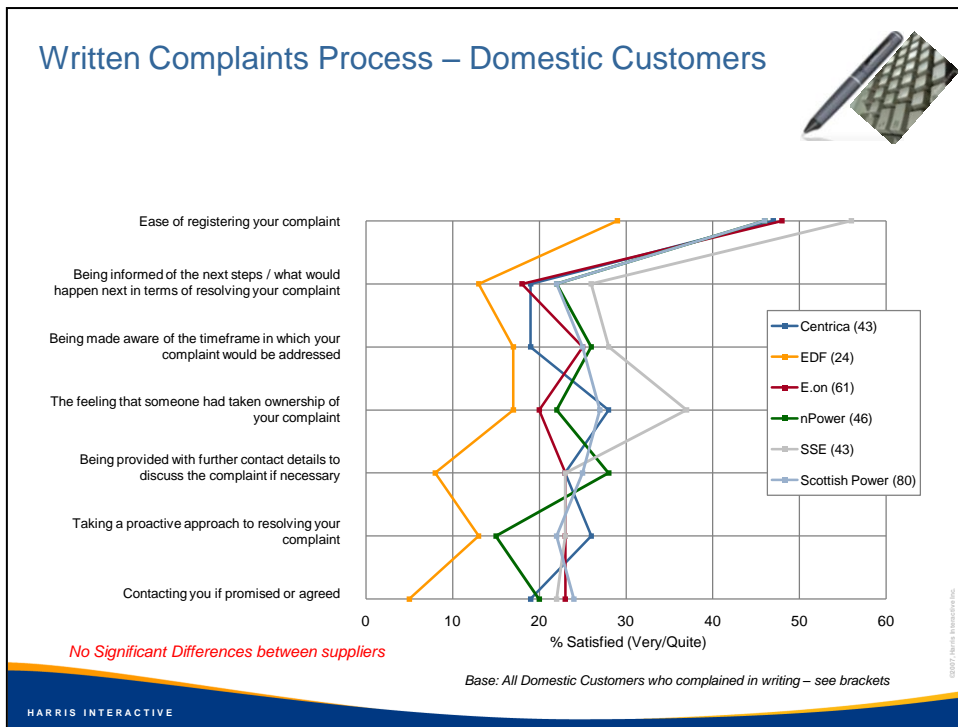


Although there were no significant differences between the suppliers, SSE had the highest proportion of customers claiming to be satisfied with the **ease of registering their complaint, being informed of the next steps, being made aware of the timeframe** and a feeling that **someone has taken ownership of the complaint**.

EDF had the lowest proportion of satisfied customers on all elements with the remaining four suppliers performing relatively consistently.

The performance of each supplier on each of the individual attributes is highlighted in the following chart.

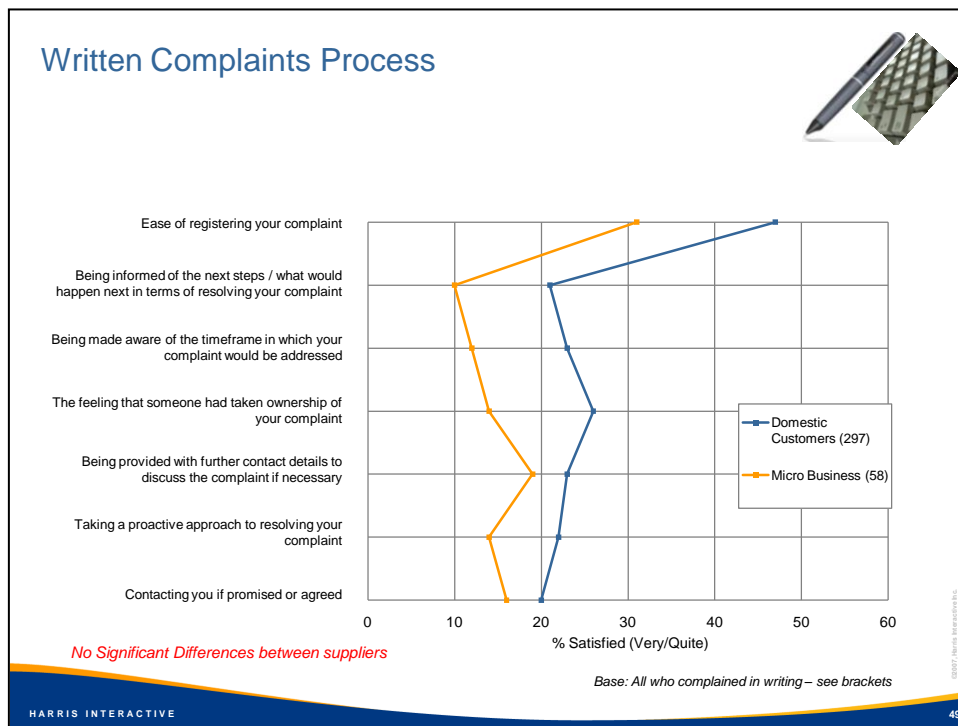
Chart 12 – Written Complaints Handling Process – Domestic Customer Satisfaction by Supplier



C.4.6 Written Complaints – Micro Business customers

As for telephone complaints, Micro Business customers were less satisfied than Domestic on all elements of the complaints handling process for written complaints. The higher levels of dissatisfaction were more pronounced for the early stages of the complaints handling process as can be seen in the following chart.

Chart 13 – Written Complaints Handling Process – Domestic vs. Micro Business Customer Satisfaction



Around a third (31%) of Micro Business customers were satisfied with the **ease of registering the complaint**, split evenly between those who were ‘very’ and ‘quite’ satisfied – 15% and 16% respectively. Two-fifths of customers (40%) were ‘not at all satisfied’ and one in ten (12%) were ‘not very’ satisfied.

Over half (57%) of customers were ‘not at all’ satisfied with their suppliers’ performance for **being informed of the next steps/what would happen next** and one in six (16%) were ‘not very’ satisfied. Only one in ten (10%) Micro Business customers were satisfied – 7% ‘very’ satisfied and 3% ‘quite’ satisfied.

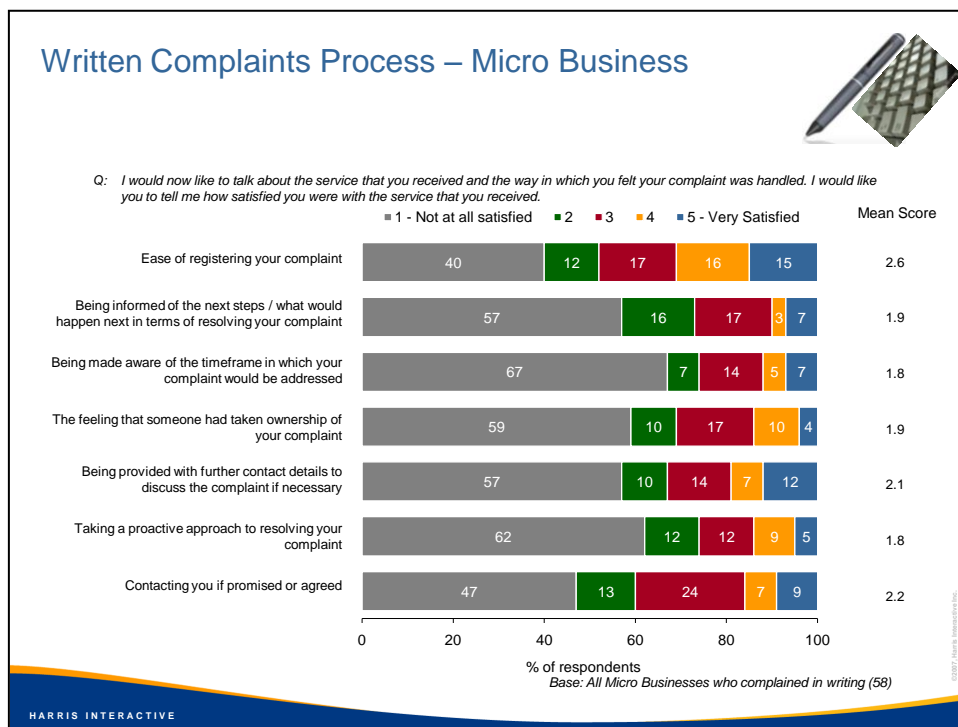
Satisfaction with **being made aware of the timeframe in which the complaint would be addressed** was similar to the previous attribute (7% ‘very’ satisfied and only 5% ‘quite’ satisfied) however, the proportion of customers who stated that they were ‘not at all’ satisfied was significantly higher – two-thirds (67%). A further one in ten (7%) Micro Business customers were ‘not very’ satisfied with their suppliers’ performance on this attribute.

As with Domestic customers, levels of dissatisfaction among Micro Business customers for **the feeling that someone had taken ownership of the complaint** and **being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint** were the same for both attributes. Almost three-fifths (59% and 57% respectively) of customers were ‘not at all’ satisfied and one in ten (10% for each) were ‘not very’ satisfied. Satisfaction was lower for taking ownership (14% satisfied – 4% ‘very’ and 10% ‘quite’) than for further contact details (19% satisfied – 12% ‘very’ and 7% ‘quite’).

Three-fifths (62%) of Micro Business customers were ‘not at all’ satisfied with suppliers **taking a proactive approach to resolving the complaint**. Only one in twenty customers were ‘very’ satisfied (5%) and one in ten (9%) were ‘quite’ satisfied.

Finally, almost half (47%) of Micro Business customers were ‘not at all’ satisfied with their supplier for **contacting you if promised or agreed** and one in ten (13%) were ‘not very’ satisfied. Overall satisfaction was relatively similar to the previous attribute, however, the proportion who were ‘very’ satisfied was marginally higher (9%) and the proportion ‘quite’ satisfied was marginally lower (7%).

Chart 14 – Written Complaints Handling Process – Micro Business Customer Satisfaction



C.4.7 Case Study Interviews – Verbatim Comments

The following verbatim comments are taken from the Qualitative Case study interviews and are included to give examples of positive and negative behaviours on the part of the energy suppliers in terms of handling and resolving customer complaints. These comments are taken directly from Domestic and Micro Business customers' responses when asked to talk in more detail about why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with a particular element of the complaints handling procedure.

The attitude of the call handler towards dealing with your complaint

Reasons for satisfaction

"Good, he was really helpful and did apologise that it wasn't sorted out beforehand"

"Pleasant, polite, prepared to understand how the problem arose and was sympathetic"

"Very pleasant to speak to, assured me they would put it right"

"Conducted himself as I wish all staff could in business, very calmly"

Reasons for dissatisfaction

"She wouldn't listen to anything I had to say, she was stubborn and I couldn't get anywhere with her"

"Second time (contacted them) was a joke, just not interested, couldn't care less, kind of thing"

"General attitude was to treat me as if I had installed the bad meter, and I was a criminal in their eyes"

"The manager was quite curt and abrupt with me at the end of the call"

The professionalism of the call handler

Reasons for satisfaction

"Calm, professional, understanding, listened and thorough, did everything he could to help me"

"Always polite, telling me they were transferring me, called me Mr Bell, apologised when departments didn't answer"

"Nice to talk to, not condescending, sounded knowledgeable, she made me feel she would do something about it"

"She gave me the impression she was very professional and listening"

Reasons for dissatisfaction

"The staff didn't listen half the time"

"It seemed to be when I spoke with young people they seemed totally disinterested"

"She didn't follow through on what I asked her to do"

"The knowledge of the staff varied, some were absolutely useless, just said stuff to get me off the phone"

Their understanding of your complaint or problem

Reasons for satisfaction

"Person's approach was good, they understood well and looked at what I wanted"

Reasons for dissatisfaction

"They didn't quite understand the nature of the complaint and how far it would go"

"They understood the complaint completely but didn't do anything about it"

"I had to repeat the problem, some of them had trouble understanding it, obviously a problem they were not familiar with"

"No idea what I was trying to tell them. Obviously not got my letter available to them on file or couldn't be bothered to look at it"

"Didn't seem to grasp what I was talking about and that's why it is still not resolved properly"

The call handler taking ownership of their problem

Reasons for satisfaction

"Took hold of the problem and dealt with it in the timescale and owned the problem"

"He didn't have to say I'm sorry and refer me to a manager, he took ownership straightaway on the 1st phone call"

"She didn't try to avoid responsibility, she took on board what I said and acted on it"

"They took the problem on board and dealt with it"

Reasons for dissatisfaction

"They made me feel they were ignoring it"

"I was pushed from one person to the other with no-one taking ownership – never getting a straight answer"

"No name given, no 'you can come back to me'. Hence it went on longer than it should have done"

"I think it was just pushed down the line and no named contact or reference number was given to me"

The call handlers' knowledge of possible solutions to resolve the complaint and the next steps

Reasons for satisfaction

"He knew what he was talking about, transparent and open and honest about it"

Reasons for dissatisfaction

"No one knew what they were talking about"

"Comes down to the knowledge issue, they didn't have the foggiest idea of who I needed to speak to"

"Didn't give any indication of the next steps, might have had knowledge, but didn't tell me"

"Once I got hold of the right people it was okay but trying to get there took time"

The call handlers' ability to make decisions there and then to resolve your complaint

Reasons for satisfaction

"They knew exactly what to do and how to deal with it"

Reasons for dissatisfaction

"They knew everything about it all, only one person could take action though, that was a problem, better to give authority everybody so trust the complaint could be resolved sooner "

"Didn't have the knowledge or expertise to deal with it. It got passed onto different people"

"Couldn't do anything, couldn't say I can do this... always had to refer to a manager"

"Customer services were rubbish throughout. They should have the power to deal with it, and they didn't"

Their proactive approach to resolving your complaint

Reasons for satisfaction

"Generally seemed to be trying to help me"

"Found them very positive when dealing with the complaint, seemed to want to get it resolved for me"

Reasons for dissatisfaction

"Not proactive, more reactive. I had to chase them with an email"

"I lost my temper the 4th time it really annoyed me, having to keep contacting them"

"I don't think they were proactive at all. I had to force them to get moving to get their engineer out and to get compensation"

"Nobody said I'll deal with it"

Clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings in resolving your complaint

Reasons for dissatisfaction

"Did nothing to resolve it, just passed to another debt collection company."

"He didn't tell me what was going to happen next, I didn't hear a thing after that."

"I never got any real timings, other than "we will look into it and call you back".

"Until the very last call there were no next steps"

"They never told me anything until the Ombudsman got involved"

Calling you back if promised or agreed

Reasons for satisfaction

"They did call me back, the same person owned the complaint all the way through"

"They did do what they said they would do within the timescales, they called me back the next day or if they said next week, then they called next week"

Reasons for dissatisfaction

"They didn't call me back, I just presumed they would"

"They never rang me back, they didn't do anything without me phoning them first"

"They never did that, it was probably all forgotten about"

"They were supposed to write and send a fax to say what was owing but I got neither"

C.4.8 Face to Face Complaints

The proportion of customers who registered their complaint face to face was very low. Of the 2,708 Domestic customers surveyed, only 13 registered their complaint face to face – this represents less than half a percent of all Domestic complaints.

Whilst this base size was too low to analyse statistically, customers who complained face to face typically rated all aspects of the process more positively than telephone and written complaints customers. The highest average satisfaction rating for face to face was 4.1 for the professionalism of the representative and the lowest was 2.9 for being informed of the next steps.

As for telephone and written complaints, satisfaction was higher for the early stages of the complaints handling process than for the latter stages.

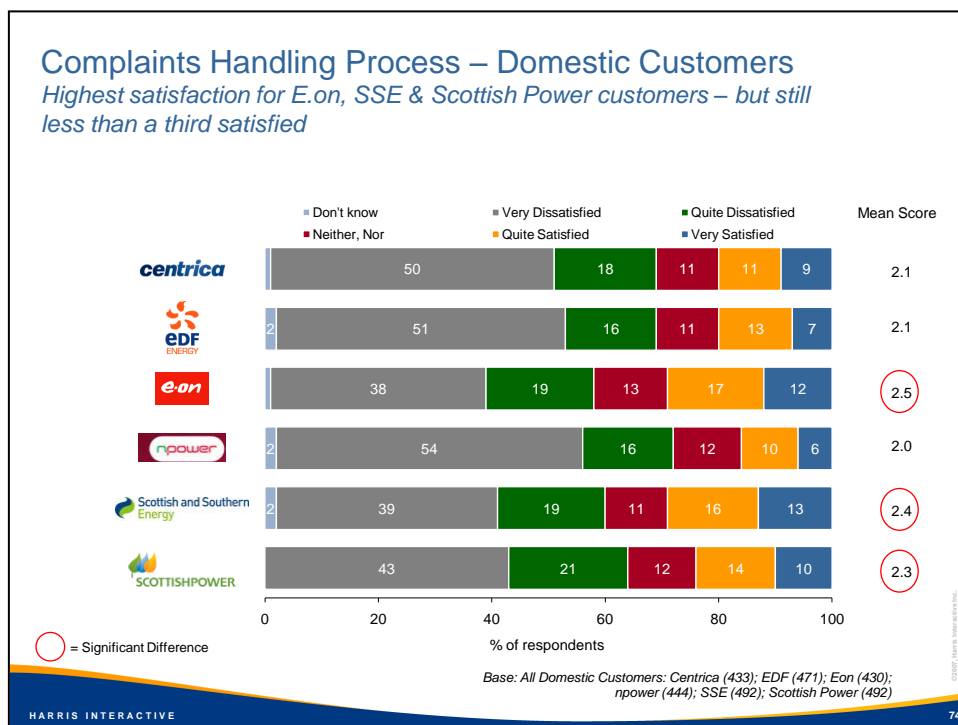
Only 1 Micro Business customer registered their complaint face to face.

C5. Overall Satisfaction with Complaints Handling Process

As with the majority of the individual elements of the complaints handling process, the majority of customers, both Domestic and Micro Business, were dissatisfied with their experience of the overall process. Almost half (46%) of Domestic customers and over half (57%) of Micro Businesses were 'very' dissatisfied.

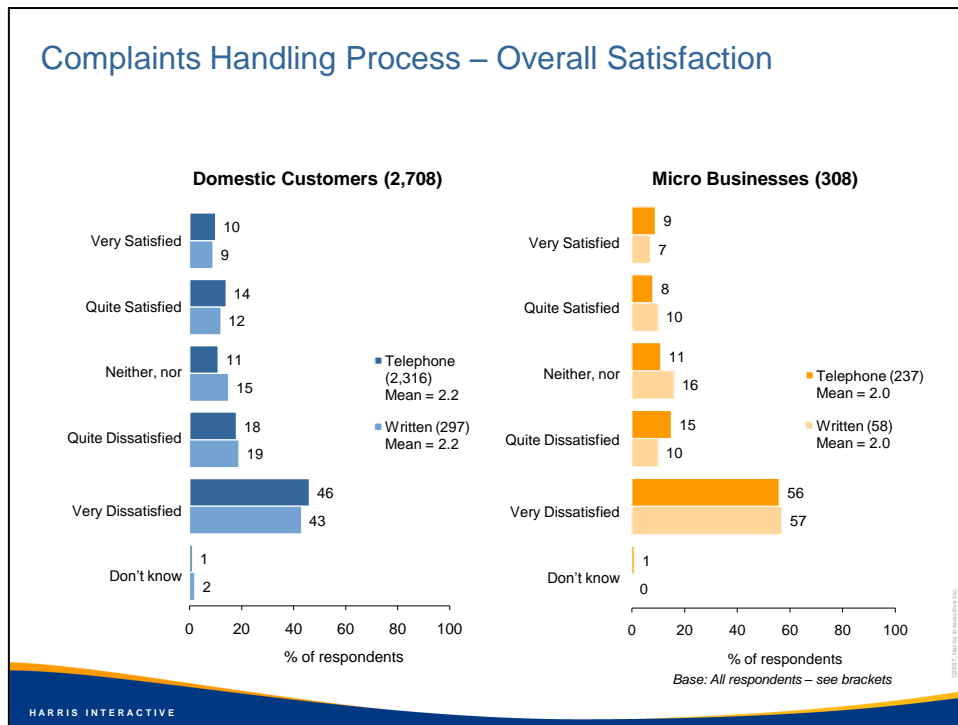
By supplier, satisfaction was highest among E.on, SSE and Scottish Power customers, however, still less than a third were satisfied – 29%, 29% and 24% respectively. This can be seen on the following chart.

Chart 15 – Overall Satisfaction by Supplier



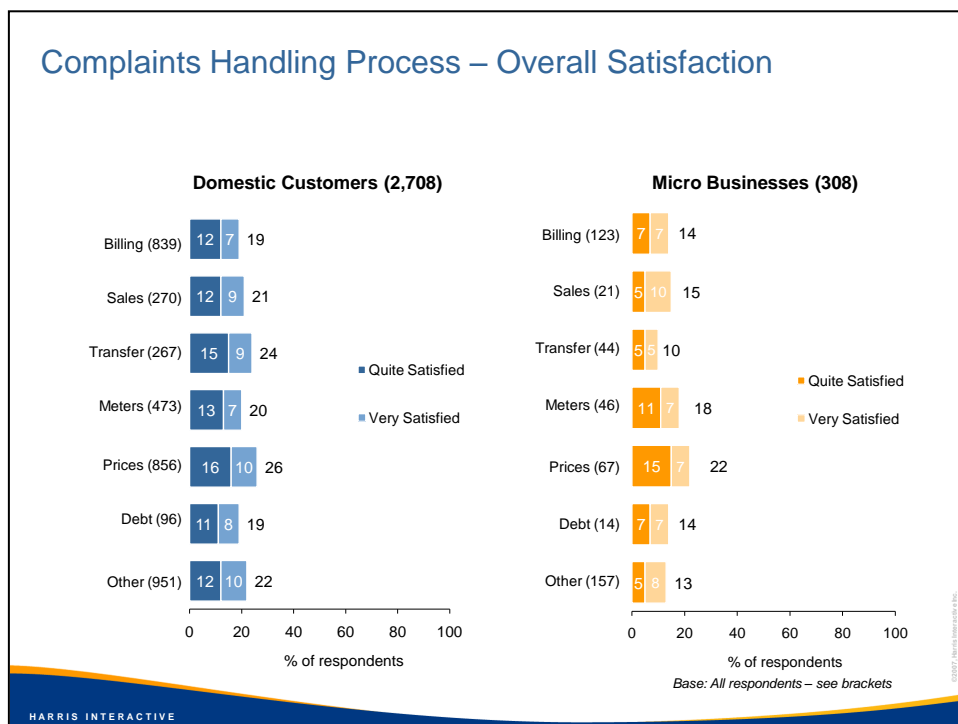
Levels of satisfaction were similar regardless of whether the complaint was made by telephone or in writing as can be seen from the chart below.

Chart 15 – Overall Satisfaction by Complaint Method



The following chart illustrates the different levels of overall satisfaction with the complaints handling process for each of the different types of complaint made. Satisfaction was highest for Price related complaints for both Domestic and Micro Business customers and whilst Price related complaints elicited the highest levels of satisfaction, there were few differences between the different complaint topics.

Chart 16 – Overall Satisfaction by Nature of Complaint



Customers were asked why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the overall process. Among Domestic and Micro Business customers, the key drivers of satisfaction were the assistance/helpful attitude of staff, complaint being dealt with or resolved promptly and having the problem resolved at all. Conversely, the drivers of dissatisfaction were not having the complaint dealt with or resolved, the process taking too long, unhelpful staff and a lack of, or poor, communication.

The following table shows the proportion of customers giving each response when asked why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the overall complaints handling procedure.

Table 8 – Reasons for satisfaction with the complaints handling procedure overall

<i>% of respondents answering</i>	Domestic Customers	Micro Business*
<i>Base:</i>	256	25
Satisfied with assistance / helpful staff	47	52
Dealt with / resolved quickly	30	24
Problem resolved	13	20
Eventually helped	6	-
No complaints / problems	5	-
Got the result I hoped for	4	-

Other responses 3% or less

**Caution: Low base*

A selection of verbatim comments given by Domestic and Micro Business customers who were satisfied with the complaints handling process are given below

Domestic Customers

- *“They were very thorough and professional, and seemed to want to help.”*
- *“It was handled extremely well, I received a written apology and a lovely bunch of flowers.”*
- *“The guy was really helpful, and he called us back when he said he would”*
- *“The problem was dealt with quickly, I only rang up the once.”*
- *“Because the woman did as she said on the phone, they sent a new bill with a new reading and it was done immediately.”*

Micro Business Customers

- *“They went over and beyond ... more than we could hope for”*
- *“She was clued up, she was very efficient and sorted it out that day and rang back to confirm.”*
- *“They knew exactly what they did wrong, solved the problem relatively quickly.”*

Table 9 – Reasons for dissatisfaction with the complaints handling procedure overall

<i>% of respondents answering</i>	Domestic Customers	Micro Business*
<i>Base:</i>	<i>1,726</i>	<i>218</i>
Unresolved / Not dealt with	22	24
Process took too long	18	17
Staff unhelpful / bad attitude	16	12
Lack of / Poor communication	14	17
Poor customer service	10	8
Generally unhappy / dissatisfied	9	6
Unhappy with (proposed) resolution	7	9
Information unsatisfactory / wrong	7	6
Do not listen / not interested	6	7
Customer has to chase / contact	5	1


A selection of verbatim comments given by customers who were dissatisfied with the complaints handling process are given below

- *“Just general not taking responsibility. Not taking us through the steps that we need to.”*
- *“Still on going and I'm getting passed from one person to another.”*
- *“After each call they assured me that it was sorted, but it was obvious it wasn't when I still received bills.”*
- *“Because I just don't think they were listening to what I was asking ... nobody wanted to help me and they weren't explaining it.”*
- *“There is a lack of communication ... I have to repeat my details to an answer phone”*
- *“The way they treated me, the lady was eating chewing gum and talking like she didn't care, she was very unprofessional.”*

As can be seen from the following chart, some significant differences existed between the suppliers in terms of drivers of overall dissatisfaction. Centrica and npower customers were significantly more likely to feel that the process took too long and E.on customers were more likely than others to be dissatisfied with the resolution that they received or that was proposed to them.

Chart 17 – Reasons for Dissatisfaction by Supplier

Drivers of Overall Dissatisfaction – Domestic Customers

						
<i>Base:</i>	289	316	245	310	284	282
Unresolved / Not dealt with	20	24	20	26	25	15  
Process took too long	22  	16	10	27  	12	12
Staff unhelpful / bad attitude	18	16	19	11  	13	19
Lack of / Poor communication	15	16	13	13	14	15
Poor customer service	13	10	9	10	6  	7  
Generally unhappy / dissatisfied	7	12	11	10	9	9
Unhappy with (proposed) resolution	7	5	10  	4	7	8
Information unsatisfactory / wrong	6	6	6	11	7	7
Do not listen / not interested	4  	8	8	4  	8	9
Customer has to chase / contact	3  	6	5	8	7	5

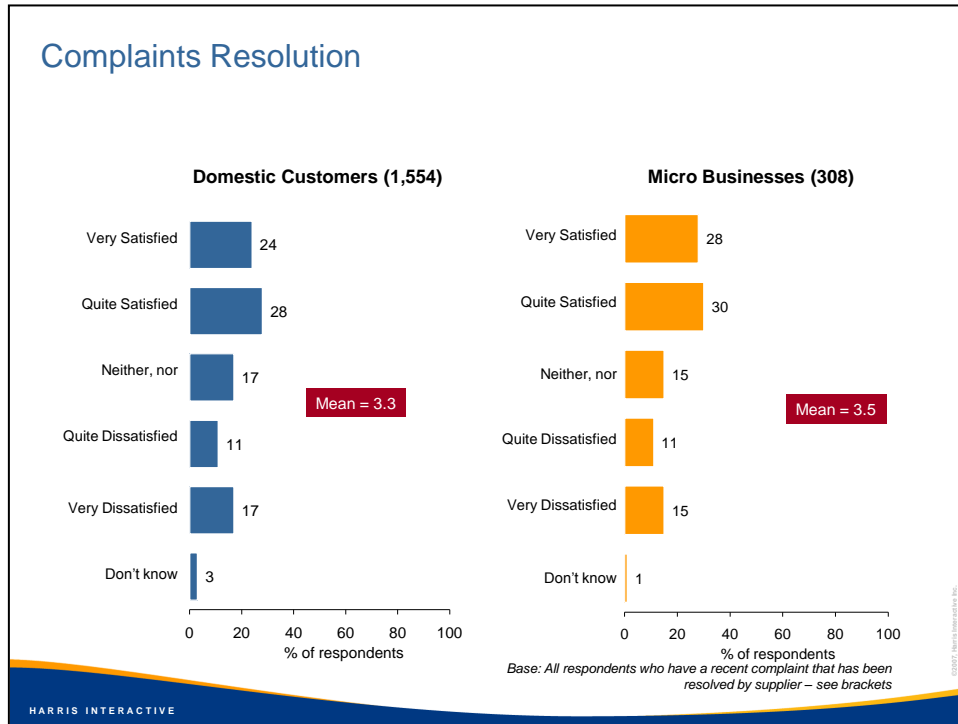
 = Significant Difference   Above/below other suppliers

©2009 Harris Interactive

C6. Resolution

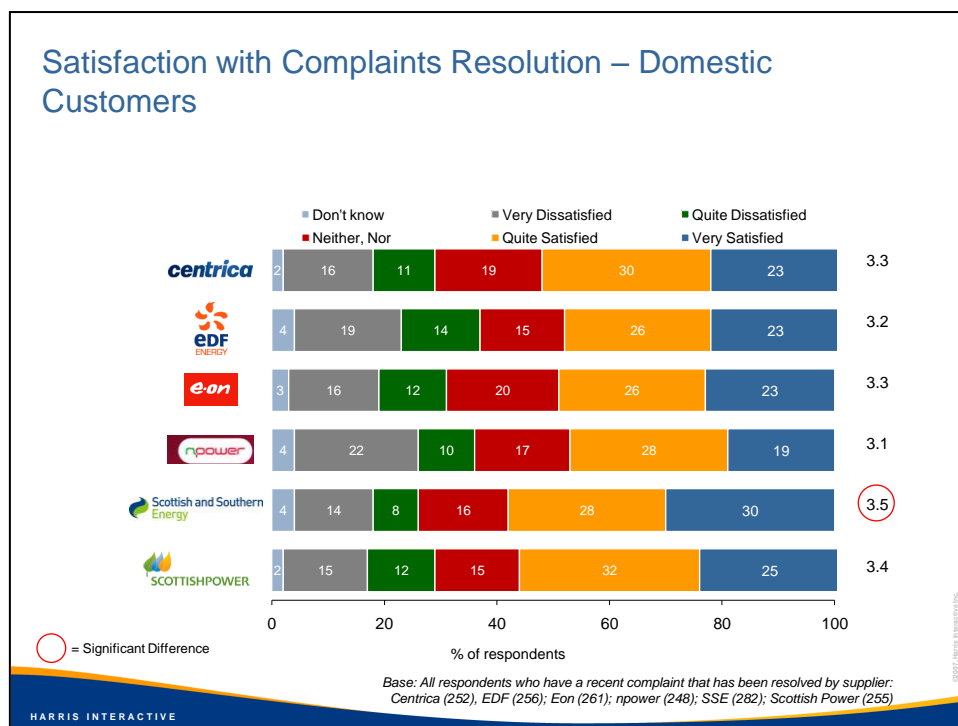
Although satisfaction with the different elements and the process overall was low, customers were more positive about the resolution that they had received. Slightly over half of Domestic (52%) and almost three-fifths (58%) of Micro Business customers who considered their complaint to have been resolved claimed to be satisfied with the resolution. In both cases however, around a quarter of customers remained dissatisfied as can be seen in chart 17.

Chart 18 – Overall Satisfaction with Complaints Resolution



As can be seen on the following chart, npower customers were the least satisfied (47% 'very/quite' satisfied) and SSE and Scottish Power customers the most satisfied – 58% and 57% 'quite/very' satisfied respectively.

Chart 19 – Overall Satisfaction with Complaints Resolution by Supplier



Customers whose complaint had been resolved by their supplier were asked whether they had had an expectation of a possible outcome to their complaint when they initially contacted their supplier. A quarter (24%) of Domestic customers stated that although they made a complaint, they did not expect anything to happen as a result and expected no outcome or resolution. Of these respondents, three-quarters (75%) received no resolution or outcome to their complaint – a figure consistent across the different suppliers, apart from npower customers, of whom less than half (46%) received no outcome/resolution.

Two-fifths (42%) of Domestic customers expected simply to have their problem/complaint rectified when making their complaint. Of these customers, slightly over half (58%) had their problem rectified by the supplier – this did not differ among the suppliers.

A similar proportion (39%) expected to receive an apology letter or email when they registered their complaint. However, of these customers, only one in five (22%) actually received one. npower customers were significantly more likely than others to receive an apology letter or email – 32% vs. 22% overall.

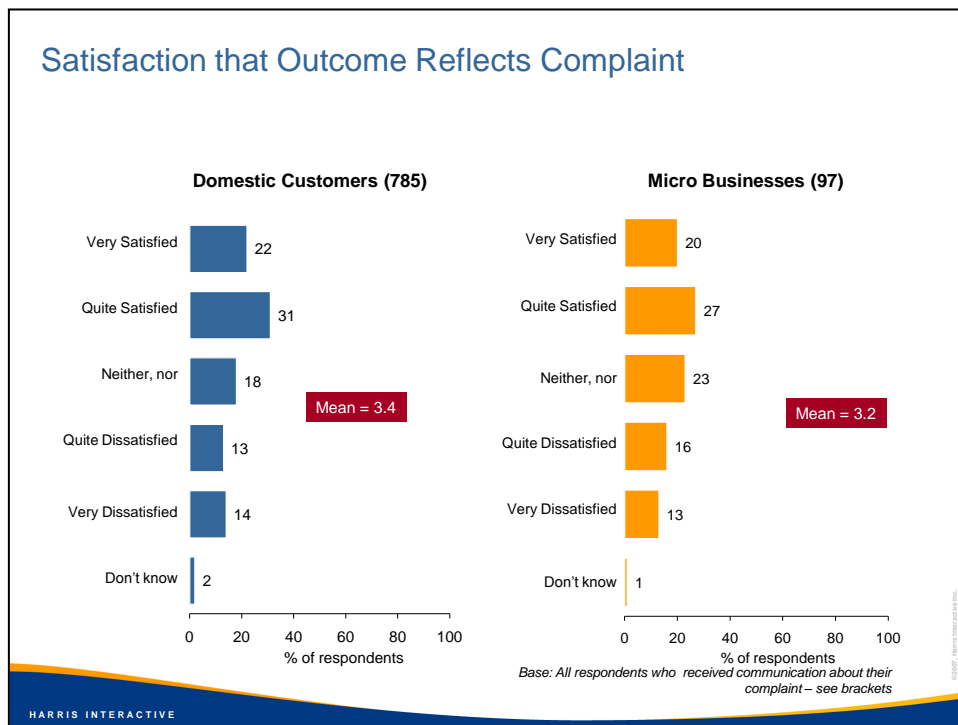
One in four customers expected to receive a compensation or apology payment (24%) or an apology telephone call (23%) from their supplier as a result of making their complaint. Of those expecting a payment, one in three (34%) actually received one with Centrica and E.on customers significantly less likely to do so than others – 27% and 21% respectively. Slightly under one in five (17%) customers received an apology telephone call – a figure consistent across the different suppliers.

Micro Business customers were more likely than Domestic to expect some form of action to occur having registered their complaint. Less than one in five (16%) expected nothing to happen and of these customers, three-fifths (62%) received nothing. However, a significantly higher proportion of Micro Business than Domestic customers expected their problem/complaint to be rectified by the supplier – three-fifths (60%) of Micro Business customers compared to two-fifths (42%) of Domestic customers. Of those who expected their complaint to be rectified, two-thirds (68%) received a resolution – a significantly higher figure than among Domestic customers.

There were no other significant differences between Micro Business and Domestic customer expectations and received outcomes. Two-fifths (39%) of Domestic customers expected to receive an apology letter or email – a quarter (26%) of whom actually received one. A quarter (24%) expected an apology telephone call – slightly over one in ten (13%) of whom actually received one. Two-fifths (22%) expected to receive compensation or an apology payment and of these customers, almost one in three (29%) received as they had expected.

The following chart shows that Domestic customers were slightly, albeit not significantly, more satisfied than Micro Business that the outcome that they received accurately reflected the nature and seriousness of their complaint. For both customer types, around half of customers were satisfied (53% of Domestic ‘very/quite’ satisfied and 47% of Micro Business ‘very/quite’ satisfied) and a quarter were not satisfied (27% of Domestic ‘very/quite’ dissatisfied and 29% of Micro Business ‘very/quite’ dissatisfied).

Chart 20 – Overall Satisfaction with Complaints Resolution



D. Appendix

D1. Quantitative Questionnaire

Version: 7	Date: 23 rd Feb '09	Designer: IM			
------------	--------------------------------	--------------	--	--	--

Ofgem – Customer Satisfaction with Complaints Research

Respondent Name: _____

Job Title: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Classification Information

S1. Supplier (from sample)

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|----|---------|
| Centrica (British Gas) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 | N = 500 |
| EDF Energy | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 | N = 500 |
| E.on UK | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 | N = 500 |
| RWE npower | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 | N = 500 |
| SSE | <input type="checkbox"/> | 05 | N = 500 |
| ScottishPower | <input type="checkbox"/> | 06 | N = 500 |

S2. Customer Type (from sample)

- | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|----|----------|
| Consumer | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 | N = 2700 |
| Micro Business | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 | N = 300 |

S4. Complaint Status (from sample)

- | | | |
|------------|--------------------------|----|
| Resolved | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| Unresolved | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |

S3. Quota (from sample)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----|---------|
| Centrica Consumer | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 | N = 450 |
| Centrica Micro Bus. | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 | N = 50 |
| EDF Consumer | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 | N = 450 |
| EDF Micro Bus. | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 | N = 50 |
| E.on Consumer | <input type="checkbox"/> | 05 | N = 450 |
| E.on Micro Bus. | <input type="checkbox"/> | 06 | N = 50 |
| RWE Consumer | <input type="checkbox"/> | 07 | N = 450 |
| RWE Micro Bus. | <input type="checkbox"/> | 08 | N = 50 |
| SSE Consumer | <input type="checkbox"/> | 09 | N = 450 |
| SSE Micro Bus. | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10 | N = 50 |
| ScottishPower Consumer | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11 | N = 450 |
| ScottishPower Micro Bus. | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12 | N = 50 |

S5. Date of Complaint (from sample)

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

S6. Date of Resolution (from sample)

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

S7. Method of Complaint (from sample)

- Telephone 01
- Letter 02
- Internet 03
- Email 04
- Fax 05
- Customer 06
- In Person 07
- Ombudsman 08
- SMS 09
- Textphone 10
- Written 11
- Verbal 12

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS AND MICROBUSINESSES WITH A NAMED CONTACT

S8. Good morning/afternoon. Could I please speak to [INSERT NAME FROM SAMPLE]?

Good morning/afternoon. My name is and I am calling from Harris Interactive, a market research consultancy based in Stockport. We are currently carrying out a project on behalf of the energy regulator Ofgem into energy suppliers' handling of recent customer complaints.

I believe that you made a complaint to your energy supplier in December, is that correct?

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> 01 | CONTINUE TO S11 IF MICROBUSINESS AND S12 IF CONSUMER |
| Yes – on behalf of someone else | <input type="checkbox"/> 02 | |
| <hr/> | | |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> 03 | SEEK REFERRAL & REPEAT IF NECESSARY OR THANK & CLOSE |

BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESSES WITH NO NAMED CONTACT

S9. Good morning/afternoon. My name is and I am calling from Harris Interactive, a market research consultancy based in Stockport. We are currently carrying out a project on behalf of the energy regulator Ofgem into energy suppliers' handling of recent customer complaints.

I believe that someone from your business made a complaint to your energy supplier in December is that correct?

- | | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> 01 | SEEK REFERRAL |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> 02 | THANK & CLOSE |
| Not a business | <input type="checkbox"/> 03 | CHECK DOMESTIC COMPLAINT AT S10 |

INTERVIEWER: IF YES (S9 CODE 1), ASK TO SPEAK TO COMPLAINANT AND REPEAT AS MICROBUSINESS WITH NAMED CONTACT FROM S8

BASE: ALL SAYING NOT A BUSINESS (S9 CODE 3)

S10. Was a complaint made relating to a domestic energy supplier?

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----|---------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 | SEEK REFERRAL |
| Yes – on behalf of someone else | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 | |
| <hr/> | | | |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 | THANK & CLOSE |

INTERVIEWER: IF YES (S10 CODE 1 OR 2), ASK TO SPEAK TO COMPLAINANT AND REPEAT AS CONSUMER RESPONDENT FROM S8

BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS

S11. And can I confirm, was your complaint related to the energy supplied to your business or to your home?

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------------------|----|---|
| Business | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 | CONTINUE TO S12 |
| <hr/> | | | |
| Home | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 | RE-CODE AS CONSUMER AND CONTINUE TO S12 |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

S12. Ofgem would like to understand a little more about your experience of making a complaint and how satisfied you were with both the process and the way in which your complaint was handled. We would greatly appreciate your help.

Could you please spare between 10 and 15 minutes to answer some questions?

(INTERVIEWER: REASSURE THE RESPONDENT THAT THE INTERVIEW IS CONFIDENTIAL, AND THAT WE ARE NOT SELLING ANYTHING)

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|----|------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 | CONTINUE |
| <hr/> | | | |
| Yes – but not now | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 | MAKE APPOINTMENT |
| <hr/> | | | |
| No – need to speak to someone else | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 | SEEK REFERRAL |
| <hr/> | | | |
| Refusal – satisfied with complaint handling | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 | THANK & CLOSE |
| Refusal – opted out of research | <input type="checkbox"/> | 05 | |
| Refusal – no reason given | <input type="checkbox"/> | 06 | |
| Refusal – no time | <input type="checkbox"/> | 07 | |
| Refusal – not interested | <input type="checkbox"/> | 08 | |
| Refusal – other reason | <input type="checkbox"/> | 09 | |

Classification & Nature of Complaint

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q1 Thank you. To begin with, can I confirm that you made a complaint to your energy supplier in December 2008?

INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT UNSURE OR UNABLE TO RECALL COMPLAINT, PROMPT WITH SUPPLIER NAME, METHOD AND DATE OF COMPLAINT FROM SAMPLE

- | | | |
|------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> 01 | CONTINUE |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> 02 | THANK & CLOSE |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> 03 | |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q2 And with which supplier did you make a complaint?

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| British Gas | <input type="checkbox"/> 01 | BRITISH GAS |
| Scottish Gas | <input type="checkbox"/> 02 | |
| EDF Energy | <input type="checkbox"/> 03 | EDF |
| E.on UK | <input type="checkbox"/> 04 | E.ON |
| nPower | <input type="checkbox"/> 05 | NPOWER |
| Utility Warehouse | <input type="checkbox"/> 06 | |
| Telecom Plus | <input type="checkbox"/> 07 | |
| Gas Plus Supply | <input type="checkbox"/> 08 | |
| Electricity Plus Supply | <input type="checkbox"/> 09 | SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN |
| Scottish & Southern Electric (SSE) | <input type="checkbox"/> 10 | |
| Southern Electric | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 | |
| Scottish Hydro | <input type="checkbox"/> 12 | |
| Atlantic | <input type="checkbox"/> 13 | SCOTTISH POWER |
| Swalec | <input type="checkbox"/> 14 | |
| ScottishPower | <input type="checkbox"/> 15 | |
| SP Manweb | <input type="checkbox"/> 16 | |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> 17 | |
| | | |
| | | |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q3 And was this complaint related to your gas or to your electricity?

SINGLE CODE

Gas 01

Electricity 02

Both 03

Something else (please specify) 04

CONTINUE

Don't know / can't remember 05 **THANK & CLOSE**

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q4 What was your recent complaint to [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] about?

DO NOT READ OUT BUT CODE ACCORDINGLY

MULTICODE

Billing – accuracy of bill 01

Billing – estimated bill 02

Billing – frequency 03

Billing – refunds 04

Sales – behaviour of sales staff 05

Sales – mis-information provided 06

Sales – agreed to receive information only 07

Transfer – problems switching to supplier 08

Transfer – problems switching from supplier 09

Meters – accuracy of meter 10

Meters – position of meter 11

Meters – meter readings 12

CONTINUE

Prices – notification of increases 13

Prices – amount of increase 14

Prices - direct debits 15

Debt – debt recovery 16

Debt – debt payment schemes 17

Debt – disconnection 18

Prepayment meters e.g. setting, faults, use 19

Customer service – general 20

Internet / website problems 21

Other (**please specify**) 22

Don't know / can't remember 23

THANK & CLOSE

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q5 And, using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means that it was not very serious and 5 means that it was very serious, could you tell me how serious you felt your complaint was?

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| 1 – Not very serious | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| 3 – Neither serious, nor unserious | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |
| 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 |
| 5 – Very serious | <input type="checkbox"/> | 05 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Don't know / Refused | <input type="checkbox"/> | 06 |

Contacting the Supplier

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q6 I would like to begin by talking about the contact that you had with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] when making your complaint. How many times have you had contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] regarding your complaint?

- Once only 01
- Twice 02
- Three times 03
- Four times 04
- More than four (please specify) 05
-
- Don't know 06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO HAD MORE THAN ONE CONTACT (Q6 CODEs 2 – 5)

Q7 And approximately how many times did [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] contact you and how many times did you have to contact them to resolve your complaint?

- Supplier contacted 01
- Respondent contacted 02
-
- Don't know 03

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO CONTACTED SUPPLIER (Q6 CODE 1 OR Q7 CODE 2)

Q8a In which of the following ways did you contact [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] when making your complaint?

**READ OUT
RANDOMISE
MULTICODE**

Telephone 01

Email 02

Letter 03

Fax 04

Website 05

Face to face 06

Other (please specify) 07

Don't know 08

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS CONTACTED BY SUPPLIER (Q7 CODE 1)

Q8b In which of the following ways did [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] contact you when handling your complaint?

**READ OUT
RANDOMISE
MULTICODE**

Telephone 01

Email 02

Letter 03

Fax 04

Website 05

Face to face 06

Other (please specify) 07

Don't know 08

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WITH MULTIPLE CONTACT METHODS (Q8a AND Q8b MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE EACH)

Q9 And which of these was your main type of contact?

DO NOT READ OUT BUT PROMPT IF NECESSARY

IF ONLY ONE RESPONSE AT Q8, FILL Q9 WITH THAT CODE

RANDOMISE

Telephone 01

Email 02

Letter 03

Fax 04

Website 05

Face to face 06

Other (please specify) 07

Don't know 08

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q10 How did you find the contact information that you used to make your complaint?

DO NOT READ OUT BUT PROMPT IF NECESSARY

MULTICODE

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|----|
| On a bill or account statement | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| Supplier website | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| Other website | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |
| Other form of communication from supplier | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 |
| Referred from other department within supplier e.g. accounts, meter reading | <input type="checkbox"/> | 05 |
| Consumer Focus | <input type="checkbox"/> | 06 |
| Consumer Direct | <input type="checkbox"/> | 07 |
| Copy of suppliers' Complaints Handling procedure | <input type="checkbox"/> | 08 |
| Energy Ombudsman | <input type="checkbox"/> | 09 |
| Citizens Advice Bureau | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10 |
| Age Concern | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11 |
| Friends/Family | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12 |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 13 |
-

Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	14
------------	--------------------------	----

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS REFERRED FROM OTHER DEPARTMENT (Q10 CODE 5)

Q11 You say that you were referred from a different part of [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], how satisfied were you with the way that your referral was handled?

READ OUT

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| Very satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| Quite satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |
| Quite dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 |
| Very dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 05 |
-
- | | | |
|------------|--------------------------|----|
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | 06 |
|------------|--------------------------|----|

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS DISSATISFIED WITH REFERRAL (Q11 CODES 4 OR 5)

Q12 Why do you say that?
PROBE FULLY

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q13 How easy did you find it to get hold of the correct contact details to make your complaint?
READ OUT

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| Very easy | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| Quite easy | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| Neither easy, nor difficult | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |
| Not very easy | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 |
| Not at all easy | <input type="checkbox"/> | 05 |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | 06 |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO FOUND IT VERY EASY OR DIFFICULT (Q13 CODES 1, 4 OR 5)

Q14 Why do you say that?
PROBE FULLY

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q15 Thinking about the complaint that you made to [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], has your complaint been resolved by [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], by the Ombudsman or is it still ongoing?

READ OUT

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Resolved by supplier | <input type="checkbox"/> 01 |
| Resolved by Ombudsman | <input type="checkbox"/> 02 |
| Not resolved | <input type="checkbox"/> 03 |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> 04 |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q16 You told me that you had contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] more than once. Were you given an explanation as to why your complaint was not resolved following your first contact?

- | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> 01 |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> 02 |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q17a How satisfied were you that you had to have more than one contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] before your complaint could be resolved?

READ OUT

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Very satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> 01 |
| Quite satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> 02 |
| Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> 03 |
| Quite dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> 04 |
| Very dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> 05 |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> 06 |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q17b Whilst resolving your complaint, did [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] ... ?

READ OUT
MULTICODE

- Direct you to their Complaints Handling procedure on their website 01
- Offer to provide you with a copy of their Complaints Handling procedure free of charge 02

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q18 And were you given any of the following information to re-contact [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] whilst your complaint was being resolved?

READ OUT
MULTICODE

- Telephone number 01
- Reference number 02
- Named contact 03
- Contact hours 04
- Email address 05
-
- None of these 06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q19 And when you had to make further contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], did they have any of the following details about you and your complaint?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| Correct contact details | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| A record of your complaint | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| Full details about the complaint | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |
| <hr/> | | |
| None of these | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q20 Following your final contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], did you receive any confirmation, either by telephone or in writing, that your complaint had been resolved?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|----|
| Yes – telephone | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| Yes – letter | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| Yes – email | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |
| <hr/> | | |
| None of these | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q21 Did you expect to receive any?

MULTICODE

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|----|
| Telephone call | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| Letter | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| Email | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q22 Were you given a timescale in which your complaint would be resolved?
DO NOT READ OUT BUT PROMPT IF NECESSARY

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| No timescale given | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| Within 1 day | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| Within 2 days | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |
| Between 3 and 7 days (within a week) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 |
| 8 – 14 days (within a fortnight) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 05 |
| 14 – 28 days (within a month) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 06 |
| Longer than 28 days | <input type="checkbox"/> | 07 |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | 08 |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q22a And how satisfied were you with this?
READ OUT

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| Very satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| Quite satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |
| Quite dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 |
| Very dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 05 |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | 06 |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS GIVEN A TIMESCALE (Q22 CODES 2 – 7)

Q23 And did [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] keep to this timescale?

- | | | |
|------------|--------------------------|----|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q24 Whilst making your complaint to [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], at anytime did you have to escalate your concern to a senior member of staff or a manager?

Yes 01

No 02

Don't know 03

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHERE COMPLAINT NOT RESOLVED BY SUPPLIER (Q15 CODE 2 OR 3)

Q25 You say that your complaint was not resolved by [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], have any of the following taken place?

**READ OUT
MULTICODE**

- [SUPPLIER FROM Q2] directed you to their Complaints Handling procedure on website 01
- [SUPPLIER FROM Q2] offered to provide a copy of their Complaints Handling procedure free of charge 02
- [SUPPLIER FROM Q2] made you aware of your right to a qualifying redress scheme 03
- [SUPPLIER FROM Q2] referred your complaint to the Energy Ombudsman 04
- [SUPPLIER FROM Q2] made you aware of additional sources of information and advice 05
- You contacted the Energy Ombudsman directly 06
- You contacted Consumer Direct 07
- You contacted Consumer Focus 08
- You contacted the Citizens Advice Bureau 09
- You contacted Age Concern 10
- You contacted another advice agency 11
- Anything else (please specify) 12

-
- No further action taken place** 13
 - Don't know 14

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WITH FURTHER ACTION FROM SUPPLIER (Q25 CODES 1 – 5)

Q26 How satisfied are you with the actions that [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] have taken?
READ OUT

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| Very satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| Quite satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |
| Quite dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 |
| Very dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 05 |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | 06 |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO ARE VERY SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED (Q26 CODES 1, 4 OR 5)

Q27 Why do you say that?
PROBE FULLY

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHERE COMPLAINT NOT RESOLVED (Q15 CODE 2 OR 3)

Q28 What is happening with your complaint now?
PROBE FULLY

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLAINED BY TELEPHONE (Q9 CODE 1)

Q29 I would now like to talk about the service that you received from [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] and the way in which you felt your complaint was handled.

For each statement that I read out, I would like you to tell me how satisfied you were with the service that you received using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means that you were not at all satisfied and 5 means you were very satisfied.

READ OUT

- The attitude of the call handler towards dealing with your complaint 01
- The professionalism of the call handler 02
- Their understanding of your complaint or problem 03
- The call handler taking ownership of your complaint 04
- Their knowledge of the possible solutions to resolve your complaint 05
- Their knowledge of the next steps in resolving your complaint 06
- The call handlers ability to make decisions there and then to help resolve your complaint 07
- Their proactive approach to resolving your complaint 08

ASK ALL WHOSE COMPLAINT REQUIRED FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5)

- Clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings in resolving your complaint 09
- Calling you back if promised or agreed 10

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLAINED IN WRITING (Q9 CODES 2 – 5)

Q30 Thinking about when you made your complaint to [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], did you receive confirmation, by letter, email or telephone that your complaint had been received and would be addressed?

MULTICODE

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|----|
| Yes – letter | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| Yes – email | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| Yes – telephone | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |
| None of these | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | 05 |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLAINED IN WRITING AND REQUIRED FURTHER CONTACT (Q9 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q6 CODES 2 – 5)

Q31 And did you receive an update on the progress or status of your complaint whilst waiting for it to be resolved?

- | | | |
|------------|--------------------------|----|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLAINED IN WRITING (Q9 CODES 2 – 5)

Q32 I would now like to talk about the service that you received from [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] and the way in which you felt your complaint was handled.

For each statement that I read out, I would like you to tell me how satisfied you were with the service that you received using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means that you were not at all satisfied and 5 means you were very satisfied.

READ OUT

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Ease of registering your complaint | <input type="checkbox"/> 01 |
| Being informed of the next steps / what would happen next in terms of resolving your complaint | <input type="checkbox"/> 02 |
| Being made aware of the timeframe in which your complaint would be addressed | <input type="checkbox"/> 03 |
| The feeling that someone had taken ownership of your complaint | <input type="checkbox"/> 04 |
| Being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint if necessary | <input type="checkbox"/> 05 |
| Taking a proactive approach to resolving your complaint | <input type="checkbox"/> 06 |

ASK ALL WHOSE COMPLAINT REQUIRED FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Contacting you if promised or agreed | <input type="checkbox"/> 07 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLAINED FACE TO FACE (Q9 CODE 6)

Q33 I would now like to talk about the service that you received from [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] and the way in which you felt your complaint was handled.

For each statement that I read out, I would like you to tell me how satisfied you were with the service that you received using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means that you were not at all satisfied and 5 means you were very satisfied.

READ OUT

- The attitude of the representative towards dealing with your complaint 01
- The professionalism of the representative 02
- Their understanding of your complaint or problem 03
- The representative taking ownership of your complaint 04
- Their knowledge of the possible solutions to resolve your complaint 05
- Their knowledge of the next steps in resolving your complaint 06
- Their ability to make decisions there and then to help resolve your complaint 07
- Their proactive approach to resolving your complaint 08

ASK ALL WHOSE COMPLAINT REQUIRED FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 - 5)

- Clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings in resolving your complaint 09
- Calling you back if promised or agreed 10

Overall Satisfaction

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q34 Taking into account everything that we have talked about so far regarding the complaints process, how satisfied were you overall with the way in which your complaint was handled by [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2]?

READ OUT

- Very satisfied 01
- Quite satisfied 02
- Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied 03
- Quite dissatisfied 04
- Very dissatisfied 05

- Don't know 06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS VERY SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED (Q34 CODES 1, 4 OR 5)

Q35 Why do you say that?

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT HAS BEEN RESOLVED (Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q36 And how satisfied were you with the resolution to your complaint?

READ OUT

- Very satisfied 01
- Quite satisfied 02
- Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied 03
- Quite dissatisfied 04
- Very dissatisfied 05

- Don't know 06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT HAS BEEN RESOLVED (Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q37 Finally, thinking about the resolution to your complaint, did you **expect** to receive any of the following having made a complaint?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

Nothing expected 01

Rectification of problem 02

Apology letter or email 03

Apology telephone call 04

Compensation or apology payment 05

Anything else (please specify) 06

Don't know 07

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT HAS BEEN RESOLVED (Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q38 And did you receive anything?

Nothing received 01

Rectification of problem 02

Apology letter or email 03

Apology telephone call 04

Compensation or apology payment 05

Anything else (please specify) 06

Don't know 07

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO RECEIVED SOMETHING (Q38 CODES 2 – 5)

Q39 How satisfied were you that what you received adequately reflected the problems that you had encountered?

READ OUT

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| Very satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| Quite satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |
| Quite dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 |
| Very dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> | 05 |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | 06 |
-

Recent Complaints

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q40 Before we finish, can you tell me if you have made a complaint, excluding the one we have talked about today, to any of the following types of company or organisation in the last 12 months?

READ OUT

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|----|
| Energy supplier | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| Water company | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| Telephone provider | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |
| Internet service provider | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 |
| Bank or Building Society | <input type="checkbox"/> | 05 |
| Transport company e.g. trains or buses | <input type="checkbox"/> | 06 |
| Local council | <input type="checkbox"/> | 07 |
| Anyone else (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 08 |
-
-

Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	09
------------	--------------------------	----

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q41 And in general terms, how confident do you feel about making a complaint to companies such as these?

READ OUT

- | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|----|
| Very confident | <input type="checkbox"/> | 01 |
| Quite confident | <input type="checkbox"/> | 02 |
| Neither, nor | <input type="checkbox"/> | 03 |
| Not very confident | <input type="checkbox"/> | 04 |
| Not at all confident | <input type="checkbox"/> | 05 |
-
- | | | |
|------------|--------------------------|----|
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | 06 |
|------------|--------------------------|----|

Classification

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q42 Gender

INTERVIEWER RECORD – DO NOT READ OUT

Male 01

Female 02

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q43 And finally for classification purposes only, could you tell me which of the following age bands you fall into?

READ OUT

18 - 24 01

25 - 35 02

36 - 45 03

46 - 55 04

56 - 65 05

66+ 06

Decline to answer 07

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q44 Which of the following best describes your current working status?

READ OUT

Working - full time (30+hrs) 01

Working - part time (8 - 29hrs) 02

Unemployed seeking work 03

Unemployed not seeking work 04

Retired 05

Decline to answer 06

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q45 And finally, what is your marital status?

READ OUT

Married/living with partner 01

- Single 02
- Separated/divorced/ Widowed 03
-
- Decline to answer 04

BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 2)

Q46 And finally, for classification purposes and so that we can analyse our results by different type of business, could you please tell me your primary business activity?

BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 2)

Q47 And your job title within the business?

BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 2)

Q48 What is your companies' approximate annual turnover?

- Less than £25,000
- £25,000 to £50,000 01
- £50,001 to £250,000 02
- £250,001 to £500,000 03
- £500,001 to £1 million 04
- £1 million to £2 million 05
- More than £2 million 06
-
- Decline to answer 07

BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 2)

Q49 And how many full time employees do you have?

- Number of employees
-
- Don't know 01

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q50 As part of this research we would like to re-contact some customers of [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] to discuss their answers in greater detail. This interview would last for approximately 20 minutes and be conducted by telephone at a time to suit you. Would

you be willing to possibly take part in one of these more detailed interviews?

Yes 01

No 02

INTERVIEWER REASSURE OF NO FURTHER CONTACT

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WILLING TO TAKE PART IN FURTHER INTERVIEW (Q48 CODE

1)

Q51 INTERVIEWER RECORD RESPONDENT CONTACT DETAILS, POTENTIAL
AVAILABILITY & SUITABILITY FOR TELEPHONE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

Suitable – positive experience 01

Suitable – negative experience 02

Unsuitable 03

Thank you for your help. Can I just remind you that this interview is part of a market research survey being carried out by Harris Interactive. If you want to verify that we are a bona fide agency, I can give you the Freephone number of the Market Research Society to ring.
GIVE NUMBER IF REQUIRED (0500 396 999).

D2. Qualitative Discussion Guide

Ofgem – Customer Satisfaction with Complaints Research
In-depth Telephone Interview

Unique Ref No.: _____
Name: _____
Job Title:
(If applicable) _____
Company:
(If applicable) _____
Telephone: _____
Supplier: _____

Customer Type:	Consumer	<input type="checkbox"/> 01	80/20 SPLIT
	Micro Business	<input type="checkbox"/> 02	
Experience	Positive/good experience	<input type="checkbox"/> 01	EVEN SPLIT
	Negative/poor experience	<input type="checkbox"/> 02	

SPEAK TO PM FOR THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

DATE OF INITIAL INTERVIEW: _____

COMPLAINT ESCALATED TO SENIOR MANAGER: ____

ADDITIONAL CONTACT REQUIRED: ____

RECORD FROM INTERVIEW SUMMARY FOR USE IN SECTION F - EXPERIENCE OF COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

TELEPHONE OR FACE TO FACE COMPLAINTS – RATING OUT OF 5

- The attitude of the call handler towards dealing with your complaint _____
- The professionalism of the call handler _____
- Their understanding of your complaint or problem _____
- The call handler taking ownership of your complaint _____
- Their knowledge of the possible solutions to resolve your complaint _____
- Their knowledge of the next steps in resolving your complaint _____
- The call handlers ability to make decisions there and then to help resolve your complaint _____
- Their proactive approach to resolving your complaint _____
- Clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings in resolving your complaint _____
- Calling you back if promised or agreed _____

WRITTEN COMPLAINT (LETTER, EMAIL, FAX) – RATING OUT OF 5

- Ease of registering your complaint _____
- Being informed of the next steps / what would happen next in terms of resolving your complaint _____
- Being made aware of the timeframe in which your complaint would be addressed _____
- The feeling that someone had taken ownership of your complaint _____
- Being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint if necessary _____
- Taking a proactive approach to resolving your complaint _____
- Contacting you if promised or agreed _____

Introduction

INTERVIEWER:

My name is.... From Harris Interactive, I am calling to follow up on the interview you conducted with us on the (date). At the time we mentioned that as part of this research we would potentially like to re-contact you to discuss your answers in greater detail. Would it be possible to speak to you about this now?

THANK RESPONDENT FOR TIME AND CONFIRM INTERVIEW TO LAST APPROXIMATELY 20 MINS

WILL BE CONDUCTED UNDER MRS CODE OF CONDUCT – CONFIDENTIAL AND FOR RESEARCH ONLY

EXPLAIN PURPOSE OF INTERVIEW:

To discuss your experiences of the complaints handling procedure in more detail, understand what was particularly good/bad and what lessons can be learnt for future complaint handling.

CONTEXT OF INTERVIEW:

Although we are very interested to hear about more about the complaint you made to (SUPPLIER) please feel free to think about any experiences you have had with other suppliers where positive lessons can be learnt.

REASSURANCE:

We apologise if we ask you to talk through something you have already gone through with us in your initial interview. We just want to make sure we fully understand where things have gone particularly right or wrong so that we can feed back your experiences and learn from them.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Section A - Initial Contact

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

- Q1** First of all, just to get a little background, can you tell me whether you have made a complaint to (SUPPLIER) before?
Probe on: what prompted that complaint? How well did you think that complaint was handled? Did it make you more or less willing to complain this time? How did it compare to this complaint?1

Q2 And now can you talk me through in detail your most recent complaint? I appreciate that you have already told us the nature of your complaint when we first spoke to you, but we would really like to understand all about your complaint and how it was handled

Probe on: How serious was the issue? Have you ever complained about this before? How comfortable were you with making the complaint?

Q3 What were you're expectations before you made your complaint?

Probe on: did you think this would be a fairly common complaint? How long did you expect it would take to resolve? Did you think it would be handled there and then? What did you expect their customer service to be like? Why?

ASK IF NOT ALREADY COVERED

Q4 Did you have an expected outcome or resolution in mind?

Probe on: What did you expect to happen? Matter dealt with on first contact vs. multiple contacts? Did you expect an apology? Compensation? Anything else?

Section B - Additional Contact

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT COULD NOT BE RESOLVED IMMEDIATELY

Q5 Thinking now about the level of explanation you received from [SUPPLIER] as to why your complaint could not be resolved immediately – was this explained to you?

Probe on: Did you receive anything in writing? Did you expect this to happen? Did they do a good job of summing up your complaint? Why/why not? Did they do a good job of explaining why your complaint could not be resolved? Why/why not? How did that make you feel?

Q6 Did they provide you with details of what would happen next and what was your responsibility and what was theirs?

Probe on: Do you feel they took enough ownership of the complaint at that point? Why/why not? How did this make you feel?

Q7 When you had additional contact with [SUPPLIER], did they have all the relevant information to hand about your complaint?

Probe on: Did they have all of the details correct? If not, what did they get wrong? Why do you think that was? How did that make you feel? What did you/they do about it? What level of service did you expect from them? Did you get the same level of service every time you had contact with them or did it vary?

Section C - Escalated Complaints

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT WAS ESCALATED TO A SENIOR MEMBER OF STAFF/MANAGER

Q8 You said previously that your complaint was dealt with by a senior member of staff or a manager. Can you talk us through why this happened?
Probe on: Was this at your request/their initiative? If your request, how easy/difficult was this to put into action? Why did you feel the need to escalate your complaint to someone more senior? How did this make you feel? If at their initiative, how did that make you feel?

Q9 Once you got in touch with a senior member of staff/manager, how much did they know of/understand about your complaint?
Probe on: Did they have all of the details you expected them to? Did you have to repeat anything? How did they make you feel?

Q10 What happened to your complaint once the senior member of staff/manager became involved?
Probe on: Were they able to resolve the complaint? Were they able to put your mind at ease? Did they appreciate the severity of your complaint? Did they take ownership of the complaint? Did they pass you on to anyone else? Who and why?

Section D - Complaint Resolution

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WITH RESOLVED COMPLAINT

Q11 Thinking now about the resolution to your complaint. How satisfied were you with the way in which your complaint was resolved?
Probe on: Where you given enough information? Did the information meet your expectations? Did you feel confident your complaint would be resolved as they said it would?

Q12 Did you receive any confirmation either written or verbally as to how your complaint had been resolved?
Probe on: Did you expect to receive any? Where you happy with this confirmation? Could they have improved this in any way? Where you happy with the speed in which you received this?

Q13 Overall, were you happy with the way in which your complaint was resolved? (rather than the outcome of the complaint)
Probe on: Was the handling of your complaint better/worse than you thought it would be? Did it take longer/shorter/about the same amount of time as you expected it to?

Section E - Unresolved / Referred Complaints

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHERE COMPLAINT NOT RESOLVED OR BEEN REFERRED TO OMBUDSMAN

Q14 Could you tell me how and why your complaint was referred to the Ombudsman?
Probe on: Who prompted referral? Where any other organisations involved e.g. CAB, Consumer Direct/Focus? Were you made clear as to why your complaint was referred? Were you happy with the way in which it was done?

Q15a How did you feel once your complaint had been referred?
Probe on: Were you relieved it was taken out of the hands of (SUPPLIER)? Did (SUPPLIER) give you confidence that your complaint would now be resolved? Did you feel they were passing the buck/trying to help by referring you?

Q15b Did you have to seek assistance from a 3rd party such as Consumer Direct, Consumer Focus, Citizens Advice Bureau?
Probe on: Why was this? What happened when you sought assistance? Did it make you feel the complaint was being taken more/less seriously?

Section F - Experience of Complaints Handling Procedure

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q16 Thinking now about the process of making your complaint to [SUPPLIER] and the individual elements of service that you discussed in your previous interview with us. Can you tell me why you were particularly satisfied/dissatisfied with each of the following elements of the process?

Prompt where satisfaction scores – very high (5) or very low (1) for each element of service

DISSATISFIED(1)

Probe on: What was so poor about this? How did their performance compare to your expectations? What was the implication/impact of this?

SATISFIED (5)

Probe on: What was so good about this? Did they do anything above/beyond your expectations? What was the implication/impact of this?

TELEPHONE / FACE TO FACE COMPLAINTS

The attitude of the call handler towards dealing with your complaint

The professionalism of the call handler

Their understanding of your complaint or problem

The call handler taking ownership of your complaint

Their knowledge of the possible solutions to resolve your complaint

Their knowledge of the next steps in resolving your complaint

The call handlers ability to make decisions there and then to help resolve your complaint

Their proactive approach to resolving your complaint

Clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings in resolving your complaint

Calling you back if promised or agreed

WRITTEN COMPLAINT (LETTER, EMAIL, FAX)

Ease of registering your complaint

Being informed of the next steps / what would happen next in terms of resolving your complaint

Being made aware of the timeframe in which your complaint would be addressed

The feeling that someone had taken ownership of your complaint

Being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint if necessary

Taking a proactive approach to resolving your complaint

Contacting you if promised or agreed

Section G - Overall Satisfaction

Q17 Is there anything else you can tell us about that particularly impressed you in terms of the way your complaint was handled?

Q18 Is there anything else you can tell us about that particularly disappointed you?

Q19 If you worked for (SUPPLIER) what would be the key elements of their complaints handling procedures that you would want to improve?

Section H - Complaints with Other Organisations

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q20 Do you have any experience (within last 12 – 18 months or so) of making a complaint to another company or organisation?

Probe on: brief explanation and details of how the complaint was handled

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WITH RECENT COMPLAINT

Q21 How did your experience with [SUPPLIER] compare with this in terms of the way in which your complaint was dealt with?

Probe on: method of contact, interaction with staff, length/complexity of process, information provided etc.

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WITH RECENT COMPLAINT

Q22 Were there any specific elements of the process that you feel [SUPPLIER] could learn from in terms of how they handle complaints?

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q23 Thank you for your time today. Before we finish the interview, is there anything else that you would like to mention in terms of the way in which your complaint was handled?

Thank you for your help. Can I just remind you that this interview is part of a market research survey being carried out by Harris Interactive. If you want to verify that we are a bona fide agency, I can give you the Freephone number of the Market Research Society to ring.

GIVE NUMBER IF REQUIRED (0500 396 999).