

Smart metering workshop on vulnerable consumers

Stakeholder workshop
20 January 2011

Prospectus recap

- Everyone should have the necessary support to access the full range of benefits that smart meters offer

Prospectus set out options for providing support to vulnerable consumers:

- Involvement of local authorities and other trusted third parties
- Dedicated help scheme for vulnerable consumers
- Other measures including government-led campaigns and other sources of energy efficiency support

- While the installation visit presents an important opportunity to provide assistance and advice to vulnerable consumers, the requirement to let a stranger into the home may also create anxiety for some

Prospectus suggested that the code of practice for installation could include additional protection for vulnerable consumers

Consultation Responses

What information, advice and support might be provided for vulnerable consumers (e.g. a dedicated help scheme)? Who should it be provided to?

- Majority of respondents supported some additional measures or protections for vulnerable consumers
- Some support for specialised information provision
- Support for local coordination and involvement of third parties, both to help identify vulnerable consumers and to play a support role
- Some support for a centralised help scheme
- Some respondents argued that suppliers should be obliged to promote additional help for vulnerable and low-income consumers
- Support for the installation visit to be used as an opportunity to update the Priority Services Register
- Some respondents suggested the visit could be used to inform vulnerable consumers about the support offered by other government schemes.

Consumer research

- Need for simple, consistent information provision, available in a range of accessible formats
- Support for the involvement of community groups and local organisations to help with vulnerable groups
- Support for a follow-up visit for vulnerable groups to ensure they aren't experiencing problems and are confident using their meter and IHD.

Who might be considered vulnerable?

The Gas and Electricity Acts require particular regard to be given to:

- Disabled or chronically sick
- Those of pensionable age
- Those on low incomes
- Those residing in rural areas

Other groups may also be classed as vulnerable, including those:

- With low levels of literacy and numeracy or without a good command of English
- Without a bank account
- Without easy internet access
- Living in poor housing that is hard to heat

Ofgem also has responsibility to ensure that consumers on low incomes, or who are otherwise vulnerable to fuel poverty, are able to benefit from competitive markets

Priority Services Register

Domestic suppliers are obliged to publicise and maintain a register of all domestic customers who are of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick, where these customers have requested to be added to the register

Suppliers must provide advice and information, free of charge, on the free services available to these customers including:

- a password to be used by any person acting on behalf of the supplier
- the relocation of a PPM to make sure it is accessible
- the provision of bills and information in an accessible format

Aims of today's workshop

- To consider the particular needs of different groups of vulnerable consumers during the roll out of smart meters
- To consider measures that might be appropriate to promote and protect the interests of vulnerable consumer
- To identify potential opportunities that smart metering might present for provide help and support to vulnerable consumers

Issues outside of the scope of today's workshop

- Remote disconnection
- Remote switching between credit and prepayment modes
- Sales and marketing at point of installation
- Inclusivity of in-home display design and calibration of ambient feedback

Agenda

13.00 – 13.15 Introduction

13.15 – 15.40 Discussion on the following questions:

- What particular needs might different groups of vulnerable consumers have during the rollout of smart metering?
- How might the specific needs of different groups of vulnerable consumers be addressed?

15.40 – 16.00 Review and wrap up

Breakout discussion

What particular needs might different groups of vulnerable consumers have during the rollout of smart metering?

Breakout discussion

How might the specific needs of different groups of vulnerable consumers be addressed?

Wrap up and review



ofgem E-Serve

Promoting choice and value
for all gas and electricity customers