



Meeting Notes

Consumer Bills and Communications Roundtable

Sixth meeting of the Consumer Bills and Communications Roundtable Group	Date and time of Meeting Location	26 th February 09:00 – 11:00 Ofgem, 9 Millbank
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The meeting note below lays out the main discussion points, agreements and action points for the seventh meeting of the Consumer Bills and Communications Roundtable Group (CBCRG).

Attendees

Anne Pardoe	- Citizens Advice
Gillian Cooper	- Consumer Focus
Elizabeth Garber	- EDF Energy
Deb Roberts	- E.ON
Alun Rees	- Energy UK
James Tallack	- Which
Louise van Rensburg	- Ofgem (Chair)
Jemma Baker	- Ofgem
Stew Horne	- Ofgem
Victoria Volossov	- Ofgem



Meeting Notes

Key discussion and action points

The group discussed the comments on the document on the purposes of supplier communications, and began to evaluate the information requirements of a bill. The group also started to discuss terms for standardisation. Please see below for more details.

Actions from previous meetings

- **ACTION:** decide on future lifetime of group- complete
The CBCRG decided to plan for three additional meetings. Depending on our progress on the Standardisation of Terms, we will plan meetings beyond May in due course. The next meetings are on 3 April 2013; 1 May 2013; 29 May 2013.

Consumer Bills and Communications Roundtable Group (CBCRG) 26 February 2013

1. Group work on purposes of supplier communications

Ahead of the meeting Ofgem had circulated an updated table which reflected the group's discussion of the purposes, sub-purposes and regulatory content of supplier communications.

Citizens Advice, Which and EnergyUK provided comments on this table ahead of the meeting. One participant thought that some sub-purposes should be grouped differently, while another group member considered that there should only be one purpose for each document. Another participant suggested that the purposes should be established independently from the current granular content of a bill.

Following discussions in the previous sessions, the group started researching how suppliers send their communications, i.e. which communication requirements they combine and how. Table 1 shows how one small supplier combines their regulated communications.

Table 1 - How small suppliers send regulated documents to customers	
Bill	Sent together with company newsletter
Annual statement	Sent as a separate document
Price increase notification	Sent as a standalone document
Tariff Information Label	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Included in the starter pack - Included in Annual Statement
Best Deal	Included in Annual Statement, if relevant
Notice of rights/ Standards of service	<p>Terms and Conditions are included in the starter pack or in the cooling off letter.</p> <p>T's and C's are sent again if the customer changes from an evergreen to a fixed rate tariff.</p>
Priority Services Register	Welcome Pack; quarterly newsletter; website
Gas safety information	
Fuel label	Welcome Pack; online; Q3 newsletter
Complaints handling procedure	Online; annual complaints report; sent out upon request
Consumer checklist	Yearly, with Q3 statement; online; at least once a year referenced in company newsletter

The group identified some items to discuss whether they were useful and necessary on a Bill. Please see Table 2 below for details.

Table 2 Content requirements of a Bill	Discussion on appropriateness of content requirement	Ideas for changes
Calorific value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does a customer need it? - Could a customer calculate the bill without it? - Is this a high priority for them? - Where else, other than on the bill, would a customer find it? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does it need more explanation? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How many customers contact suppliers about this? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could quality of gas become more of an issue over time? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would removing it decrease transparency for a consumer? Could smart metering assist? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would lack of understanding cause dis-engagement from the bill? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would a bill be simpler without it? Is it the calculation or the term that is complex for consumers? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What existing research do suppliers have on this? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is there enough time to do further research? 	<p>(1) Full details available on request only to consumers and online. The Bill would only provide signposting to further info on calorific value.</p> <p>(2) Allow consumers to request regular insert on this topic</p> <p>(3) Provide consumers with signposting to third party with this information to increase trust.</p> <p>(4) Reduce the volume of information on calorific value</p> <p>(5) Suppliers to conduct further consumer research by through short trialling on impact of calorific value</p> <p>No recommendation was reached at this stage. This is pending further research by group participants. These are:</p> <p>Suppliers to review existing consumer research.</p> <p>Suppliers/Consumer groups to review contact/complaint information on this topic.</p>
Consumer checklist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consumer Focus is proposing to revise how the UK implements EU directive requirements for the consumer checklist. In a letter to DECC and Ofgem, Consumer Focus recommends an alternative approach. Current issues identified by Consumer Focus include the cost 	<p>(1) Provide signpost on bill only and available on request to consumers</p> <p>Consumer Focus to draft letter/ proposal</p> <p>Ofgem- check for duplication</p>

	<p>of updating and re-issuing the consumer checklist, as well as ensuring that suppliers display the latest version.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ESAS number required for Green Deal? 	<p>on impartial advice</p>
Consumption comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is this useful for consumers? - Should this be annual, quarterly or per billing period? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o If annual, should this be on the annual statement? Would that mean fewer consumers receive it? - Estimated meter readings could make accurate comparisons difficult? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No change: Ofgem to check the flexibility of UK implementation of the relevant EU directive(s)
Postal address for distributor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why is this needed? - If needed for complaints, consider replacing with an email address? - Is the telephone number sufficient? 	<p>(1) Remove address because it is not needed in an emergency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If needed for complaints, consider replacing with an email address <p>Ofgem to follow up this recommendation with the Networks division</p>
Rota disconnection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the radio an appropriate medium? - How would this work in an emergency? - Should this be a separate channel? 	<p>Ofgem to follow up with the Networks division to explore if this is still appropriate</p>
MPAN/MRPN number	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does this need to be on page one? Does this need some standardisation depending on its use in the change of supplier process? - What role does it play in the switching process? i.e. do consumers need it to change supplier, or is it a 'check' reference for switching? Are consumers told where to find meter numbers when they switch? 	<p>No recommendation at this stage</p> <p>Ofgem to follow up with the team conducting the change of supplier work and provide more details on the regulatory requirements.</p>

2. Standardisation of Terms discussion

Ofgem provided participants with an initial list of about 25 terms which might be considered necessary for standardisation. At the next meeting, participants will provide comments on those.

Actions

- **Action – Suppliers** to review existing consumer research on displaying calorific value; **suppliers/consumer groups**¹ to review contact and complaint information on this topic.
- **Action - Consumer Focus** to draft letter/proposal about consumer checklist; **Ofgem** check for duplication on impartial advice
- **Action – Ofgem** to research the flexibility of the implementation of the EU directive(s) on consumption comparison information.
- **Action– Ofgem** to follow up with the Networks division whether providing a postal address for the distributor and rota disconnection information is still appropriate.
- **Action – Ofgem** to follow up with the team conducting the change of supplier work and provide more details on the regulatory requirements for MPRN/MPAN numbers.
- **Action – Energy UK** to find out from its members how they dispatch regulated documents to customers (grouped together or sent separately?).
- **Action - Ofgem** to send out initial list of terms for standardisation and links to relevant research.
- **Action – Energy UK** to check for supplier research on standardisation of terms.
- **Action – Ofgem** to update the table setting out purposes to ensure it maps regulatory requirements to the content items.
- **Action – Energy UK** to consult with its members and begin to draft the recommendations report to Ofgem and Government.

¹ Consumer groups indicated at the session their consumer contact information is unlikely to be sufficiently granular to feedback on this issue.