



Utility Customer Service Management Ltd.

Submission to Ofgem
December 2017

Future supply market arrangements – call for evidence
14th November 2017.

UCSM Ltd acts as a Utilities consultancy spanning all utilities predominantly across the south of England and targeted towards small to medium sizes Customers hence, over 85% of our works is in the area of domestic supplies.

We are not a third-party intermediary but do interreact on behalf of our Customers with suppliers and it is based upon this background, this submission is made.

1. It is our firm view that many suppliers have not carried out their required functions effectively and this is particularly relevant in the area of metering services. Additionally, this has been enabled to a degree by “light touch” regulation / low levels of enforcement.
Examples (details available) include:
 - a. Supplier leaving Customers off supply for extended periods of time (UCSM Ref 732).
 - b. Supplier failing appointments as a routine (UCSM Ref 1053).
 - c. Supplier interpreting Guaranteed Standards to the detriment of Customers and appearing to have the support of Ofgem (UCSM Ref 550).
 - d. Suppliers ongoing poor response times to Customers requests (UCSM Ref – multiple).
2. Suppliers appear to have very low levels of accountability towards their Customers and whilst for DNO's this has to a large extent been addressed via the ICE initiative, no such engagement has been put in place for suppliers.
3. Meter operators have zero accountability towards end Customers which placed them in a very “privileged position”



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in a perverse manner inasmuch as they can (and often do) provide poor Customer service with no recourse.

4. Ironically, despite DNO's having far lower levels of direct Customer interface on a day to day basis, they have actively engaged with Customer to enable this engagement to drive their agenda in terms of Customer service but also other loosely connection functions.
5. Suppliers continue to carry out one-way communications with Customer e.g. emails and/or text messages from a source which will not accept replies forcing Customers to have to use telephone communication for which some suppliers are more than happy to leave Customers waiting for many minutes listening to music and the occasional message saying the call is important!
6. The performance of suppliers (we feel) is a critical factor in the current low levels of confidence Customers have in the energy market.

In conclusion, we do not feel the supplier hub and the role of all parties supporting the supplier hub has lead to good levels of Customer Service and this was demonstrated some years ago when the lead party in electrical disconnections was shifted from being the supplier to DNO's – a move which we feel clearly demonstrated a step change improvement in effectiveness in the delivery of simple tasks.