RETAIL ENERGY CODE

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REC CHANGE ISSUES GROUP
I0189 WORKGROUP MEETING MINUTES

MEETING	**RECCHIG_25_18905**
DATE	**30 April 2025, 11:00**
LOCATION	**By teleconference**

Presenter	Representing	Initials	Role
Caroline Freimuller	REC Code Manager	CF	Chair/Lead Change Analyst
Anton Moden	REC Code Manager	AM	Performance Assurance Lead
Harry Firth	REC Code Manager	HF	Secretariat

Full attendee list available upon request.

1. INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed attendees to the REC I0189 Working Group meeting.

2. CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA

The Chair invited any additional items of business for consideration during the meeting, but no items were raised.

The Chair informed attendees that this session would focus on some new survey questions being proposed by the Code Manager. The Chair added that the new questions in this session would focus on prepayment. They added that each question will be clearly linked to specific parts of REC Schedules to clearly show the obligations.

3. I0189 – VOICE OF THE CONSUMER

The Chair presented an overview of the proposed new prepayment survey to attendees. The Chair advised that a separate Workgroup will be held for a discussion on the potential operating model (including centralisation) of the three proposed surveys, likely to be the final I0189 Workgroup meeting in July. The Chair added that this survey will only be for domestic Consumer types as the Non-Domestic Prepayment sector is minimal.

The Chair advised that it is proposed for only Suppliers with more than a certain number of prepayment customers will be obligated to send this survey out. The Chair added that eligible Suppliers will send this survey out to 10% of their prepayment portfolio on a quarterly basis. This would include both traditional Prepayment Meters and Smart Meters in Prepayment mode.

A Supplier representative asked whether the Code Manager have considered descoping prepayment customers who have answered this survey in a certain time period, suggesting that the same customers may be sent repeat surveys. The Chair responded that this had not been considered, but they were happy to take this on board. AM suggested that customers who have responded to the survey within the previous year or six months could be exempt from answering again. The Supplier representative agreed, noting that the prepayment portfolio is subject to less switching than other Consumer types. Another Supplier representative added that prepayment customers are the Consumer type that engage the least with the Supplier, and descoping could help to raise engagement levels.

The Chair presented the first proposed survey questions to attendees, which ask Consumers if they have a traditional Prepayment Meter or Smart Meter in Prepayment mode, and that the survey would end if they answered "No" to both questions. The Chair asked about some of the language that should be used in these questions, for example using "non-smart prepayment meter" or "pay-as-you-go" meter. A Supplier representative responded that they use "pay-as-you-go" in Consumer communications. Another Supplier representative added that some more vulnerable Consumers are likely to be on prepayment meters, and that ensuring that simple, clear language is used in the survey questions is important.

A Supplier representative advised that they felt the wording used in the proposed survey questions around Schedule 11, clause 2.1 was not appropriate for prepayment customers and suggested that it needs to be simplified. AM agreed and asked attendees how they believed the questions should be reworded whilst keeping to the linked obligation in the REC Schedule. Another Supplier representative responded that the main obligation in the linked part of the REC Schedule 11 is if the customer has been able to top up their prepayment meter, which is not covered by the questions. The Chair responded that a proposed question asking about that had been considered but removed as the Code Manager had been concerned that a lot of the answers would not be relevant, potentially being interpreted by Consumers as being unable to pay rather than due to technical issues with the meter. AM added that those answers would be out of scope for the REC. A Supplier representative responded that they understood this stance but added that this question could be reworded so that the focus is if there were problems with the meter when the customer was trying to top up.

A Supplier representative noted a question on whether prepayment meters are charging the correct tariff rate and advised that Suppliers already submit a Request for Information (RFI) to Ofgem on price caps on a quarterly basis, so this information is already being monitored elsewhere. AM responded that this is a similar question to one in Ofgem's quarterly price cap RFI, there is a difference.

A Supplier representative raised concerns over the wording of the question on emergency credit, suggesting that it could result in Consumers who were unaware of emergency credit starting to misuse this process. Another Supplier representative agreed and suggested that some sort of qualification should be included within the question, for example are you aware of the emergency credit process and how to check with your Supplier to see if you are eligible. The Chair and AM agreed that the wording of the question required amendment.

There was discussion over what emergency credit situation is being referenced in the aforementioned question. The Chair suggested that it refers to any situation where the customer directly contacts the Supplier and asks for them to top up the meter for them, no matter the reason. They added that the wording of the question could be changed to “are you aware of all emergency credit options available to you through your Supplier?”. Supplier representatives agreed with this approach.

A Supplier representative queried whether a question on whether customers have had to wait for a new key or card to top up their prepayment meter before they could get emergency credit is required. They added that prepayment customers would not have to wait for a new key or card in their experience, as either a new code will be provided to classic prepayment customers to pick up a new key/card, or an emergency appointment would be raised for the same day to resolve this issue. The Chair agreed that this was an unlikely scenario, but referenced the requirement in REC Schedule 11, clause 2.2 which is linked to the question. They added that if response rates indicated that this question could be removed from the survey in the future, this is something that the Code Manager would consider as the aim is for the surveys to be fluid.

A Supplier representative noted a question on whether a customer had been charged for energy used by a previous occupier of the address and suggested that the new occupant needs to have informed the Supplier that they have moved into said address. The Chair agreed and suggested that the question could be changed to ask if the customer noticed any discrepancies in their costs after informing the Supplier of the change of occupancy. They suggested that the question could be expanded to ask if the customer was charged for any debt the previous occupant had. The Supplier representative suggested that this could be overcomplicating the question and would rely on the customer being able to work the prepayment meter which should not be assumed.

There was discussion on whether a question should be included on misdirected payments, particularly when there has been a recent change in occupancy. The Chair advised that the Code Manager had taken the assumption that the customer would not know which Supplier received the payment, so would not know if there is a misdirected payment. Supplier representatives responded that there is an annual obligation for Suppliers to send an invoice to their prepayment customers. It was agreed that it would be complicated to include such a question, answering on receiving misdirected payments meant for another Supplier.

A Supplier representative suggested that a question could be included asking Consumers if they have ever had to provide evidence of a top up, providing the example of when a customer bill does not align with what the meter stated several months before when the Consumer made the top up. There was support from other Supplier representatives and the Chair agreed that this question would be added.

The Chair advised that three questions had been included on prepayment switching for only Consumers with Smart prepayment meters to answer, adding that other switching-based questions had been discounted but they would be happy to include them if attendees saw value in doing this. A Supplier representative queried about a question asking if the customer was on a prepayment contract with both their old and new Supplier when they last switched. The Chair clarified that this question is asked from the customer’s perspective, they are aware of the

switching process when the customer's contract is temporarily changed to credit by the new Supplier before being changed back to prepayment, but the Consumer would usually be unaware of this process.

Supplier representatives advised that once the wording of the questions had been updated and simplified, that they would discuss it internally to ensure it is appropriate for their prepayment consumers. They also highlighted the importance of trialling this survey in particular, given the general low levels of engagement Suppliers have with prepayment consumers. AM agreed and suggested that in the future, there should be a quick process to remove any questions from the survey without requiring a REC Change. The Supplier representatives agreed. CF suggested that they would look into allowing provisions within the I0189 legal drafting to allow the Code Manager to make necessary changes. AM suggested that a regular review of the survey could be included within the Change.

Next Steps:

AM thanked attendees for their feedback in this session and added that this would be used by the Code Manager to update the proposed questions ahead of the next Workgroup. The Chair added that they would aim to continue holding the Workgroups on a monthly basis and would send out a poll to all attendees for potential meeting dates to ensure maximum attendance. They advised that the next Workgroup meeting is likely to be held at the beginning of June. The Chair added that the agenda and slides will be made available 5 working days ahead of the next Workgroup meeting as usual.

4. AOB

The Chair invited attendees to provide AOB. None was raised and the meeting was closed.