REC Referral Assessment Service and Energy Theft Unit Referral Information and Evidentiary Requirements

Purpose

The Energy Theft Unit (ETU) is a partnership between REC and City of London Police as detailed in REC Schedule 7, section 9. Its purpose is to deliver an enforcement solution to address inconsistent industry reporting and limited police engagement which, in turn, lead to few successful prosecutions and no effective deterrent against energy theft, especially by organised crime groups exploiting vulnerable consumers.

In addition to the ETU, the creation of a Referral Assessment Service (RAS) as detailed in REC Schedule 7, section 10, Annex 4 is necessary to act as the liaison between REC Parties and the ETU. Its purpose is to triage referrals, undertaking a level of quality assurance, identify any additional information and evidence that may support the case before passing it onto the ETU to ensure appropriate targeting of resources and provide continuous feedback for REC Parties to improve referrals.

This document details the information REC Parties need to provide for the RAS to effectively evaluate each case for progression to the ETU.

Each REC Party will consider whether their completed Energy Theft Investigations meet the threshold of the 'Strategic Threat Assessment and Case Acceptance criteria' before sending them to the RAS.

Once received by the RAS, the information and amount of detail provided will be reviewed based on the REC Party segment and against the agreed evaluation mechanism. The process will include checking for links to cases already submitted by other REC Parties to determine whether these investigations can be consolidated and identifying any additional information that may strengthen the case.

This may include the addition of relevant information the referring party did not have access to, including other properties or periods for which they are not the registered energy supplier. This ability to combine data will create additional insight to better target resource towards organised criminals and those exploiting consumers by charging for illegal services. These groups are not within any individual industry parties' ability to effectively pursue in isolation.

Context

There are three different forms for the submission of information; one for Energy Suppliers, the next for Energy Networks and the third is for any REC Party to report details of individuals or groups offering devices or tampering services.

The two forms to be completed by Supplier and Network Parties only differ in the categories of information to be provided.

- Supplier Parties must provide the date they acquired the site and details of their named consumer along with any information relating to their investigation, the theft and/or tampering outcome, details of the perpetrator(s) if this differs to the named consumer and evidence gathered/retained.

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- Network Parties must provide similar information but are unlikely to have a named consumer unless they have had previous interactions at the site.

The third form, Disruption Information, is for completion by any REC Party who becomes aware of individuals or groups offering tampering as a service and can provide sufficient detail to initiate an investigation by the Energy Theft Unit with a view to permanent disruption of the activity and enforcement against the facilitators or perpetrators, This includes online threats such as social media groups and websites spreading information on how to commit energy theft.

On each of the forms the information required is categorised as Mandatory (M); Conditional (C) or Optional (O). A submission will not be considered for progression if any of the mandatory information is not provided as it is considered there will be little possibility of any consolidation with other cases or successful enforcement activity.

These referrals and any supporting documents, photographs and videos will be submitted to the RAS via the REC Portal. (*The REC Portal is expected to be the file transfer mechanism but this will be confirmed at a later date)*

Where the referring party has indicated they hold any physical evidence, the ETU may make contact to arrange collection once the referral has been accepted.

Where the RAS case assessor determines a submission does not meet the requirements, they may contact the referring party to clarify the information provided or to ascertain whether additional information is available. Where critical information is missing, they may reject the submission until the required information is obtained.

Urgent referrals for cases requiring immediate intervention to prevent the loss of evidence or where it is deemed there is an immediate risk to public safety may be reviewed by phone or online meeting involving the REC Party, the RAS and the ETU.

Referrals accepted by the RAS as meeting the threshold for referral and having all the required information are not guaranteed for progression by the ETU. ETU rejected cases will be sent back to the RAS with the reason for the rejection and relevant feedback for the referring party.

If the referring party believes the rejection is incorrect, they can initiate the escalation process.

Where a referral is progressed by the ETU, it will follow the process as detailed in the City of London Police's ETU process documentation. Feedback and updates will be provided to the referring REC Party by the RAS/ETU at appropriate milestones and at case closure

The referral and assessment processes will be reviewed regularly to optimise efficiency and effectiveness and to accommodate feedback from stakeholders where improvements are identified.

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