

# Consumer Energy Charter



## OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

- The commitments within the Consumer Energy Charter have been made on a voluntary basis.
- All signatories will use best endeavours to adhere to the commitments between 1 November 2023 and 31 March 2024.



transitioning to *net zero* carbon



## Financial commitment

- 1 Electricity and gas suppliers will commit to making a financial contribution to a third party hardship fund to support customers struggling to pay their bills.

## Pre-payment meter customer commitments

- 2 From 1 November 2023, electricity and gas suppliers will support those in debt by completing an updated review of ability to pay for all customers on 40% repayment rates and offering all customers who are on the maximum debt repayment amount of 40% to move to a 20% repayment rate. Repayment rates will not be set above 20% for customers who are new to debt repayment plans unless requested by the customer. In addition, suppliers will support customers who are having difficulties paying their bills by undertaking an individual assessment of the customer's ability to pay and discussing options available to the customer.
- 3 Electricity and gas suppliers will ensure that customers on their customer care registers are not moved on to a pre-payment meter, unless the customer requests it and has also been made aware of the advantages and disadvantages of this choice for them.
- 4 Electricity and gas suppliers will not compel customers in debt to move onto a pre-payment meter over the Christmas period (1 December 2023 to 31 January 2024), unless specifically requested by the customer.
- 5 Energy suppliers will provide enhanced aftercare support to customers who have been moved on to a pre-payment meter to recover debt. This will include checking in with customers one month after installation to ensure that the customer is able to access and top up their meter and to confirm that debt repayment levels are manageable.

## Debt

- 6 For all credit customers, electricity and gas suppliers will continue to assess customers' ability to pay, and if this identifies any issues, they will look to reducing repayment rates and/or extending debt repayment timeframes.
- 7 Electricity and gas suppliers will commit that debt collections processes, including those carried out by their agents, will be strictly conducted in line with the Utility Regulator's Code of Practice for Payment of Bills.
- 8 Electricity and gas suppliers will make contact with those on their customer care registers to inform them of the tariff most suitable for their needs.
- 9 During their interactions with consumers in payment difficulties, energy suppliers will provide practical advice to consumers on energy efficiency measures that could help customers reduce their energy bills.

## Communications

- 10 Electricity and gas suppliers, government and consumer bodies will together, provide up-to-date, accurate information to consumers through the Consumer Council's website, and their own individual social media channels. Suppliers will ensure that their contact details and opening hours are clear, up to date and in a prominent position in written communications as well as on their websites.
- 11 Suppliers will have staff appropriately trained to deal with the needs of vulnerable consumers and make this option clear on their websites and other customer communications.
- 12 Suppliers will have a specialised individual or team lead as a key contact for third sector, advice bodies, consumer bodies and the Utility Regulator.