



Commissioner for **Older People**
for Northern Ireland

Ursula O'Kane
The Utility Regulator
Queens House
14 Queen Street
Belfast
BT1 6ED

7th October 2016

Dear Ursula,

RE: Consultation on a new supplier code of practice on bills and statements

I am writing to you on behalf of the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland in relation to the proposals outlined in the consultation on a new supplier code of practice on bills and statements document. The role of the Commissioner is to promote awareness of issues relating to older people and to be an authoritative champion for them.

COPNI has reviewed the proposals outlined in the consultation document and this response is only in relation to the proposals detailed in the code of practice on domestic bills and statements.

The Commissioner is pleased that the document reflects the conversation this office had with the Utility Regulator in 2015 in relation to how best to ensure the needs of older people are balanced with the needs of the energy suppliers.

The Commissioner welcomes the high level principles that will ensure customers fully understand the information contained in their bills and statements, that all information contained in the bill or statement is accurate and provided in a timely manner and that customers will be made aware if there are cheaper tariffs available to them.

In addition to this, the Commissioner welcomes the commitment to ensuring bills and statements are presented in a uniform manner, using language that is non-threatening, supportive, customer friendly and understandable. Balancing the needs of the customer with the needs of the supplier is reasonable however the Commissioner would ask that if a bill or statement declares that action needs to be taken, this is presented in a size



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14 font to ensure this information is as accessible as possible, which is stated as good practice by the UK Association for Accessible Formats.¹ These proposed changes are vitally important to older customers and COPNI will continue to monitor how and when they are implemented.

If you would like to discuss any of these points in further detail, please do not hesitate to contact the Policy Team via:

Emer Boyle,
Head of Legal and Policy Advice
(028) 90 890 894
emer.boyle@copni.org

Yours sincerely,

Emer Boyle
Head of Legal and Policy Advice
Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland

¹UK Association for Accessible Formats G002 Guidelines - <http://www.ukaaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/G002-UKAAF-The-provision-of-accessible-format-materials.pdf>