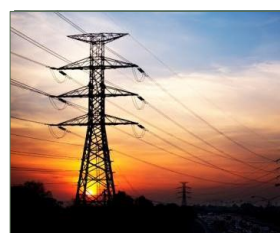


Care Register Review

Final Decisions Paper
March 2018



About the Utility Regulator

The Utility Regulator is the independent non-ministerial government department responsible for regulating Northern Ireland's electricity, gas, water and sewerage industries, to promote the short and long-term interests of consumers.

We are not a policy-making department of government, but we make sure that the energy and water utility industries in Northern Ireland are regulated and developed within ministerial policy as set out in our statutory duties.

We are governed by a Board of Directors and are accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly through financial and annual reporting obligations.

We are based at Queens House in the centre of Belfast. The Chief Executive leads a management team of directors representing each of the key functional areas in the organisation: Corporate Affairs; Electricity; Gas; Retail and Social; and Water. The staff team includes economists, engineers, accountants, utility specialists, legal advisors and administration professionals.

Our Mission

Value and sustainability in energy and water.

Our Vision

We will make a difference for consumers by listening, innovating and leading.

Our Values

Be a best practice regulator: transparent, consistent, proportional, accountable, and targeted.

Be a united team.

Be collaborative and co-operative.

Be professional.

Listen and explain.

Make a difference.

Act with integrity.

Abstract

The UR, in our Consumer Protection Strategy, made a commitment to review Care Registers. These registers are for consumers who require additional and special services. Electricity, gas and water companies all provide certain services to vulnerable consumers who choose to be included on Care Registers.

This paper provides information on the Care Registers operated by the network companies in Northern Ireland and also includes proposals for improvements in promotion and data sharing. The paper focuses on electricity and water network companies Care Registers. We have focused on these Care Registers first due to the urgent nature of the care provided, particularly in the event of an outage, interruption or incident. Gas network Care Registers will be considered when we review supply company Care Registers as a follow-on project.

Audience

This paper will be of interest to a number of stakeholders including those representing vulnerable consumers and those working in the gas, electricity and water industries.

Consumer impact

The UR considers that the proposals in this paper will have a positive impact on consumers by improving awareness of Care Registers and awareness of the services available to those consumers who register. The UR considers that the proposals in this paper will have a positive impact in relation to equality and that there should be no increase in costs as a result of the proposals in this paper.

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Glossary and Acronyms

Care Register	A special register for consumers who require additional services due to a set of non-financial vulnerability criteria such as pensionable age, disability and or a chronic illness.
CPS	The UR's Consumer Protection Strategy.
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
ICO	Information Commissioner's Office
Network company	An electricity, gas or water company responsible for the infrastructure such as pipes, wires and other apparatus. In this paper the term network company will refer to NIE Networks and NIW.
NIE Networks	Northern Ireland Electricity Networks.
NIW	Northern Ireland Water.
Priority Services Register (PSR)	Ofgem's term for Care Registers
Risk of Harm	New terminology relating to the complex and transitory nature of customer vulnerability
Supply company	Any business licensed by the UR to supply electricity or gas to consumers in Northern Ireland.
UKRN	UK Regulators Network; an organisation formed by 13 regulators

	throughout the UK each representing different sectors of the economy.
UR	The Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation.

Equality Considerations

As a public authority, the UR has a number of obligations arising from section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. These obligations concern the promotion of equality of opportunity between:

- Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- Men and women generally;
- Persons with disability and persons without; and
- Persons with dependants and persons without.

The UR must also have regard to the promotion of good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial groups.

In the development of its policies the UR also has a statutory duty to have due regard to the needs of vulnerable consumers i.e. individuals who are disabled or chronically sick, individuals of pensionable age, individuals with low incomes and individuals residing in rural areas. Some of the above equality categories will therefore overlap with these vulnerable groupings.

In order to assist with equality screening of the Care Register Review consultation paper, the UR requested respondents to comment on the equality impact of the proposals and to provide any information or evidence in relation to the needs, experiences, issues and priorities for different groups which they felt was relevant to the implementation of any of the proposals.

All of the respondents who expressed a view in relation to equality felt that the proposals had the potential to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for utility customers.

Based on equality screening undertaken by the UR, the UR considers that this decision paper will have positive impacts for consumers particularly for older people and those with disabilities or who are sick. Therefore, the UR considers that the proposals do not need to be subject to Equality Impact Assessment.

Executive Summary

The UR has decided, in relation to this Care Register Review, to take a principles based approach of regulating by consent in the first instance. The UR wants industry to take the lead in relation to their individual Care Registers and take responsibility for the protection of the consumers who are most at risk of harm in the event of a major incident, a planned or unplanned outage.

As stated in our Consumer Protection Strategy (CPS), the review of Care Registers in Northern Ireland is a project which has two phases. Phase One of this project looks at Care Registers of Northern Ireland Electricity Networks (NIE Networks) and Northern Ireland Water (NIW), and is concerned primarily with increasing awareness and uptake of the registers. Phase two will review the Care Registers of the gas network companies, gas and electricity supply companies. Where appropriate cross learning between Phase One and Phase Two will apply. These projects were included in our CPS as, during the development of the CPS, we identified a lack of awareness and uptake of care registers. In addition we identified differences between the industry sectors which warranted a two phase approach.

UR expects NIE Networks and NIW to take responsibility for their Care Registers as part of their companies' consumer care package. Both companies will work and build relationships with the community and voluntary sectors, advice giving agencies, consumer bodies and particularly health bodies. This partnership approach will ensure a consumer's needs are at the heart of the Care Registers.

UR has engaged proactively with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) from the outset of this project. Companies are expected to comply with Data Protection law in regards to the development of the co-operation and promotion

agreement.

The UR understands that the lawful basis for processing personal data is set out in Article 6 of the GDPR. At least one of the following must apply whenever personal data is processed:

1. Consent – the individual has given clear consent for the processing of their personal data for a specific purpose;
2. Contract – the processing of personal data is necessary for a contract you have with the individual, or because they have asked you to take specific steps before entering into a contract;
3. Legal obligation: the processing of personal data is necessary in order to comply with the law (not including contractual obligations);
4. Vital interests – the processing is necessary to protect someone's life;
5. Public task – the processing is necessary for you to perform a task in the public interest or for your official functions, and the task or function has a clear basis in law; and
6. Legitimate interests – the processing is necessary for your legitimate interests or the legitimate interests of a third party unless there is a good reason to protect the individual's personal data which overrides those legitimate interests.

It will be for the companies (NIE Networks and NIW) to decide what the legal basis is for the processing of personal data in regards to Care Registers.

The UR developed and consulted on ten proposals to ensure increased promotion and awareness raising of the Care Registers held by NIE Networks and NIW. Following reflection on the responses received to the Care Register review consultation, please find below a list of these proposals and the decisions taken by the UR:

- **1. Consultation Proposal** - Services offered by electricity and water companies will continue to recognise the different levels of service required by consumers with various different needs. The proposal was endorsed by respondents. However CCNI said that they felt services should have been a separate question in the consultation paper.

UR Final Decision: The UR will proceed with proposal as drafted. We note that in response to the general question in the paper stakeholders were generally satisfied with the services on offer. In addition we intend to include a question on services as part of the next review of supplier and other network companies Care Registers. We consider that the review of the services on offer should be continuous and ongoing. Therefore we have also agreed with NIE Networks and NIW that they will work together in relation to how best to communicate with those customers who have used the services (particularly after an incident or interruption). This communication will take the form of a post incident (interruption in supply) follow up telephone call with affected customers. At this stage, the company can conduct a feedback survey relating to the recent event. Each company will work independently in contacting customers. The companies shall proactively seek to work with local community groups active in the area where the recent incident occurred. This engagement with community groups will be with an aim to increase awareness of the Care Registers;

- **2. Consultation Proposal** - As proposed by UKRN in GB, NIE Networks and NIW should adopt a common naming convention for their Care Registers and use consistent and accessible language when referring to their Care Registers. The proposal was endorsed by respondents.

UR Final Decision: A common naming convention will be adopted for the Care Registers of NIE Network and NIW. The UR will put in place two categories of registers (1) Medical Customer Care Register – mirroring the criteria of existing NIE Networks Critical Care Register (that is persons who

rely on life supporting or sustaining medical equipment) and (2) Customer Care Register– mirroring the criteria of the other network companies Care Registers and suppliers' registers. We also note that in discussions some stakeholders felt we should avoid the use of the terms “vulnerable” or “special” as they believe it may be stigmatizing and prevent some customers signing up to the Register. The common naming convention will come into force once a co-operation and promotion agreement has been established between NIE Networks and NIW. The UR has allowed one year for the work on the co-operation and promotion agreement to be completed;

- **3. Consultation Proposal** - NIE Networks and NIW should work together to ensure that a consumer who is eligible to join the NIE Networks Care Register is included on the NIW Care Register. This will ensure that the most vulnerable consumers can avail of a comprehensive service particularly during a major incident. The proposal was endorsed by respondents.

UR Final Decision: Proceed with proposal as drafted within Data Protection guidelines and associated legislation;

- **4. Consultation Proposal** - NIW need to create a sub-set to their current Care Register. This sub-set is to consist of consumers who are currently included on, or are eligible to be include on, the NIE Networks Care Register. This sub-set will include those who rely on life supporting or sustaining medical equipment. This consumer sub-set will help in targeting services during a major incident. The proposal was endorsed by respondents, however some respondents did also say that UR should seek more information on services provided to consumers on the registers.

UR Final Decision: Proceed with proposal as drafted. In addition, as part

of proposal 1 we have also agreed with NIE Networks and NIW that they will work together in relation to how best to communicate with those customers who have used the services (particularly after an incident or interruption). This will allow the continuous review of services;

- **5. Consultation Proposal** - NIE Networks and NIW should work together to improve promotion and awareness of their Care Registers e.g. a common bi-annual vulnerable Consumer Working Group. The proposal was endorsed by respondents.

UR Final Decision: NIE Networks and NIW should ensure their co-ordination of promotional activity; ensuring that their staff are trained to an appropriate level. This training is carried out on a regular basis, and the content reviewed to ensure it is meeting the needs of the consumers and the utility staff. A new Consumer Working Group will have a membership of consumer representative bodies and we will proactively seek to include representation from the health sector. The Consumer Working Group will focus on aspects of the Care Registers that are of importance to consumers;

- **6. Consultation Proposal** - NIE Networks and NIW should work together to continue to improve relationships within community and voluntary organisations, advice giving agencies and other stakeholders who promote Care Registers including specifically health bodies. The proposal was endorsed by respondents.

UR Final Decision: Proceed with proposal as drafted;

- **7. Consultation Proposal** - NIE Networks and NIW should proactively explore ways in which data can be shared between the two companies, within data protection regulations, and for the benefit of vulnerable consumers. For example, a data sharing agreement between NIE Networks

and NIW which seeks the express and informed consent from consumers for their information to be shared between the two companies. The proposal was endorsed by respondents, however some did express concerns regarding data protection and in particular GDPR.

UR Final Decision: Engage with the Information Commissioner's Office in relation to the development of a co-operation and promotion agreement between NIE Networks and NIW working within Data Protection guidelines and associated legislation;

- **8. Consultation Proposal** - The UR should continue to engage with UKRN on issues relevant to Care Registers; monitoring best-practice and GB progress. The proposal was endorsed by respondents.

UR Final Decision: Proceed with proposals as drafted;

- **9. Consultation Proposal** - UR should set up an annual Industry Working Group for Care Registers; the purpose of which would be to continue to engage with industry and stakeholders in regards to monitoring progress on promotion, awareness, data sharing, and collaboration. In particular an industry forum should report the number of consumers registered by each of the companies. The proposal was endorsed by respondents.

UR Final Decision: Establish an Industry Working Group. The Industry Working Group will have a membership of industry partners, such as NIE Networks, NIW and the UR. The Industry Working Group will discuss technical and operational issues in relation to Care Registers, for example data protection concerns. The first task will be a co-operation and promotion agreement between NIE Networks and NIW. The UR considers that the co-operation and promotion agreement should be in place, customer information should be being shared and we should be in a position to report on the impact of the co-operation and promotion agreement within one year of the publication of this decision paper. The

Industry Working Group will be held in parallel to the Consumer Working Group which is outlined in proposal 5; and

- **10. Consultation Proposal** - UR should produce and distribute a promotional leaflet (similar to that produced by UKRN) on the various services available. The proposal was endorsed by respondents. Some respondents said it is important to reach people who do not have access to the internet, thus non-digital promotional methods should be used.
UR Final Decision: NIE Networks and NIW should work together on the joint development of a stand-alone information leaflet on the Care Registers. This leaflet will include information on how customers can sign up for both Care Registers. This will be in addition to the UKRN style leaflet as proposed by UR.

The UR welcomes the ten responses to the consultation and the constructive feedback they contained. All ten proposals, listed above, have been endorsed by the respondents to the consultation. Respondents raised a number of issues that we have reflected in our decisions in regards to each of the proposals.

Introduction

Background

In Northern Ireland licence obligations have been placed on domestic electricity and gas suppliers and electricity, gas and water network companies. These obligations state that both the network companies (electricity, gas and water) and domestic suppliers must offer certain groups of vulnerable domestic consumers a special package of services.

Consumers likely to avail of these special services include those who are of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick and those who have consented to be included in the Registers.

In order to provide these consumers with the special services, the network companies and suppliers have developed their own Registers. These registers hold the personal details of consumers who have registered voluntarily to avail of the special services.

The UR's 5 year Consumer Protection Strategy (CPS) contained a commitment to review network companies Care Registers in year one and in year two to review supplier Care Registers. These Care Registers are for consumers who require special assistance as they are at a greater risk of harm and who have requested to be included in the registers.

The CPS stated that we would review NIW and NIE Networks Care Registers first; then use this learning to inform a review of the gas network companies and supply companies' Care Registers.

In February 2016, the UR published the CPS final decision paper which included the rationale for projects that would be included in the 5 year CPS lifespan and provided details of the outcomes for each of these projects. In regards to the review of network Care Registers, we stated that the “feedback we have received regarding take up rates and awareness of services offered by network companies suggests that this is a priority issue”¹. Therefore, in response to this stakeholder feedback, the outcomes of the network companies Care Register review will be increased take-up and awareness raising.

On 30 November 2016, the UR held a communications forum on network companies’ Care Registers and major incidents. A major incident includes severe weather, storms, floods, outages and other events which could cause large numbers of consumers to lose supply.

The forum was held in conjunction with the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (Consumer Council) and was attended by a number of key stakeholders who represent vulnerable consumers. Representatives from the community and voluntary sector were in attendance, alongside various industry players from gas, electricity, water and also the ICO. All attendees contributed to the discussion and gave their views.

The communication forum brought together the main players that would be involved in this Care Register review. The forum allowed the network companies to share best practice on dealing with major incidents and importantly on how to protect vulnerable consumers included on Care Registers during major incidents.

¹ <https://www.uregni.gov.uk/publications/201617-202021-consumer-protection-strategy-decision-paper>

This forum enabled the UR and the network companies to hear from groups representing vulnerable consumers; exploring their concept of best practice and hearing examples of the consumers' experiences.

The communication forum highlighted a number of noteworthy points. These are included below:

- 1) There is widespread support for the good work already in place in terms of registers and services for vulnerable consumer. While there is willingness to improve current Care Registers if possible, they are generally considered to be working well;
- 2) There are good reasons for distinguishing between network Care Registers and supplier Care Registers. For example, the intensity level of services offered to an electricity consumer who relies on an electricity supply to operate life supporting medical equipment is different to the level of priority service offered to a gas consumer who requires gas for cooking or heating and who may require additional help;
- 3) There are variations in the methods of promotion, level of awareness and take-up of network Care Registers; and
- 4) Data protection protocols apply to the information held on all Care Registers. The ICO has extensive guidance to ensure all network and supply companies process data in accordance with data protection rules and in a way which benefits vulnerable consumers.

Approach

UR has adopted a 'principles and regulation by consent' based approach to the review of the Care Registers of NIE Networks and NIW.

The review of Care Registers in Northern Ireland is a project which has two phases. Phase One of this project looks at Care Registers of NIE Networks and

NIW, with Phase Two reviewing the Care Registers of the gas network companies, gas and electricity supply companies. We plan to commence Phase Two after Phase One.

The UR issued a consultation paper in July 2017, following receipt of responses to this consultation the UR set about discussing a number of themes and issues that were included in the responses. The UR held a number of one-to-one meetings with NIE Networks and NIW and we met with the Consumer Council. These meetings helped to further develop our thinking on how best to progress this CPS project; ensuring the aim of the project was realised, that of increased promotion and awareness.

In keeping with the engagement carried out during the development of the CPS, the majority of responses stated that there needed to be increased promotion of the Care Registers through a focused programme of awareness raising.

The consultation paper looked specifically at the role of Care Registers during a major incident event, planned or unplanned outages. In this regard, the UR developed the proposal to develop a co-operation and promotion agreement between NIE Networks and NIW to ensure that those consumers most at risk of harm would be included on both the NIE Networks and NIW Care Register. There was a significant level of support from respondents to this proposal. A number of respondents sought clarity on the process by which a co-operation and promotion agreement would come about and asked for assurances that the treatment of consumers' personal data would be compliant with data protection guidelines. In response to this, NIE Networks and NIW will follow relevant Data Protection and new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidance before a co-operation and promotion agreement is implemented. A Data Protection Impact Assessment will be completed prior to the establishment of a co-operation and promotion agreement. The Data Protection Impact Assessment will evidence that the

associated risks of this proposed co-operation and promotion agreement have been investigated and mitigated. The Assessment will also document reasons for any decisions taken in relation to the identified risks.

Responses were received from both gas and electricity suppliers. They stated that they wished to have a set of bespoke arrangements put in place when their Care Registers are reviewed in Phase Two of this project. The UR will take the lessons learned from Phase One of this project, the review of NIE Networks and NIW Care Registers, applying these appropriately to the review of the gas network, gas suppliers and electricity suppliers Care Register review, which will take place in Phase Two of the project.

The UR stated in the consultation paper that we recognise the differences that exist between the industries in regards to the Care Registers they are required by license to hold. The UR will, in consultation with the gas network companies and gas and electricity suppliers, produce a list of proposals that are reflective of the learning coming from this current review of the NIE Networks and NIW Care Register but that are appropriate for both the gas network companies and the gas and electricity suppliers.

Paper Structure

This decision paper on the review of NIE Networks and NIW's Care Registers follows the structure below:

- **Section One** of this paper provides details on the ten proposals which were consulted upon and the updated version of these proposals following responses to the consultation; and

- **Section Two** provides an analysis of the responses to the consultation paper, which have been grouped by theme.

Next Steps

Following the publication of this paper; the UR will work on an ongoing basis with NIE Networks and NIW to ensure each of the ten proposals listed in Section One of this paper are effectively implemented. Also, the UR will set about bringing together NIE Networks and NIW in order to develop the co-operation and promotion arrangement. We expect that the co-operation and promotion agreement will be in place and we will be in a position to provide feedback on the benefit of the agreement, within one year of the publication of this decision paper. The UR will monitor the implementation of the ten proposals to ensure they are delivering the additional consumer protections envisioned. In order to do this, the UR will gather feedback from both the Industry and Consumer Working Groups in regards to the progress made on the delivery of the proposals.

The UR has requested that both NIE Networks and NIW report back to the UR on a regular basis as to the ongoing progress made on the ten proposals.

In order to monitor this progress, the UR will formulate an agreed action plan for NIE Networks, NIW and UR to contribute to. This action plan will detail each of the following:

1. The ten proposals outlined in Section One of this Paper;
2. Attribute responsibility to either NIE Networks, NIW or the UR to each of the activities contained with the ten proposals; and
3. Log the status of the activity and record when completed.

In parallel to this, the new Working Groups (Consumer and Industry) will be established. The Consumer Working Group will be set up by the UR and will have a membership of consumer representative bodies. The Industry Working Group

membership will include NIE Networks, NIW and UR. Both these Working Groups will aid in the delivery of the ten proposals.

Section One: Proposals

The UR developed a consultation paper that reflected a number of themes that had been raised by stakeholders during the development of the consultation.

These themes included:

- Promotion and marketing of both NIE Networks Care Register and the NIW Care Register needs to be improved; and
- Facilitating data sharing between NIE Networks and NIW will enhance consumer uptake of the registers.

Ten proposals were designed to incorporate these themes which stakeholders had raised during the development of the consultation paper.

These ten proposals have the main objective of achieving increased promotion and awareness raising of the Care Registers held by NIE Networks and NIW.

Following reflection on the ten responses received to the Care Register review consultation; please find below a list of these proposals and the decisions taken by the UR:

- **1. Consultation Proposal** - Services offered by electricity and water companies will continue to recognise the different levels of service required by consumers with various different needs. The proposal was endorsed by respondents. However, Consumer Council said that they felt services should have been a separate question in the consultation paper.
UR Final Decision: The UR will proceed with proposal as drafted. We note that in response to the general question in the paper stakeholders were generally satisfied with the services on offer. In addition we intend to

include a question on services as part of the next review of supplier and other network Care Registers. We consider that the review of the services on offer should be continuous and ongoing. Therefore, we have also agreed with NIE Networks and NIW that they will work together in relation to how best to communicate with those customers who have used the services (particularly after an incident or interruption). A post major incident follow up telephone call and at that stage carry out a feedback survey related to the recent event. Each company would work independently in contacting customers and would proactively seek to work with local community groups active in the area of the recent incident. This work would aim to increase awareness of the Care Register and will better facilitate the continuous review of services;

- **2. Consultation Proposal** - As proposed by UKRN in GB, NIE Networks and NIW should adopt a common naming convention for their Care Registers and use consistent and accessible language when referring to their Care Registers. The proposal was endorsed by respondents.

UR Final Decision: A common naming convention will be adopted for the Care Registers of NIE Network and NIW. The UR will put in place two categories of registers (1) Medical Customer Care Register – mirroring the criteria of existing NIE Networks Critical Care Register (that is persons who rely on life supporting or sustaining medical equipment) and (2) Customer Care Register – mirroring the criteria of the other network companies Care Registers and suppliers registers. We also note that in discussions some stakeholders felt we should avoid the use of the terms “vulnerable” or “special” as they believe it may be stigmatizing and prevent some customers signing up to the Care Register. The common naming convention will come into force once a co-operation and promotion agreement has been established between NIE Networks and NIW. The UR has allowed one year for the work on the co-operation and promotion

agreement to be completed;

- **3. Consultation Proposal** - NIE Networks and NIW should work together to ensure that a consumer who is eligible to join the NIE Networks Care Register is included on the NIW Care Register. This will ensure that the most vulnerable consumers can avail of a comprehensive service particularly during a major incident. The proposal was endorsed by respondents.

UR Final Decision: Proceed with proposal as drafted within Data Protection guidelines and associated legislation;

- **4. Consultation Proposal** - NIW need to create a sub-set to their current Care Register. This sub-set is to consist of consumers who are currently included on, or are eligible to be include on, the NIE Networks Care Register. This sub-set will include those who rely on life supporting or sustaining medical equipment. This consumer sub-set will help in targeting services during a major incident. The proposal was endorsed by respondents, however some respondents did also say that the UR should seek more information on services provided to consumers on the registers.

UR Final Decision: Proceed with proposal as drafted. In addition, as part of proposal 1 we have also agreed with NIE Networks and NIW that they will work together in relation to how best to communicate with those customers who have used the services (particularly after an incident or interruption). This will allow the continuous review of services;

- **5. Consultation Proposal** - NIE Networks and NIW should work together to improve promotion and awareness of their Care Registers e.g. a common bi-annual vulnerable Consumer Working Group. The proposal was endorsed by respondents.

UR Final Decision: NIE Networks and NIW should ensure the co-ordination of their promotion activity ensuring that their staff are trained to an appropriate level. This training is carried out on a regular basis, and the content reviewed to ensure it is meeting the needs of the consumers and the utility staff. A new Consumer Working Group, will have a membership of consumer representative bodies and we will proactively seek to include representation from the health sector. The Consumer Working Group will focus on aspects of the Care Registers that are of importance to consumers;

- **6. Consultation Proposal** - NIE Networks and NIW should work together to continue to improve relationships within community and voluntary organisations, advice giving agencies and other stakeholders who promote Care Registers including specifically health bodies. The proposal was endorsed by respondents.

UR Final Decision: Proceed with proposal as drafted;

- **7. Consultation Proposal** - NIE Networks and NIW should proactively explore ways in which data can be shared between the two companies, within data protection regulations², and for the benefit of vulnerable consumers. For example, a data sharing agreement between NIE Networks and NIW, seeking express and informed consent from consumers for their information to be shared between the two companies. The proposal was endorsed by respondents, however some did express concerns regarding Data Protection and in particular GDPR.

UR Final Decision: Proceed with the proposal and engage with the Information Commissioner's Office regarding the development of a co-operation and promotion agreement between NIE Networks and NIW, working within Data Protection guidelines and associated legislation;

² The Data Protection Act, 1998 and the new GDPR which will come into force 25 May 2018.

- **8. Consultation Proposal** - The UR should continue to engage with UKRN on issues relevant to Care Registers; monitoring best-practice and GB progress. The proposal was endorsed by respondents.

UR Final Decision: Proceed with proposal as drafted;

- **9. Consultation Proposal** - UR should set up an annual Industry Working Group for Care Registers; the purpose of which would be to continue to engage with industry and stakeholders in regards to the monitoring progress on promotion, awareness, data sharing, and collaboration. In particular an industry forum should report the number of consumers registered by each of the companies. The proposal was endorsed by respondents.

UR Final Decision: Establish an Industry Working Group. The Industry Working Group will have a membership of industry partners, such as NIE Networks, NIW and the UR. The Industry working group will discuss technical and operational issues in relation to Care Registers, for example data protection concerns. The first task will be to facilitate a co-operation and promotion agreement between NIE Networks and NIW. The UR considers that the co-operation and promotion agreement should be in place, customer information should be being shared and we should be in a position to report on the impact of the co-operation and promotion agreement within one year of the publication of this decision paper. The Industry Working Group will be held in parallel to the Consumer Working Group which is outlined in Proposal 5; and

- **10. Consultation Proposal** - UR should produce and distribute a promotional leaflet (similar to that produced by UKRN) on the various services available. The proposal was endorsed by respondents. Some

respondents said it is important to reach people who do not have access to the internet, thus non-digital promotional methods should be used.

UR Final Decision: Proceed with proposal and ensure that NIE Networks and NIW work together on the joint development of a stand-alone information leaflet on the Care Registers. This leaflet will include information on how customers can sign up for both Care Registers. This will be in addition to the UKRN style leaflet as proposed by UR.

Following the publication of this paper, the UR will work on an ongoing basis with NIE Networks and NIW to ensure each of the ten proposals listed in Section One of this paper are effectively implemented. Also, the UR will set about bringing together NIE Networks and NIW in order to develop the co-operation and promotion arrangement. We expect that the co-operation and promotion agreement will be in place and we will be in a position to provide feedback on the benefit of the agreement within one year of the publication of this decision paper. The UR will monitor the implementation of the ten proposals to ensure they are delivering the additional consumer protections envisioned.

The UR has requested that both NIE Networks and NIW report back to the UR on a regular basis as to the on progress made on the ten proposals.

In order to monitor this progress. The UR will formulate an agreed action plan for NIE Networks, NIW and UR to contribute too. This action plan will detail each of the following:

1. The ten proposals outlined in Section One of this Paper;
2. Attribute responsibility to either NIE Networks, NIW or the UR to each of the activities contained with the ten proposals; and
3. Log the status of the activity and record when completed.

In parallel to this, the new Working Groups (Consumer and Industry) will be

established. Both these Working Groups will aid in the delivery of the ten proposals.

Section Two: Consultation Themes

The UR welcomes the ten responses received to the consultation and the constructive feedback they contained.

Responses to the consultation were received from industry, the community and voluntary sector and statutory partners.

Below is a list of respondents to the consultation:

- Advice NI
- CAB
- Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland
- Consumer Council
- firmus energy
- NEA
- NIE Networks
- Public Health Agency
- Regional Community Resilience Group
- SSE Airtricity

Themes from the consultation responses

The ten proposals consulted upon have been endorsed by the respondents to the consultation. A number of responses to the consultation contained constructive suggestions on how some of the proposals could be further developed. We have incorporated these suggestions into the proposals. More detail on these amendments to the proposals can be found in Section One of this paper.

Furthermore, a number of respondents raised issues that they asked the UR to be mindful of as the review of NIE Networks and NIW Care Registers is implemented.

We have grouped the issues raised by the respondents under the following headings:

- Ensure promotion materials are not ‘digital by default’ but rather have a mix of materials using social media platforms and production of paper leaflets;
- Ensure consumers personal data is treated within Data Protection guidelines³;
- Increased collaboration with the health sector;
- Maintain a watching brief on developments in GB to ensure consumers in NI are receiving best practice regulation;
- Use existing tools for promotion and co-ordinate promotion of Care Registers with existing campaigns;
- Establish Consumer and Industry Working Groups;
- Development of a mechanism to monitor and evaluate level of consumer satisfaction with Care Registers services;
- Use of accessible language in any correspondence with consumers relating to the sharing of their personal data;
- Use of terminology that reflects the multi-dimensional and transitory circumstances of vulnerable consumers;
- Ensure that both network companies staff are trained to allow them to engage with consumers in challenging circumstances;
- Services offered by both NIE Networks and NIW to their Care Register consumers are reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose; and

³ The Data Protection Act 1998 and new GDPR that will come into force in May 2018.

- When reviewing the gas network companies, gas and electricity suppliers Care Registers during Phase Two of this project; ensure that bespoke solutions are found that reflect the differences of these Care Registers in comparison to the NIE Networks and NIW.

This section of the paper will provide more background on some of the issues listed above in more detail and the UR's response to them.

Digital by default

A number of respondents provided additional information in relation to the types of promotional methods adopted to increase uptake of the Care Registers.

One respondent stated that a large amount of promotion activities are done electronically, however many people in Northern Ireland do not have the skills or necessary equipment to enable effective targeting in this way.

Another respondent suggested that it is important to ensure not all communication is 'digital by default' and that other methods of engagement should be utilised, including promotional leaflets and telephone calls (where feasible).

UR response

Such was the level of support for non-digital communication, the UR has decided that NIE Networks and NIW should jointly produce a standalone, dedicated leaflet for the promotion of the Care Registers. The UR will expect NIE Networks and NIW to work jointly and in collaboration with the Consumer Council and other key stakeholders. Both NIE Networks and NIW will work together to ensure that the leaflets are distributed as widely as possible, with a particular importance placed

on circulating the leaflets to publicly accessible venues, for example GP surgeries, hospital waiting rooms and public libraries. The UR will ensure this leaflet is clear, easy to understand, and accessible in a variety of formats. It is envisaged that the Consumer Working Group (see proposal 5) will play a significant role in the promotion of the leaflet.

The UR notes the calls from respondents not to pursue a solely digital pathway in regards to the promotion of the Care Registers. We note the calls from many organisations that although digital communications have their place, there is still a significant role for a paper reference document. The need for non-digital promotional materials, particularly for more vulnerable customers and those who do not have access to the internet, was highlighted in the consultation responses. Consequently, we will implement proposal 10 to reflect the importance of non-digital promotional materials.

Data Protection and Care Register registration

One significant theme throughout all of the response to the consultation was the need to ensure that consumers' personal data is treated within the Data Protection guidelines.

A suggestion was made that the companies should build a mechanism so that consumers who do not want their name to be included on a Care Register is captured so they do not feel harassed in the future.

One respondent sought clarity on how applications will be processed. They asked for more detail on how third party consent, where the data will be held, and how the two Care Registers will link given the current different eligibility criteria.

However respondents stated that they were reassured that the involvement of the ICO would ensure that the Working Group were made aware of the various data protection and new GDPR regulations and guidance that are available.

Two responses stated that any potential co-operation and promotion agreement between NIE Networks and NIW should be developed in parallel with awareness raising activities.

UR response

The primary focus on the sharing of data between the two Care Registers is to ensure that those consumers with the highest levels of need will be included on both the NIE Networks and NIW Care Register.

Both companies currently have to comply fully with the Data Protection Act, including all the procedures for the treatment of personal data. Further to this, both companies will have to ensure compliance with the new data protection arrangements under GDPR.

The UR has engaged proactively with the ICO throughout this review of Care Registers. We will continue to engage with the companies to ensure that the co-operation and promotion agreement is fully compliant with the Data Protection protocols and the new requirements of the GDPR.

Under GDPR, information a company or organisation provides to people about how they process their personal data must be:

- (1) Concise, transparent, intelligible and easily accessible;
- (2) Written in clear and plain language, particularly if addressed to a child; and

(3) Free of charge.

The UR will ensure that NIE Networks and NIW incorporate the outcomes, in regards to the processing of personal data identified under the GDPR additional requirements and considerations it brings, into the co-operation and promotion agreement.

We intend to consult the ICO's Data Sharing Code of Practice, Data Protection and GDPR guidelines.

Collaboration with the health sector

A strong theme coming through a number of responses was the need to engage proactively with the health sector; ensuring that their knowledge and expertise was captured in any partnership working going forward.

Further to this, a number of responses raised the need to work specifically with the health sector as the majority of those likely to be eligible for the Care Register are regularly in touch with GP's, social services and other health care professionals. They suggested that engagement with Health and Social Care, especially from the HSC Trusts (who will be the key organisations supporting clients who are reliant on life supporting medical equipment) should be sought. This is likely to include but may not be limited to the HSC Trust Community Care Teams and Recovery Service (previously Community Rehabilitation Service).

UR Response

The UR recognises fully the important role that the health sector will have to play in the implementation of this project going forward. Through partnership working, NIE Networks and NIW will work and build relationships with the health sector,

using existing relationships and endeavoring to build upon these relationships to enhance the involvement of the health sector going forward.

Watching brief on developments in GB

Respondents agreed that the UR should continue to engage with the UKRN.

One respondent stated that it is useful to learn from experiences of others in terms of both positive and negative outcomes. Another response commented that Northern Ireland needs to learn from, but not necessarily copy GB developments and that any solutions should be fit for Northern Ireland not simply a replication.

UR Response

The UR will continue to be represented on a number of UKRN working groups which focus on consumer issues. We will use these working groups to engage with UKRN, informing them of ongoing work to enhance consumer protections in Northern Ireland. The UR will also capture any learning or best practice that the UKRN can share to help enrich our consumer projects going forward. We will make sure this learning is adopted as necessary for particular Northern Ireland circumstances.

Promotion of Care Registers

A number of respondents commented that it would be a more efficient use of resources for the two organisations to work together on promotion and avoid duplication in terms of time and money. They commented that working in partnership allows the message to get out more easily and more widely to those who can avail of the registers. Respondents also commented that working with the community and voluntary sector is one of the most effective method of promotion.

Indeed, another respondent suggested that this approach would provide a more streamlined and all-encompassing approach for vulnerable clients.

Responses stated that both companies should collaborate and work with advice agencies, other charities, landlords and health care professionals to promote the Care Registers and the associated benefits.

UR response

A common theme throughout the ten proposals included in the consultation paper is one of co-operation and joint working. Indeed, many of the proposals cannot be achieved unless there is a significant level of partnership working between NIE Networks and NI Water.

Therefore, we expect the two companies to engage with each other and consumer representatives to deliver a joint programme of promotion and review. This will need to be in place for UR to comprehensively monitor and evaluate the outcomes of this CPS project. Some respondents have identified a number of existing promotional activities that are currently taking place across Northern Ireland; any newly developed literature on the Care Registers could be included in these existing promotional activities. Such 'direct' access to consumers who would be deemed to be at a heightened risk of harm would be beneficial to increasing awareness of the Care Registers going forward.

Establish Consumer and Industry Working Groups

Consumer Working Group

One respondent agreed that a Consumer Working Group will add to the overall momentum of the project and invigorate the industry.

Another commented that the introduction of a Consumer Working Group would be a good mechanism to highlight the purpose and effectiveness of the Care Register and will assist in informing those who are registered.

One respondent raised the issue of representation on the Consumer Working Group; stating that many older people who are registered may have mobility and/or cognitive impairments, making it difficult to attend such meeting.

Industry Working Group

One respondent stated that an Industry Working Group should provide statistical detail on work carried out in relation to promotion, awareness, data sharing and collaboration. The respondent suggested that providing annual numbers of consumers registered by each of the companies at an annual Industry Working Group would provide some measure of success of activities that have been carried out during the year.

Another respondent commented that the scope of the Industry Working Group should be expanded to include service provision and learning from the UR's work with UKRN.

One response sought clarification on how this Industry Working Group would sit alongside the Consumer Working Group.

UR Response

The UR welcomes the support from respondents to the proposal to establish an Industry and Consumer Working Group.

It is envisaged that the Consumer Working Group will provide a platform for the discussion on progress made to date from the consumers' point of view. We will

consult with this Working Group in regards to the time milestones and the development of any other appropriate evaluation mechanisms going forward. The UR has decided that the Consumer Working Group will initially comprise of consumer body representatives – in time it could be opened up to include customers if necessary. However, bodies such as Age Sector Platform or Disability Action often send members of their organisations who are also customers and who can share their experiences. We will work in partnership with stakeholders in the community and voluntary sector to provide advice on this going forward. The Consumer Working Group membership will be best place to comment on the consumer benefit of the proposals as they are implemented. Indeed, the Working Group has the potential to look at other wider consumer issues post implementation of the proposals.

The Industry Working Group's primary duties will be to monitor progress on promotion, awareness, data sharing, and collaboration. However, UR will share any appropriate learning captured through UKRN with the Working Group; indeed, the Group will also provide a mechanism to capture details of the number of customers who have been registered by each of the companies.

The Industry Working Group sits alongside the Consumer Working Group, each having a primary focus on either consumers or industry. The establishment of both forums will allow the UR to gather information on progress of implementation of the proposals contained in this paper. As the project develops and key pillars of the project have been put in place, the co-operation and promotion agreement and the joint promotion of the Care Registers, we can review the objectives of the Working Groups.

Monitor and evaluate of consumer satisfaction

A number of respondents suggested that the companies should engage with

consumers, who are included on a Care Register, after a major incident has occurred. Contacting consumers who have been affected by a major incident, planned or unplanned outage would provide an opportunity for some form of evaluation and feedback to occur on the customer experience.

UR response

The UR wishes to develop this concept and we have built it into proposal 1. The evaluation of the consumer experience of the services received during their time off supply would be beneficial to both industry and consumer representatives'. A mechanism of evaluation, for example the use of telephone surveys, would provide an evidence base for decisions in the future in relation to services and targets.

Ensuring progress is maintained

A number of respondents expressed concerns that NIW have 2,778 consumers on their Care Register whilst NIE Networks has 6,000 registered consumers; the responses stated that these numbers were lower than expected.

Another respondent said that the focus should be on incrementally growing the numbers registered. Stating that a gradual increase in registrations to the Care Registers will ensure the current level of service is maintained.

UR response

The UR recognises the concern expressed by respondents at the low number of consumers currently included on the Care Registers, particularly the NIW Care Register. The UR shares this concern, and therefore the focus of this review will continue to be promotion and awareness rising of the Care Registers; ensuring

that all those who need to be on the registers are included and so receive the assistance and information they may require during a major incident or planned and unplanned outages. Proposals 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10 will directly lead to better promotion and take-up of the Care Registers.

Upon reflection of the responses to the consultation paper, the UR has decided to include a number of 'time milestones' as we move forward in this process of reviewing the Care Registers. These time milestones will include the setting of a time period for the development of a co-operation and promotion agreement and the implementation phase of this agreement. Once a co-operation and promotion agreement has been reached with NIE Networks and NIW, which meets all the requirements under GDPR, the UR will progress Phase Two of this Care Register review, which will focus on the gas network companies, gas and electricity suppliers. We will take the learning gained through Phase One and apply it appropriately to these companies; seeking to achieve an outcome of increased uptake of the Care Registers currently available to the consumers of these companies. It is not just about numbers of people on registers it is about ensuring the right people are on the registers, namely those consumers the most at risk of harm. By taking a phased approach and growing the numbers incrementally, the UR can ensure service levels are maintained and problems are identified early.

Furthermore, some respondents to the consultation asked that targets be established in regards to the numbers of consumers registered on Care Registers. The UR agrees that there needs to be a mechanism by which the process can be monitored, however the use of a volumes target is not appropriate at this stage of the project. A target based on a crude number could lead to distortions at this stage. It is more important that the right consumers are included on the Care Registers and that they are reached in the right way, rather than a crude target based on numbers of consumers registered. As previously stated, the UR will set a number of time milestones that each of the companies will agree to reach. For

example, the setting of a time frame for the development of a co-operation and promotion agreement. As the project is implemented, the UR will review which monitoring mechanism is appropriate, for example how to monitor improvements in awareness levels. This decision is in keeping with a principles based approach the UR has adopted for this project. UR has decided not to set mandatory targets at this time; this is partly due to the highly co-operative nature of the engagement that has taken place with industry to date. However, depending on progress made in implementing the proposals, the UR may revisit the introduction of mandatory targets.

Use of accessible language

One respondent stated that the Data Protection Act is complicated and many consumers will be potentially concerned about how their data is used. They called for a 'plain English' approach to correspondence be adopted. This would fit with the requirements of GDPR. Others stated that any communication with consumers needs to be presented to them as simply as possible to ensure that they understand it. They stated that it is important that any attempt to gain consent to data sharing of personal information is communicated as simply and clearly as possible so that it does not deter consumers from giving their consent.

Furthermore, one response said that consistent and accessible language must be used when referring to the Care Registers to help avoid confusion particularly for older people and those more vulnerable. Indeed, the respondent stated that, "in our experience people do not care where the help comes from or what it is called, they just simply need to know about it and how to access it in simple terms".

UR response

We concur with a number of respondents who stated that the pathways to accessing the registers must be as simple as possible. The use of clear and consistent language should ensure that any consumer confusion in relation to the

Care Registers is kept to a minimum.

Where consent is the condition for processing, GDPR sets a high standard for consent. An indication of consent must be unambiguous and involve a clear affirmative action (an opt-in). It specifically bans pre-ticked opt-in boxes. It also requires individual ('granular') consent options for distinct processing operations. Consent should be separate from other terms and conditions and should not generally be a precondition of signing up to a service.

We are aware that under GDPR organisations must keep clear records to demonstrate consent. The GDPR gives a specific right to withdraw consent. Therefore people must be told about their right to withdraw, and offered easy ways to withdraw consent at any time.

Restricted to residences and care homes

One response stated that registers are currently limited to households. Organisations such as those providing training and care facilities in the community and sheltered housing would also like to be on the Register.

UR response

We note the suggestion to include non-domestic premises on Care Registers. However, NIE Networks and NIW's Care Registers do contain premises such as Nursing Homes and sheltered housing as well as domestic premises. We remain of the thinking that the primary focus and resource of the network companies Care Registers should remain focused on these premises rather than be stretched to include more categories of premises.

Terminology

One respondent stated that the concept of vulnerability in Northern Ireland has

shifted towards the concept of 'risk of harm'. They stated that circumstances of a power outage or interruption to a water supply could have an immediate and dramatic effect on an individual's risk of harm.

UR response

We note the inclusion of the term 'risk of harm' in one of the responses in relation to the changing concept of vulnerability in Northern Ireland. As a regulator, the UR is guided by both the Energy Order and the licences that the utility companies have to adhere to and be fully compliant with, in regards to the setting of definitions. Indeed, it is partly due to the expanding nature of the term vulnerability that we did not propose a definition of vulnerability. We welcome this suggestion to refer to consumers in challenging circumstances as those who are 'at risk of harm'. We propose using this terminology to describe consumers who may benefit from inclusion on a Care Register. This approach is consistent with other recent UR projects and decisions, for example, the new Codes of Practice on Energy Theft.

As the awareness of the Care Registers increases, the companies will gain in understanding of the variety of complex needs that some consumers may have and will develop the skills necessary to meet these needs for consumers. The effective working of the Consumer Working Group will play a significant role in the expanding of the industries' understanding of the needs and requirements of consumers who are at risk of harm.

Phase Two issues

Respondents raised the issue of how the ten proposals which were consulted upon, would be used when the UR commences the review of gas network companies, gas and electricity suppliers Care Registers. A number of issues were raised, they included:

- Would a common name convention be extended to the whole utility industry i.e. gas network operators and electricity and gas suppliers;
- Gas distribution and electricity and gas supply companies must be provided the scope to fully consider data protection and data sharing issues, irrespective of decisions taken by electricity and water companies;
- Recognition that consumer data information flows are different in the gas and electricity industries; and
- Reconciliation of consumer information held by both the supplier and network operator.

UR response

We will address this call to extend the common naming convention to the remaining utilities (gas networks and all suppliers) when the UR commences the review of Care Registers for gas network companies and gas and electricity suppliers, in Phase Two of this project. The UR notes the differences in the flows of information between the network company and electricity supply companies or gas supply companies in the electricity and gas industries. Indeed, this was a fundamental element in the decision to review the gas and electricity industries Care Registers separately.

The recommendations made to incorporate a mechanism to annually reconcile the consumer information held by both the supplier and network operator is one that can be explored during Phase Two of this project. Indeed, any learning from the co-operation and promotion agreement established between NIW and NIE Networks, which is applicable, can be shared and included in the scoping of Phase Two.

Training

The importance of training was raised by a respondent; stating it was of

paramount importance that any NIW and NIE Networks employees who have dealings with consumers should be aware of the Care Registers and be confident in speaking about them. Staff should be able to outline the benefits available from the Care Registers, and sharing data to ensure that the consumer is fully informed.

UR response

UR recognises the importance of having appropriately trained staff that will guide consumers through the process of becoming included on Care Registers. The UR notes the complex area of consumer needs and the need to ensure that staff are trained in such a way to allow them to provide the appropriate response for a consumer. This is particularly relevant for consumers who are experiencing a challenging personal circumstance such as a mental health issue.

The UR will seek to ensure that both companies have appropriately trained staff. Both NIE Networks and NIW will need to ensure that their staff are trained to an appropriate level. This staff training will need to cover both awareness of the Care Registers and the ability of staff to identify signs of vulnerability and then discuss with the consumer about how the company can provide help. Such training will have to be done on a regular basis and the content reviewed to ensure it is meeting the needs of consumers and staff. Companies may wish to investigate links with third parties to allow referencing (with permission) for more specific support. The Consumer Working Group can be used as a mechanism to report back on the levels of staff awareness and could also provide views on staff capability to identify and discuss vulnerabilities.

Service

One respondent stated that the review was timely as it provides an opportunity for companies to review and update their own services. Allowing them to be alert to the changing needs of users, for example, those with mental health and learning

disabilities, when communicating with these consumers.

Another respondent said they were disappointed that the UR has not taken the opportunity to include in the consultation, questions about services provided to consumers. The response continued that the majority of stakeholders (whom they had engaged with) said that they would have liked to have seen a question on services and that the review did not go deep enough to look at the needs of different consumers in different circumstances. However, the respondent also stated that the stakeholders they had spoken to were also generally satisfied with the services currently provided, but the need to improve and enhance these services was also widely discussed and supported.

UR response

The review did not propose any changes to the services provided to consumers included either on the NIE Networks Care Register, or the NIW Care Register. This was because the project came from our CPS. The research and preparation we did for the CPS indicated that the problem with network Care Registers is uptake and awareness rather than services provided. Indeed, the services provided were detailed in our consultation paper and respondents were asked to comment on all aspects of the paper. We note that those respondents who would like to have seen more emphasis on services also commented that stakeholders were generally satisfied with the services provided.

However, the following measures will ensure services are appropriate and adequate:

1. Constant review of how services perform after a major incident, storm or outage. Further to this, UR has taken a decision that a survey of Care Register consumers will take place after a major incident, storm or outage;
2. Discussion on service at the Consumer Working Group;

3. Investigation when problems are identified; and
4. The review of gas network companies, gas and electricity supply companies Care Registers during Phase Two of this project will provide more information on wider services.

By way of an example of continuous learning, NIE Networks has submitted an assessment to the UR following Storm Ophelia (October 2016) which resulted in outages and the contacting of consumers included on the NIE Network Critical Care Register. NIE Network reports to the UR on the operational issues experienced during such an event. NIE Networks reported that during Storm Ophelia approximately 11,000 telephone fault calls were answered⁴ during the 3 days of the Storm by a combination of call handlers and the High Volume Call Answering (HVCA) system utilised in the Contact Centre. Up to 36 call handlers were deployed to answer the peak level of consumer calls.

During the event, calls from Critical Care consumers (who are dependent on life supporting electrical equipment) were given priority and call handlers provided these consumers with the best available information on restoration times. The purpose of this was to enable these consumers to make informed choices such as whether they should move to relatives, friends or, if necessary, go to their local hospital. During the period 16 - 18 October, 4 dedicated Critical Care support staff from NIE Networks contacted around 60 Critical Care consumers who were off supply to provide them with the best information available. Exceptionally, and based on specific personal circumstances, a small generator can be provided to a Critical Care consumer; as such 20 small generators were installed and maintained by NIE Networks at the homes of Critical Care consumers during this event.

NIE Networks has conducted an internal review of their response to Storm Ophelia; including any improvements they identified into their emergency plan and business

⁴ Over the three days, 5000 fault calls were answered by call agents, and 6000 via HVCA

processes going forward.

Therefore, the UR is satisfied that continual learning is gathered and integrated into the service offered by NIE Networks to their Care Register consumers. UR will seek to develop an evaluation mechanism that both NIE Networks and NIW can use, post a major incident, to assess the service they provided.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The UR was pleased with the level of support for the 10 proposals. The UR expects NIE Networks and NIW to take responsibility for their Care Registers as part of their companies' consumer care package. Both companies will work to build relationships with the community and voluntary sectors, advice giving agencies, consumer bodies and particularly health bodies. Both companies will also improve co-operation and communication between themselves on Care Register issues and improvements. This partnership approach will ensure consumer's needs are at the heart of the Care Registers.

UR has engaged proactively with the ICO from the outset of this project and we expect the companies to continue to follow Data Protection and GDPR guidance in regards to the development of the co-operation and promotion agreement. This will ensure it is fully compliant with the Data Protection protocols and meets the new data protection requirements of GDPR.

UR considers that the current system of Care Registers is delivering well for consumers in Northern Ireland and we wish to build upon this good practice. We consider that the proposals in this paper are proportionate and will enhance and build on the service currently offered. We consider that the proposals in this paper should deliver the following outcomes for consumers:

1. Reduced confusion about the different services offered by network companies and supply companies;
2. Increased awareness amongst consumers and stakeholders representing vulnerable consumers;
3. Increased data sharing (ensuring compliance with data protection requirements); and

4. Increased collaboration amongst industry and a range of stakeholders who can help with promotion and uptake of Care Registers.

Next Steps

Following the publication of this paper the UR will work on an ongoing basis with NIE Networks and NIW to ensure each of the ten proposals listed, in Section One of this paper, are effectively implemented. Also, the UR will set about facilitating the development of a co-operation and promotion arrangement. We expect that the co-operation and promotion agreement will be in place and we will be in a position to provide feedback on the benefit of the agreement within one year of the publication of this decision paper. The UR will monitor the implementation of the ten proposals to ensure they are delivering the additional consumer protections envisioned.

The UR has requested that both NIE Networks and NIW report back to the UR on a regular basis as to the progress made on the ten proposals.

In order to monitor this progress, the UR will formulate an agreed action plan for NIE Networks, NIW and UR. This action plan will detail each of the following:

1. The ten proposals outlined in Section One of this Paper;
2. Attribute responsibility to either NIE Networks, NIW or the UR to each of the activities contained with the ten proposals; and
3. Log the status of the activity and record when completed.

In parallel to this, the new Working Groups (Consumer and Industry) will be established. Both these Working Groups will aid in the delivery of the ten proposals. The action plan will be shared with both Working Groups and will form the agenda for the Working Group meetings.