

Annex 2b: Code of Practice minimum standards on Provision of Services for persons who are of Pensionable Age or Disabled or Chronically Sick

This Code of Practice minimum standards outlines the minimum actions required to fulfil the obligations detailed in Condition 31 of the Electricity Supply Licence and Condition 2.11 of the Gas Supply Licence and other relevant licence conditions. This Code of Practice should be no more than two clicks from the homepage on the supplier's website.

Type of Customer

This Code of Practice cover customers who are of pensionable age or disabled, including in particular domestic customers who are disabled by virtue of being blind, partially sighted, deaf or hearing impaired or chronically sick.

Services Provided

- a) Licensee will at the request of any such Domestic Customer, where reasonably practicable and appropriate, and in each case free of charge [details in licence]: (Condition 31, 3 (a-e) Electricity, Condition 2.11.3 (a-f) Gas).

In order to fulfil the above licence condition, at the request of any such domestic customer where reasonably practicable and appropriate, suppliers must, for no cost:

- provide special controls and adaptors for electrical and gas appliances and meters and reposition meters (including prepayment meters).

- provide special identification for employees authorised by the Licensee to visit households. This will include operation of a password scheme.
- provide advice on the use of electricity and/or gas appliances and other gas fittings (where appropriate) to any such customer who requests it.
- operate a nomination or bill redirection service for those customers who wish to have their bills redirected to a nominated person in addition to a copy of the bill sent to the actual customer if requested. Suppliers must ensure that the nominated person has agreed to receive the bills.
- arrange to read the meter at least once each quarter and advise the customer of that reading where the customer or no one else in the household can read the meter.
- arrange for a free annual gas safety inspection of the gas appliances and other gas fittings on the customer's side of the meter for those customers who are of pensionable age, disabled or chronically ill. This only applies to households where all occupants are of pensionable age or disabled or chronically sick or minors. This does not apply where the landlord of the customer is responsible for the annual inspection in accordance with the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004. The safety inspection must be undertaken by a person possessing appropriate expertise (Gas Only).

b) The Code of Practice shall include arrangements by which the Licensee will on request and free of charge [details in licence]: (Condition 31, 4 (a) Electricity, Condition 2.11.4 (a) Gas).

In order to fulfil the above licence condition suppliers must on request and free of charge

- provide alternative formats of communications for those domestic customers who require it including provision for customers who are blind or partially sighted or deaf or hearing impaired. This will include as a minimum, terms and conditions, billing information, Codes of Practice, complaints procedures and will include having facilities available to assist blind or partially sighted, or deaf or partially deaf customers to enquire or complain about any bill, statement or service provided to them.

Disconnecting Customers who are of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick

c) The Code of Practice shall include arrangements by which the Licensee will deal with disconnections [details in licence] : (Conditions 31, 4 (b-d) and 31.6 (a-b) for Electricity, Conditions 2.11.4 (b-d) and 2.11.6 (a-b) for Gas).

In order to fulfil the above licence conditions suppliers must

- not disconnect a customer who has not paid their bill and is of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick and lives alone or only with other persons who are of pensionable age, disabled, chronically sick or under the age of 18 during any winter period, that is to say, a period beginning with 1 October in any year and ending with 31 March in the following year.
- take reasonable steps to avoid disconnecting the supply to premises where a bill has not been paid and includes an occupant who is of pensionable age or disabled or chronically sick during any winter period, that is to say, a period beginning with 1 October in any year and ending with 31 March in the following year.

- take all reasonable steps to ascertain whether a domestic property falls within the scope of the two previous points before exercising any right to disconnect the property.
- in the case of disconnection of a domestic property maintain for at least six months or where a complaint has been made, six months after the complaint has been resolved, a record and evidence of the steps taken to ascertain whether the occupants include persons who are of pensionable age or disabled or chronically sick or minors. This evidence must be provided to the Authority on request.

Awareness-raising of services provided

d) The Code of Practice shall include arrangements by which the Licensee will perform free of charge [details in licence] : (Condition 31, 5 (a-d) Electricity, Condition 2.11.5 (a-d) Gas).

In order to fulfil the above licence condition suppliers must

- establish and maintain a register of domestic customers who are of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick and who wish to be included on the list.
- ensure that the register holds sufficient information of the age, disability or chronic illness of domestic customers to allow their specific needs or requirements to be identified.
- inform domestic customers at least annually of the existence of the register and how eligible customers can be included on it.
- provide (free of charge) advice and information to customers on the services available from their supplier because of their age, disability or

chronic illness.

- demonstrably promote customer care registers to encourage greater identification and sign up of eligible customers.
- encourage appropriate organisations (such as but not exclusive to advice giving agencies) to raise awareness of the existence of customer care registers amongst members and clients.
- ensure that relevant staff are adequately trained in the identification of customers who may be eligible for the customer care scheme and in treating customers in an empathetic manner to encourage customers to self-identify.
- where appropriate and in line with data protection provisions, provide information in the customer care register to any relevant party licenced to convey gas or distribute electricity to the domestic consumer's premises under the Gas Order or the Electricity Order in an appropriate form and at appropriate intervals.