

## **Ecotricity**

### **Response to energy supplier performance consultation document**

#### **Q1: Please state which types and combination of the following quantitative measures you think best reflect industry performance and your reasons for this.**

We believe all of the proposed measures should be used with the exception of 1.7: if this requirement were imposed it would place an unnecessary burden upon us as we would need to introduce new measures for logging calls to record if the customer was responding to service failures or simply seeking information. Our current system clearly separates complaints from queries and as a service failure is likely to be logged as a complaint we believe this is sufficient.

Customers should be able to see how many complaints have been raised externally to all of the various bodies as it gives a good indication of how good a company is at resolving complaints themselves. We think it is particularly important to show how many repeat contacts have had to be made via an external body before the complaint is resolved: we believe these repeat referrals should be more heavily weighted because if attention is paid to the first referral why would a customer need to go back

We believe that the energy ombudsman complaints should be weighted according to outcome as this would give consumers clear information as to whether or not the complaint was actually upheld, showing whether or not there was any fault on the supplier's part. This should help to assuage any fears about defensive behaviour from suppliers against sending accounts to the ombudsman because reporting will show how many complaints were made against them and how many of those were actually upheld.

#### **Q2. Please state whether you think the following measures should have a greater or lesser weighting and your reasons for this.**

We wouldn't want to see complaints cleared by the supplier in one day included in the weighting as there is no requirement by Ofgem to even report on these at the moment.

We would expect to see repeat direct complaints weighted more heavily than those cleared outside the one day rule as there should be no need for a repeat complaint if it was dealt with properly in the first place.

We wouldn't expect to see advice only cases at CD to be weighted at all, after all advice can resolve an issue without a complaint that's what they're there for: we regularly refer customers to CD for confirmation of what we've told them, i.e. advice, and would not expect to be penalised for referring a customer for that type of confirmation.

We would expect any repeat referrals to CD to be weighted more heavily for the same reasons as above: there should be no need for a repeat complaint if it's dealt with properly the first time.

We're not sure why EHU cases need to be weighted more heavily than above, in our experience they are simply enquiries about power being off that are easily resolved once we establish if it's a network issue or other.

EnSO complaints need to be weighted more heavily than the others to reflect the fact that the supplier has not managed to resolve a complaint. However, we would not expect to receive points against us for a complaint that has not been upheld in any way.

**Q3a. Consumer Focus seeks views on which option would provide the most accurate picture, how you think it should be funded and how the customer satisfaction measure should be incorporated into the model; for example, as a standalone measure or as a positive metric (see section 4) as part of the overall ranking calculation.**

We believe that an independent survey would probably provide the best results but as a supplier funding for such an initiative would be an issue. Could the survey apply to those suppliers with more than 50,000 as with CERT?

**Q4. Consumer Focus seeks views on what types of positive indicators would best reflect supplier performance and be useful to consumers. Additionally do you think these indicators should be combined with the complaint data or provided as a stand alone measure of performance?**

We believe that the best positive indicator would be to show best practices and how that impacts, i.e. how many complaints are not resolved within the 1 day rule: mistakes happen but it's the way in which you deal with them and the speed of response that turns the customer around and shows good service.

This information is clear from the annual complaints report that all suppliers are required to issue but could be shown as a standalone measure as well for quick comparisons to be made by the consumer.

**Q5a. What performance information do you think should be published on the nine smaller suppliers? Should this information be combined with that of the big six or shown as a standalone measure separately?**

We believe the same information should be provided as with the Big 6 so that the consumer can compare all across the board. However, because a lot of the customers of the Big 6 have never changed regional suppliers (we believe about 50% of their customer base), they have never experienced the problems associated with transferring and that is where a lot of complaints stem from. The customers with the small suppliers have made a choice to swap and are usually more vocal and expressive as a result so we are more open to complaints: these consumers expect great things and are sometimes let down by the industry processes over which we have no control but the customer simply sees this as poor service – forget the excuses.

So while we would expect the same information to be shown we believe us (small suppliers) would be better judged separately from the Big 6. There is also the issue that the Big 6 could skew the figures by throwing money at a complaint, i.e. compensation as opposed to our approach which is to hold our hands up where we've made a mistake, put things right &

move on asap. We don't believe in today's compensation culture & only consider such payments where we are solely responsible for any financial loss incurred by the customer. It is clear from some very minor issues that consumers have got used to getting £25/£50 every time they complain and therefore they have come to expect this, resulting in more minor complaints being made and whereas the customer may well have liked the response before they now expect a payout to go with it.

**Q5b. What performance information on business suppliers do you think Consumer Focus should provide for micro-business consumers? In what ways do you think it should differ from the provision for domestic consumers?**

Given that the Ombudsman will look at a complaint from a micro business in the same way as a domestic customer, we believe micro businesses should be provided with the same performance information as domestic customers.

**Q6. In what format do you think the performance information should be displayed to ensure it is easily understood and useful to consumers?**

We believe a ranking system would be the simplest way to display the information to consumers.

**Q7a. How often do you think the performance information should be updated?**

We believe annually would be best so that seasonal trends do not skew the figures: we would get more complaints following a hard winter because bills are higher so an annual report would even this out. Maybe it could be updated at the same time as the annual complaints report are done by each supplier.

**Q7b. Excluding the Consumer Focus website, where do you think links to the information should be displayed to ensure as many consumers as possible can access to the information?**

To display it in too many places could result in update failure. So long as all suppliers follow the same format then it could also be displayed on the suppliers' websites alongside the annual complaints report, with it being updated at the same time as the actual complaints report. While the consumer would have to look at each site they would at least be able to see the statistics easily – so long as we all use the same format and don't put our own 'spin' on it.