

Meeting notes & actions

The aims of this Working Group meeting were to:

- Consider the current, typical consumer journey and how this will be impacted by both a five working day and next working day switch.
- Understand the critical points of consumer engagement, how customer engagement currently happens and how will this need to change?
- Consideration of the journey from a consumer perspective, including what a customer may reasonably expect to experience.

The typical consumer journey (existing).

- The Chair provided an overview of the post-sale consumer communications issued by PCWs (slides 8-14) and the initial consumer communications provided by acquiring Suppliers, following receipt of sale information from PCWs (slides 15-21).
- A summary of current communications was broken down into six categories:
 - General information provided
 - Application / Confirmation / Welcome Pack messages
 - Cool-off related messages
 - Switch timeframe / Supply Start Date messages
 - Meter Reading /Payment messages
 - Contact messages
 - Other messages

Comments and questions raised by participants:

- ***Implications for Collective Switching?***
 - The Chair advised that this would be raised as a topic for consideration at the next Main Forum meeting on 18 May.
- ***What medium do PCWs use for messages?***
 - PCWs have various sales channels, some of which may be off-line.
 - Noted that the new timeframe for faster switching will require email/text to be used as standard, as postal mail will not arrive until after the switch completes.
 - Comment made that some consumers do not use electronic media and requirement for traditional post in some circumstances cannot be ignored.
 - Traditional Prepayment will also need to use postal services e.g. to deliver a physical payment device.

- Comment made that the communication method used may also have a bearing on the start of the cool-off period.
- ***Are the future rules on speed of switch mandatory?***
 - Yes, the obligations reside within the Supply Licence, which will have a backstop requirement of five working days for the 'Relevant Date'.
 - Noted that, at the point of go-live, Suppliers will take individual positions on the switch speed(s) they will use. Some might decide to offer a next-day switch from Day 1, whereas others may default to five working days, or possibly something in between.
 - The Chair noted that Ofgem have remained consistent in their view that agile Suppliers will be permitted to move quickly to a next-day switch (potentially from day 1) if they can demonstrate that there will be no consumer detriment.
 - There may also be differentiation due to, for example, customer types or happy path versus unhappy path journeys.
 - Commented that consumers (and PCWs) would benefit from certainty on switch speeds as there are messages communicated today that tend to avoid firm commitments on timing.
 - Opportunity to deliver stronger, more confident messaging to consumers on switch dates.
 - It was also noted that not all Suppliers have signed up to the Energy Switch Guarantee. However, all Suppliers need to comply with their licence obligations on switching.
- ***How will PCWs handle customer requests for switches being enacted up to 28 days later?***
 - It was commented that choice is helpful until there is too much, when it can become confusing.
 - Some customers like to align renewal dates across products and services, to help in household management.
 - Some customers might welcome choice of date above speed, though there has been no obvious demand evident for next day switching.
 - Comment made that future switching tied to a CoT may breach data privacy rules.
 - **Action:** *All Forum members to consider: Should the consumer be offered a choice of switch date at the point of sale? Or, should the process remain consistent with today i.e. no choice at point of sale, with an additional capability for consumer requests to be captured and passed on?*

- **Access to Supplier Terms & Conditions**
 - View provided that the provision will become more important for customers and should be made accessible up front (e.g. on topics such as smart meters and exit fees).

- **Review of messaging examples:**
 - A comment was made that the goal is ensuring all essential information is provided without effecting differentiation over how it is given.
 - Dynamic messaging may be needed more in the future.
 - Interesting to note that one supplier example advises ‘cool-off’ customers to go back to the PCW.
 - Prepayment was noted as a topic with unique requirements that may demand specific messaging
 - **Action:** *The Chair to ensure that Prepayment messaging is considered further at a future Working Group meeting.*

 - It was suggested that future message consistency to consumers is needed in at least three areas:
 1. *Next Steps (what will happen, who will contact you)*
 2. *Cooling-off (your rights, when it starts, how long it lasts)*
 3. *Switch speed (provide an accurate, consistent message, prevent over-promising/false expectations, possibly clarify compensation rights)*

- **Messaging on Switch Speed:**
 - View expressed that the variance in switch speeds initially could be covered by a simple message that the change will take a maximum of five days.
 - However, concerns remain about the explanation required of five days from when?
 - Another view noted that it would be a much easier and more positive message to standardise on five days. It is better to reliable and simple with promises, than fast and variable.
 - Dynamic messaging is costly and complex.
 - A Supplier noted that the Supplier Licence requires a switch to be undertaken within five working days (backstop not a target). Therefore, although standardisation would simplify messaging it is not consistent with the obligations on Suppliers.
 - **Action:** *The Chair to circulate the current and future proposed Supply Licence Condition text for information.*
 - A Supplier commented that differing switch speeds should not generate operational issues as the process is always driven by the gaining Supplier.
 - Comment made that market incentives will drive all Suppliers to be able to gain customers at the same speed at which they can lose them.

Consideration of the journey from a consumer perspective, including what a customer may reasonably expect to experience.

- Due to time constraints, this item will be considered at the next Working Group meeting on 3 June.

Future Forum and Working Group meeting dates.

- The Chair advised that for diary planning purposes, calendar invites/placeholders will be issued for all planned Forum and Working Group meetings, in alignment with the Work Plan v1.0 within the slide pack Appendix.
 - **Action:** *The Chair to issue calendar invites to the Forum contact list for future Consumer Communication & Engagement Working Group meetings.*