



PCW/Supplier Forum

Consumer Communication & Engagement Working Group – Meeting 1
6 May 2021

Competition Act Reminder

- In taking part in this meeting, participants are confirming that they have undergone relevant training to raise their awareness of, and ensure compliance with, applicable competition law, including the Competition Act 1998 and Articles 101 and 102 EC and that they will not discuss matters that would or might lead to any breaches of competition law.

Agenda

| Item | Topic |
|------|--|
| 1 | <i>Introduction and meeting aims</i> |
| 2 | <i>Overview - Terms of Reference (relevant to this Working Group – ToR 4.4)</i> |
| 3 | <i>Topic – Typical Consumer Journey, Consumer Perceptions & Expectations</i> |
| 4 | <i>Proposed Work Plan for this Working Group and dates of future meetings</i> |
| 5 | <i>Updates/additions to the Forum Risk Register</i> |
| 6 | <i>AOB</i> |

The aims of today's meeting....

- Provide an overview of pertinent elements of the Terms of Reference for Working Group consideration and approach to delivery.
- Focus discussion on the topic of the **typical consumer journey, alongside consumer perceptions and expectations.**
- 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.
- Provide oversight of the proposed Working Group approach and confirmation of future meeting dates.
- Review and update the Forum Risk Register as required.
- Finally, consider AOB from Working Group members.

2. Overview - Terms of Reference (para 4.4)

- *4.3 To consider matters associated with Consumer Communication & Engagement, including:*
 - *4.4.1 Consideration of a typical consumer journey, consumer perceptions & expectations and the impacts associated with transition to a five working day and a next day switch;*
 - *4.4.2 Minimum messaging requirements and clarity over responsibilities in all predictable consumer journeys. To include consistency of communication on rights and obligations and what the consumer can expect to happen next and when;*
 - *4.3.3 Approach to ensuring the delivery of consistent, timely consumer communications, a positive experience and the avoidance of consumer detriment, with consideration from a consumer perspective;*
 - *4.3.4 The treatment of consumer-requested Supply Start Dates and any other tailored switching requests.*

Questions for Working Group consideration



Consumer Communication & Engagement

- How will PCWs make standstill periods, cool off periods and changes clear to consumers?
- How will a PCW know if there is a standstill period? What action would this trigger?
- How do PCWs communicate offers and the objection process to consumers?
- How will PCWs provide information to consumers about timelines for next steps in the switching process?
- How will future dated switches agreed with consumers be treated by PCWs and Suppliers?
- What are the implications of automated switching services?
- Who will own the relationship with the customer along the process, particularly when there are problems with the switch request, or the switch fails?
- What are the implications of OFAF (One Fail All Fail) switch requests?
- How will PCWs be aware of differing Supplier offerings at point of implementation, in terms of differing switch lengths?
- How do we ensure that customers are fully informed of process and timing expectations, but not over-promised or mis-informed?
- How do we generally ensure consistent, accurate messaging to consumers?

3. Typical Consumer Journey, Consumer Perceptions & Expectations

- **Typical Consumer Journey**

- Overview of post sale consumer communications issued by PCWs
- Overview of initial consumer communications issued by acquiring Suppliers, post receipt of information from PCWs

- **Consumer Perceptions & Expectations**

- Overview of the 'Happy Path' customer experience, previously considered by the Consumer Journey Forum

- **Initial questions for consideration**

- What changes are required to current communications, to facilitate a faster switch speed (five working days / next day)?
- What information/topic areas would benefit from a standardised/consistent approach to consumer messaging in the future?
- How can the potential for customer confusion/detriment be mitigated, as the timeframe for switch completion dramatically reduces?

Typical Consumer Journey (PCW)

(Initial communication to consumer at point of sale - from PCW)

An overview of some of the generic information provided within initial PCW to consumer communications, noting that actual content varies per provider.

- *Name of New Energy Supplier*
- *Tariff Name selected*
- *Tariff Information*
- *Reference to being based upon 'x' kwh consumption*
- *An estimated annual £ cost and calculated savings*
- *Reference number*
- *MPXN*
- *Switch application date*
- *Customer details (name, address etc)*
- *Contact information*
- *Payment method*
- *Request for feedback on process so far*
- *Reference to no physical supply implications*
- *Next steps...*

Typical Consumer Journey (PCW)

(Application / Confirmation / Welcome Pack messages)

- *The New Supplier will, within two weeks, send a confirmation of contract with Terms & Conditions and tariff information*
- *Your New Supplier will send you your contract within a week, which confirms the agreement you've signed up to*
- *The application will be sent to your New Supplier in the next 24 hours*
- *You will be in receipt of a welcome pack from your New Supplier in the next 2 weeks*
- *New supplier will send a switch confirmation, welcome pack, switch date in the next fortnight*
- *Your New Supplier will be in touch within a few days of your application with a welcome pack*
- *The switch process is via your New Supplier, there is usually no need to contact your old one*
- *The switch application has been sent to the New Supplier but it's not confirmed yet, there are checks to do*
- *There might be wrong information on the application or past credit problems*
- *The following details have been received, which will shortly be sent to your New Supplier*
- *The switch process has started, if more information is required we will be in touch*

Typical Consumer Journey (PCW)

(Cool-off related messages)

- *Your welcome pack will confirm your 14 day cooling-off period, contact your New Supplier if you want to cancel*
- *Details of cancellation rights will be included in the Contact Confirmation from your New Supplier*
- *You may not hear anything during first 14 days as this is your cooling-off period*
- *If you have changed your mind and want to cancel, download and fill in a form (link provided)*
- *Contact your New Supplier to cancel your application, you have 14 days to cancel from today, or you might have to pay exit fees*
- *Your switch is not confirmed yet, you have a right to change your mind*
- *You have the right to cancel within 14 days from the day after the date you signed up to this tariff, details of how to cancel will be included within your welcome pack*
- *You have an automatic cooling-off period of 14 days starting immediately – your welcome pack will provide full details*
- *Notify your New Supplier within 14 days to cancel the switch*

Typical Consumer Journey (PCW)

(Switch timeframe / Supply Start Date messages)

- *Your switch could be completed in as little as 21 days*
- *The switch should take no longer than 5 weeks – plus mention of 14 day cooling-off plus 3 days (17 working days in total)*
- *You will be asked for a new meter reading in about three weeks, the switch will complete a little after that*
- *The switch will take about four weeks*
- *It typically takes 21 days for your transfer to complete*
- *Link provided to detailed timeline information*
- *A letter confirming the Supply Start Date will be sent approximately 3 weeks before SSD, opening meter readings will be requested*
- *Your New Supplier will contact you with the exact switch date, which will be after your cooling-off period*
- *The New supplier will be in touch within 7-14 days and advise of date for supply start*
- *The switch will be complete in 4-6 weeks time*
- *Note some Suppliers still follow a switch process of up to 6 weeks, they will advise you if this applies to you*

Typical Consumer Journey (PCW)

(Meter Reading / Payment messages)

- *Your New Supplier will be in touch with you for a meter reading*
- *You will be asked for a new meter reading in about three weeks*
- *New Suppliers will confirm your details and ask for a meter reading in 2-4 weeks time, the old supplier will also ask for one too*
- *Take a final meter reading on your switch date and give it to your New Supplier*
- *If you have switched, your old supplier will be in touch for a final meter reading*

- *You can challenge the direct debit payment if its too high (link to information provided)*
- *If you are in credit with you Old Supplier it should be automatically refunded*
- *If you owe your Supplier money, it shouldn't interrupt your switch unless you owe a large amount*
- *If you have chosen to pay by Direct Debit, you are protected under the Direct Debit Guarantee*

Typical Consumer Journey (PCW)

(Contact messages)

- *If you have not heard anything from your New Supplier in 28 days, contact us*
- *If you have any problems please contact your New Supplier first and not us*
- *If you haven't heard anything in a fortnight chase your New Supplier*
- *Contact us if you would like to discuss your switch*
- *Would you like to discuss your switch, just contact us*

Typical Consumer Journey (PCW)

(Other messages)

- *There is no requirement for you to do anything right now*
- *Link provided to more information about the switching process*
- *Phone number provided for the New Supplier for information enquiry or to cancel*
- *Provision of PCW email / phone number for any enquiries*
- *Link provided to the New Suppliers' Terms & Conditions*

- *A reminder to pay the final bill with existing Supplier and cancel any Direct Debits*
- *Coronavirus has not impacted switch timeframes*
- *Your new energy account will be set up by your New Supplier*
- *If you have chosen an online account, your New Supplier will contact you regarding*

Typical Consumer Journey (Supplier)

(Initial communication to consumer – post receipt from PCW)

An overview of some of the generic information provided to consumers by a Supplier, within their initial consumer communication, noting that actual content varies per provider.

- *Account number*
- *Fuel type chosen*
- *Current view on Switch date (aim to switch by/on)*
- *Supply address*
- *Payment method*
- *Tariff Name & Type*
- *Unit rate and Standing Charge*
- *Direct Debit Guarantee information*
- *First payment due date (Direct Debit)*
- *Estimated annual cost / assumed consumption*
- *Tariff end date / Price guaranteed until date*
- *Exit fee information*
- *Discounts/additional charges*
- *Link to Tariff Terms / Fuel Mix information*
- *Personal Projection information / link*
- *Information about the Supplier*

Typical Consumer Journey (Supplier)

(Application / Confirmation / Welcome Pack messages)

- *It is easy to track your switch, click below and access your account for an update*
- *Everything you need to know about your chosen tariff is inside your welcome pack (link provided)*
- *We will contact your current energy provider to arrange your switch*
- *We have gone through all the information provided and all is correct*
- *Please check your meter point numbers – its important to check that we have taken over the right supply when you join us (check your current bill)*
- *We will write to you again shortly confirming the details of your new tariff*
- *Your account can be managed online, where you can see documents and Terms & Conditions (link provided)*
- *Welcome, we need you to Click here to finalise your account set up*
- *Your online account has been set up and its ready for you to access (link provided)*
- *Please read the Terms & Conditions and Tariff Information carefully as these form your contract*
- *Check the progress of your switch below (link provided)*
- *We will take care of your switch – at no point will you be without supply*
- *Sign up to My Account to view your full Welcome Pack*
- *Your switch is underway from today*

Typical Consumer Journey (Supplier)

(Cool-off related messages)

- *If you decide that you don't want to switch, remember you have 14 days to change your mind*
- *If you have a change of heart let us know within 14 days of this email and we will stop your switch*
- *If you change your mind in the next 14 days, just tap 'Cancel switch?' in your account. You'll stay with your current supplier*
- *If you don't want to move, please tell your switching site*
- *Option provided for consumer to change the details provided and 'Start again'*
- *Your 14-day cooling off period starts on the day after you signed up with us. If you'd like to cancel your switch during this period (email us/phone/download form)*
- *The cooling-off period is 14 days, during which you can contact us to cancel your switch*
- *If you cancel your switch nothing will happen, you will stay with your old Supplier*

Typical Consumer Journey (Supplier)

(Switch timeframe / Supply Start Date messages)

- *We are starting your switch and hope to complete it by 'x' date*
- *It shouldn't take more than 21 days to switch you over to us*
- *We will now begin the process of transferring your supply, which will take at least three weeks to complete*
- *We will be in touch to confirm the start date for your new tariff*
- *All being well, we will start supplying you with energy on 'x' date*
- *There are a few more things to do but you should be with us from 'x' date*
- *You can see your confirmed supply start date(s) online, as soon as they're available*
- *We expect to start supplying your electricity on 'x' date*
- *Sometimes timelines can change, but we'll let you know if that happens*
- *We aim to complete all switches within 15 working days*
- *You may be eligible to receive £30 compensation (if not completed on time)*

Typical Consumer Journey (Supplier)

(Meter Reading / Payment messages)

- *We'll need your first meter reading on 'x' date, we will contact you again to remind you*
- *We will send you a reminder a few days before your switch date to submit your first meter readings*
- *We will ask you to send an opening meter reading to enable an accurate first bill*
- *Some early smart meters are not compatible across all energy Suppliers, and you may be asked to send us regular readings for now*
- *We will be in touch if we need you to send us your opening meter readings*
- *We'll ask for your opening meter read shortly, this is important (link to why)*
- *We'll take care of everything and be in touch when we need you to submit your opening meter reading*
- *If you have a Smart meter, there is no need to submit your opening meter read — we'll collect this directly from your meter (footnote explaining that sometimes this is not possible)*

- *You will hear from us about your Direct Debit soon*
- *Once your account is up and running, you can easily manage your payments and update your payment details online*
- *If you are a prepayment customer, a new key card or barcode will be sent to you shortly so you can top up - information on how you can top up will be included*

Typical Consumer Journey (Supplier)

(Contact messages)

- *Contact us (link provided)*
- *If you have any questions, please get in contact with one of our agents or via email (link provided)*
- *Link provided to Supplier Complaints process / Ombudsman/Citizens Advice contact information*
- *If you can't find an answer to your question, get in touch (link provided)*
- *If something is not right' let us know and we will get straight onto it*
- *Our Help Centre has the answers you need, if you have any questions*

Typical Consumer Journey (Supplier)

(Other messages)

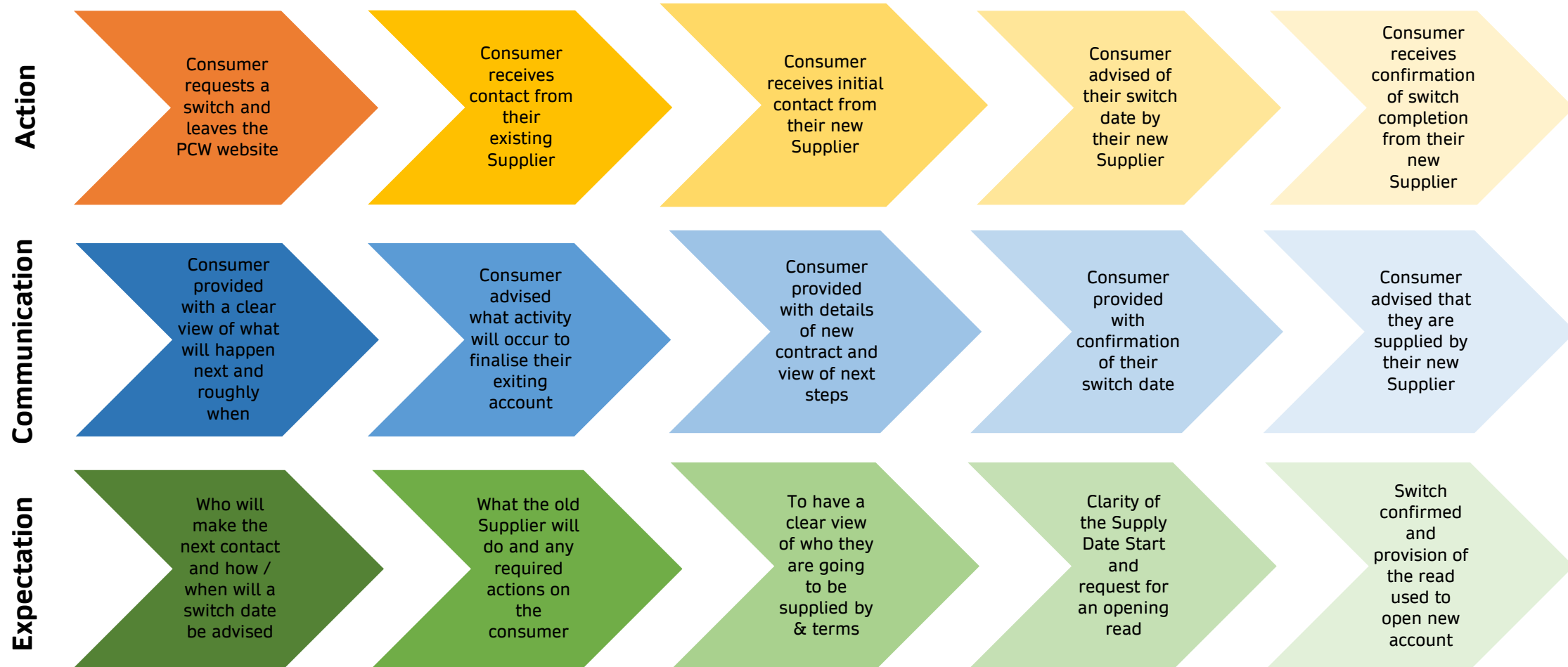
- *Priority Service Register – do you need extra help, let us know (link provided)*
- *If you have an emergency – information provided on what to do in the event of a gas leak or electrical emergency with relevant phone numbers and link to an emergency information page*
- *Your Distribution Network Owner is responsible for ensuring a reliable electricity supply (contact details provided)*
- *We will be in contact to offer you a free smart meter*
- *A smart meter upgrade at no extra cost means no more meter readings and no more estimated bills*
- *If you have a smart meter, we may not be able to connect to it yet*
- *You will save ‘x’ tonnes of CO2 a year, based upon ‘y’*
- *For more information about how switching sites work and how to contact us (link provided)*
- *It is common for mix-ups relating to addresses or meter numbers (in context of importance of ensuring all information provided is correct)*
- *Link provided to Support Centre / Help*
- *Link to ‘Your Terms & Conditions’*
- *Link to ‘Your Quote details’*
- *Link to ‘are you worried about your current contract?’*

Typical Consumer Journey - Questions for consideration

- What changes are required to current communications, to facilitate a faster switch speed (5 working days / next day)?
- What information / topic areas would benefit from a standardised / consistent approach to consumer messaging in the future?

Consumer perspective – ‘Happy Path’ consumer journey

- The Consumer Journey Forum have previously considered the consumer experience during the journey from initial contact to Supply Start Date.
- There is potential for customer confusion/detriment as the timeframe for switch completion dramatically reduces – with multiple contacts by multiple parties within a shortened timeframe. How can this be mitigated?



4. Future meeting dates

| Date | Time | Meeting |
|---------------------------|------|--|
| Thursday 3 June | 2pm | <i>Consumer Communication & Engagement Working Group – meeting 2</i> |
| Thursday 1 July | 2pm | <i>Consumer Communication & Engagement Working Group – meeting 3</i> |
| Wednesday 4 August | 2pm | <i>Consumer Communication & Engagement Working Group – meeting 4</i> |
| Tuesday 30 August | 2pm | <i>Consumer Communication & Engagement Working Group – meeting 5</i> |

5. Risk Register

PCW/Supplier Forum Risk Register (Page 1)

Version Date: 23 April 2021

| ID | RISK | DESCRIPTION & IMPACT | NEXT STEPS |
|-----|--|---|--|
| 001 | Testing arrangements | Currently, switching programme end-to-end testing arrangements exclude any PCW involvement, so is therefore missing the initial data capture process. This omission could expose end-to end process shortcomings at go-live. | Consideration needs to be given to if and how PCWs and Suppliers can/should, as required and appropriate, test relevant parts of the end-to-end switching process, outside of formal programme testing arrangements. |
| 002 | Incomplete validation against established industry data sources (DES and ECOES). | For a variety of reasons, the consistent access to and utilisation of industry data, by PCWs, is not universal. There are also challenges associated with obtaining or deriving consumption data. The advent of the Retail Energy Location (REL) and the programme requirement/expectation that this will be utilised when initialising new switch requests, will make future access to DES and ECOES by all parties essential. | There is a requirement to establish, understand and address the obstacles that are currently preventing universal access to industry data sources and how these obstacles can be removed ahead of go-live. |
| 003 | Inconsistency in Supplier data capture requirements (by PCWs) | Suppliers have diverse product offerings, different approaches to capturing information such as vulnerable customer/priority register information and differing risk appetites to process elements such as credit vetting. Lack of a consistent or standardised data capture approach introduces complexity and cost. | Whilst recognising the requirement for differentiation, consider the development of a minimum data set, information that is required to enable a faster switch (both 5 working day and next day switch) |
| 004 | Differing data communication arrangements, between PCWs and Suppliers | The existing arrangements facilitate a diverse range of data communication/provision solutions. Whilst current arrangements are predominantly based upon batch processing solutions, processes are starting to evolve (in a non-standard manner), with the introduction of differing API solutions. | Whilst respecting existing commercial arrangements between PCWs and Suppliers and being cognisant of strategic reform that might take occur under the auspices of the Energy White Paper, consider any changes that might be required to better facilitate the implementation of faster switching arrangements in Summer 2022 and consider what an ideal, future target operating model will need to look like to enable next day switching as standard. |

PCW/Supplier Forum Risk Register (Page 2)

Version Date: 23 April 2021

| ID | RISK | DESCRIPTION & IMPACT | NEXT STEPS |
|-----|--|---|---|
| 005 | Switch status updates and feedback mechanisms between PCWs and Suppliers | There is a lack of consistent, robust feedback mechanisms that prevent the efficient and timely flow of information between PCWs and Suppliers during the switch process. All parties in the change of supply chain are therefore not always aware of the switch status, particularly problematic where there are process delays and a lack of certainty over which party the consumer might make contact with to investigate/complain. | Consider what improvements could be made to the existing arrangements to mitigate any process issues or consumer detriment. |
| 006 | Industry metering data triggers unnecessary rejections or tariff errors | Many Suppliers treat legacy two-rate rate meters as single rate for billing. Problems can occur where this is not transparent to PCWs. | Further consideration required to establish the extent of this risk and what actions could be undertaken to mitigate. |
| 007 | Potential for customer confusion as the timeframe for switch completion dramatically reduces | The overlap of standstill, cool-off and speed of switch has the potential to confuse customers, particularly if multiple communications are being received from multiple sources (PCW, Old Supplier, New Supplier) within a short period of time. Additional confusion as to who 'owns' the customer at which point of the process, particularly an issue where there is a rejection or blockage in the switch process. | To be considered and addressed by the Customer Communication & Engagement Working Group. |
| 008 | Absolute clarity required of 'relevant date' (when the switch clocks starts ticking) | All switch processes, requirements and obligations will rest on the clear definition of 'relevant date'. This is particularly important when trying to manage customer communications and expectations, measuring overall switch timeframes & performance and enabling compliance with legislation and guaranteed standards. | Ofgem are currently in the process of providing clarity within revised licence drafting. |

PCW/Supplier Forum Risk Register (Page 3)

Version Date: 23 April 2021

| ID | RISK | DESCRIPTION & IMPACT | NEXT STEPS |
|-----|--|---|---|
| 009 | Change of Tenancy events and Auto-Switching arrangements. | Change of Tenancy (CoT) events can cause particular problems with auto-switching, including the creation of erroneous transfers and customer inconvenience/detriment. | Further Forum discussion required to consider what improvements could be made to mitigate customer detriment. |
| 010 | Data Enquiry Services – future resilience and availability improvements. | It will be critical for Data Enquiry Services to have high levels of resilience and availability as the industry moves to faster switching timeframes. | Requirement to engage with Data Enquiry Service providers to discuss and consider any actions necessary. |

7. AOB

Appendices

PCW/Supplier Forum Work Plan v1.0

