



## Energy Supplier Rating – Consultation on new customer service metrics and other updates – E.ON response

### *Email*

#### ***Q1: Do you agree with our proposal to include email as a customer service metric?***

We agree with Citizens Advice's proposal to include email as a customer service metric. This method of contact is growing in importance, although we believe that over time, webchat will be the main method of electronic communication for customers as it is more immediate. We believe Citizens Advice should continue to monitor customer service metrics and adapt the star rating to reflect consumers' preferences more accurately.

It is vital that Citizens Advice clearly and unambiguously defines what should and should not be included in the metric, to ensure consistency between suppliers and accurate comparability for consumers. We try to call customers who email us and, where this is successful, may never respond by email. We would therefore consider a substantive response to be one where we had closed the correspondence due to having contacted the customer through alternative communication channels.

#### ***Q2: Do you agree with our proposal to use percentage response time (within a certain number of days) as our measure of supplier performance?***

We agree that a percentage response time, within a certain number of days, should be the measure of supplier performance. However, it must be acknowledged that the time to respond will be longer for emails sent out of normal working hours. For example, an email sent by a consumer at 8am and responded to by 6pm that day would appear to have been responded to within a day, even though the response took nearly 10 hours; however, if the consumer emails the supplier at 11pm and a response is sent at 9am the next day, it will look as though it took more than one day to respond. The issue is exacerbated at weekends and where there are bank holidays.

We do have concerns, however, about the proposal to measure response times to all messages from a consumer in a thread, rather than just the initial message. There is currently no way to recognise that a message is part of a thread; it would be necessary to make changes to our systems that would be costly and take time to implement. Any such process is unlikely to be totally reliable and there would be a lack of consistency in the way a 'thread' was measured by each supplier. We propose that Citizens Advice instead measures response times to each individual email.

#### ***Q3: Do you agree with our proposal to measure response time to subsequent emails from consumers, following supplier responses, and to exclude response time to secondary messages?***

We agree that measuring response time to all emails from a consumer in a thread would be the most ideal; however, we have significant concerns that the results could be misleading, as responses in a thread are reliant on how quickly a consumer responds to the initial and subsequent emails. For example, a consumer may raise a query about their bill; the supplier may respond by requesting a

meter reading. It may take several days before the customer replies. We believe a fairer measure would be provision of a response, other than an automated or holding response, to each individual email.

It is not clear what Citizens Advice considers to be a “*subsequent/secondary message*”, and this raises concerns for consistency in the way suppliers deal with emails. In the example we use above regarding a customer who has queried a bill, a consumer may ask when they will receive a revised bill; this could either be considered a continuation of the same thread or a new thread, or a subsequent or secondary message. Should Citizens Advice measure responses to each individual email, as we propose above, this would not be an issue.

***Q4: Please share any relevant research you are aware of on customer expectations of email response time.***

We would draw your attention to the information in the following link:

<https://www.callcentrehelper.com/industry-standards-metrics-125584.htm>

***Q5: Do you have any further comments on our proposal to include email as a customer service metric?***

We believe that Citizens Advice should exclude responses to emails sent from a ‘do not reply’ mailbox: such mailboxes are not a part of our customer service channels and emails may not be picked up and responded to as quickly as responses to a regularly monitored mailbox. We also believe that mailboxes dealing with consumer complaints should be excluded, to avoid double counting with the customer complaint metric that Citizens Advice uses.

***Social media***

***Q6: Do you agree with our proposal to include social media as a customer service metric?***

We agree with Citizens Advice’s proposal to include social media as a customer service metric. This method of contact is growing in importance, although we believe that over time, webchat will be the main method of electronic communication for customers as it is more immediate. We believe Citizens Advice should continue to monitor customer service metrics and adapt the star rating to reflect consumers’ preferences more accurately.

It is vital that Citizens Advice clearly and unambiguously defines what should and should not be included in the metric, to ensure consistency between suppliers and accurate comparability for consumers. For example, what does Citizens Advice consider a ‘substantive answer’ to be?

***Q7: Do you agree with our proposal to measure Facebook and Twitter contacts, and to only measure direct messages?***

Yes, we agree with this proposal.

***Q8: Do you agree with our proposal not to make social media a mandatory contact channel, but to penalise suppliers who have a presence on social media but do not respond to customer queries via this channel?***

We agree with this proposal. However, we believe there should be a score to represent the number of different channels a supplier provides, to reflect the importance of consumers being able to contact their supplier in their preferred way.

***Q9: Do you agree with our proposal to change the wording around ‘answered substantively’ in our information request?***

While we believe that a supplier who agrees with a customer to deal with their query through an alternative communication channel should be considered to have substantively answered the query, suppliers should not be able to consider a message telling the customer to telephone them or contact them via email is sufficient. Citizens Advice should clearly define what it means by ‘substantively answer’.

***Q10: Please share any relevant research you are aware of on customer expectations of social media response time.***

We would draw your attention to the information in the following links:

<https://www.callcentrehelper.com/industry-standards-metrics-125584.htm>

<https://blog.hubspot.com/service/social-media-response-time>

<https://www.convinceandconvert.com/social-media-research/42-percent-of-consumers-complaining-in-social-media-expect-60-minute-response-time/>

<https://econsultancy.com/key-trends-social-media-customer-service/>

<https://www.socialbakers.com/statistics/facebook/pages/total/united-kingdom/brands/industrial>

***Q11: Do you have any further comments on our proposal to include social media as a customer service metric in the rating?***

Social media is still a very small communication channel for suppliers, particularly in relation to direct messages. Citizens Advice needs to take this into account in its weightings. We believe that, over time, webchat will become the most significant electronic communications channel.

#### ***Webchat***

***Q12: Do you agree with our proposal not to include webchat as a customer service metric at this stage, but to keep it under review as part of future iterations of the rating?***



We accept that there are currently difficulties with including a metric for webchat. However, we believe this will become the most significant channel for electronic customer communications in future, and therefore Citizens Advice should seek to include this at the earliest opportunity.

In addition, we believe that there should be a score included for suppliers who offer additional communications channels, such as webchat. This could be on the basis of the number of different communications channels offered.

***Q13: Do you have any further comments on webchat as a customer service metric?***

We would be willing to work with Citizens Advice to help put a metric in place in the near future for webchat.

***Q14: Do you agree with our proposal not to include telephone ringbacks and telephone abandonment rates as customer service metrics?***

We agree with this proposal. Should Citizens Advice consider including ringbacks as a metric in future, we would ask for virtual hold technology to be considered as an equivalent to ringback. This technology allows a caller to hang up but retain their place in the call queue; when their place is reached, the system automatically dials their number.

***Q15: Do you agree with our proposal for incorporating the new customer service metrics into the rating?***

We are concerned that the weightings for customer service do not accurately reflect the shares of contacts through the different communication channels. At E.ON, for example, the number of emails we receive is less than a quarter of the telephone contacts we receive. The weighting should be more fairly balanced.

***Q16: Do you agree with our proposal to include the Energy UK Vulnerability Code of Practice in the rating?***

We believe it is too early to consider whether to include the Energy UK Vulnerability Code in the rating, as it is still not clear what it will include, how it will be governed and whether it will include anything in excess of what is already required under the supply licence.

***Q17: Do you have any comments on the broader role of the Company Commitments element of the star rating?***

We believe that a weighting of 10% for this metric is too high. Suppliers are held to at least the same, if not higher, standards under the supply licence, therefore membership of these commitments does not have any additional value for consumers.



***Q18: Do you have any comments on the opportunity to dispute the reports from the Energy Ombudsman in the star rating processes?***

In theory, we support what Citizens Advice is proposing for this metric. However, we recommend that suppliers be given an opportunity to review the new methodology once it has been in operation for two quarters, as only then will it be possible to see whether, in practice, it produces accurate results. We would also appreciate an opportunity to review the new pro forma before this change is made to the methodology. In designing the new proforma, we would also ask that Citizens Advice considers whether it is necessary to include a column of Complaints Level 2.

***Q19: Do you have any comments on the proposal to align the star rating measure of switching timeliness with Ofgem's proposals?***

We agree with Citizens Advice's proposal to set the starting point for a switch as the date the gaining supplier received a completed application.