

# Domestic Supplier Liaison

## August 2022



Citizens Advice and The  
Extra Help Unit

# Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Minutes from last meeting
- Consumer service Operations update
- Advice Direct Scotland Operations update
- EHU Operations update
- Break
- Ombudsman Services Operations update
- Supplier Spotlight group discussion
- Citizens Advice energy policy team update
- Citizens Advice cost of living focus
- Citizens Advice Scotland PPM research
- AOB



# Actions



Suzi Cassie

# Consumer service update, quarter one 2022/23



Leanne Dullard  
Operations

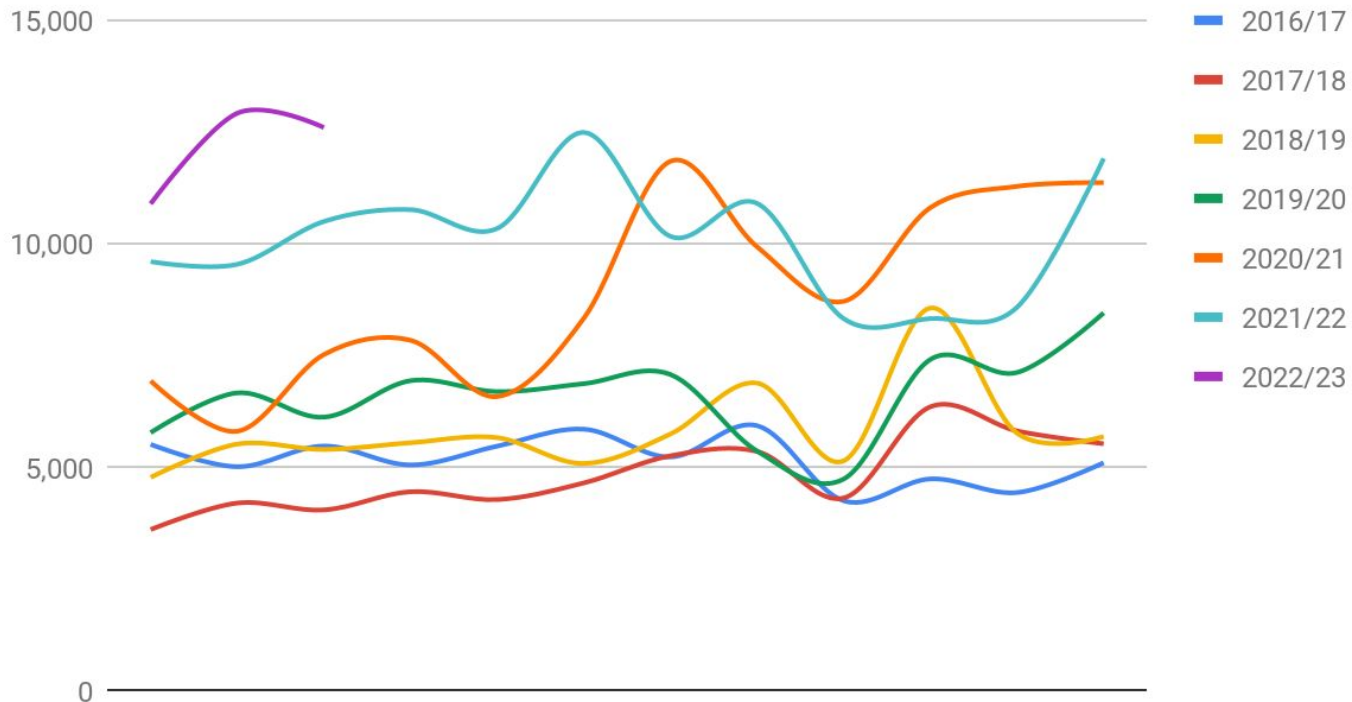
# Performance and Operations Q1

Key points from Q1 are:

- Contacts answered in Q1 were the highest we have ever answered as a result of continued energy crisis
- Our web chat channel has continued to remain busy and is being promoted on social media and other platforms in order to try and channel shift some clients away from phones
- Introduced new monitoring procedures to ensure the quality of our data remains consistent, in line with the new affordability codes being introduced

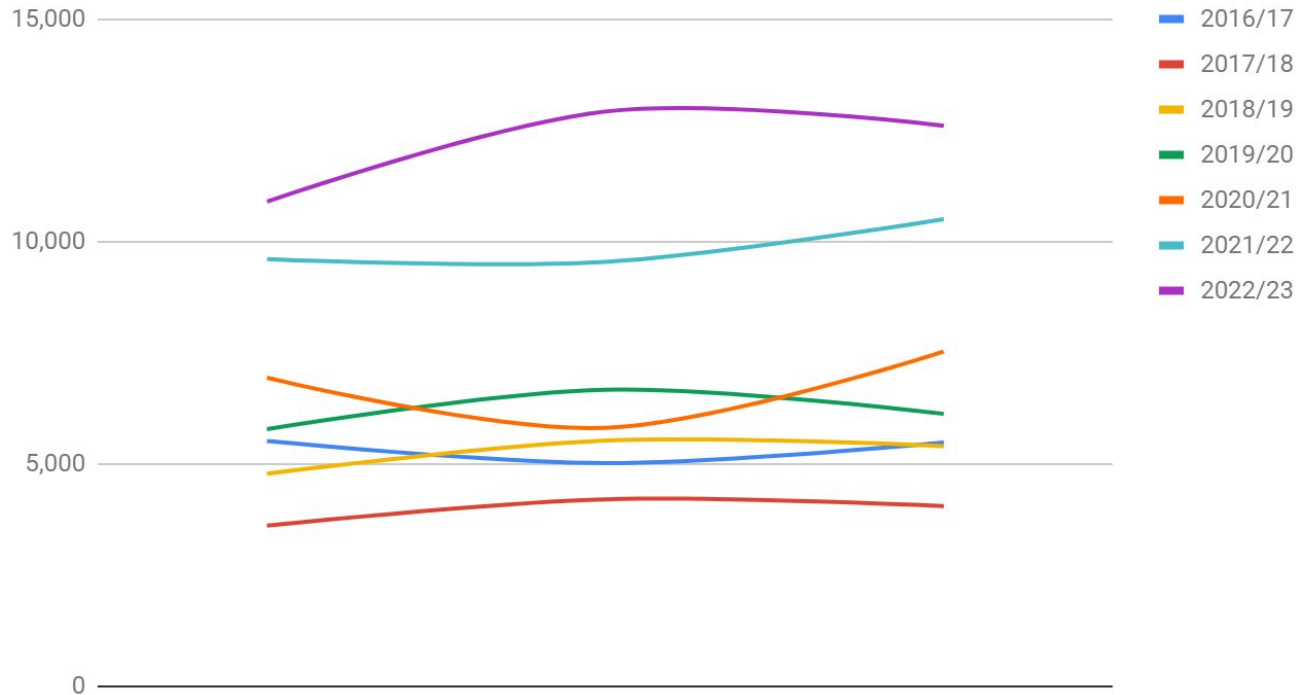
# Contact volumes comparison 2016/17 to 2022/23

Contacts answered 2016/17 - 2022/23



# Q1 contact volumes comparison 2016/17 to 2022/23

Yearly comparisons of Q1 contacts answered 2016/17 to 2022/23



# End of call survey trends 18/19 - present

Category trend



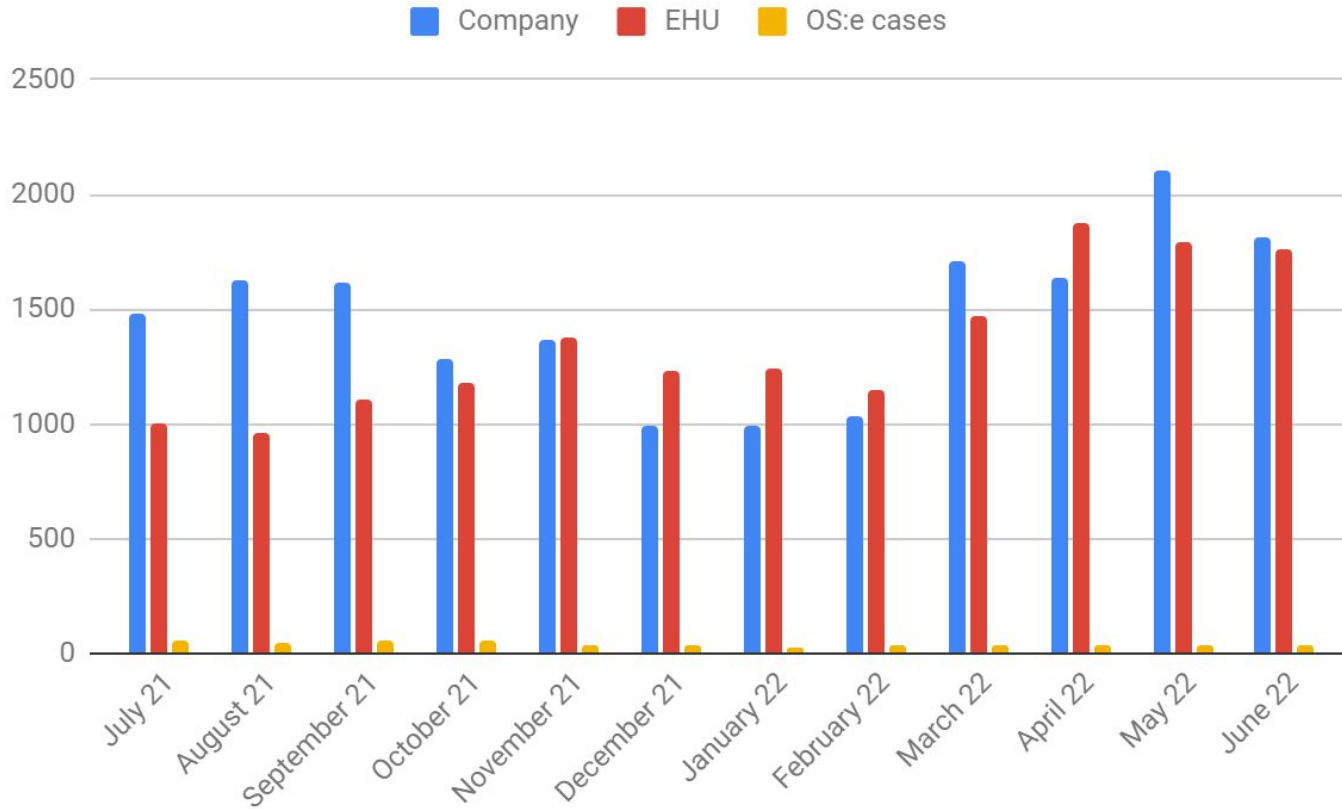


# Referrals against volumes July 21 - June 22

Volume v Referrals July 21 - June 22



# Referral proportions July 21 - June 2022



# Recorded information on the IVR

	Priority calls	Price cap information	Supplier of last resort
Jan 22	1,750		1,987
Feb 22	1,401	345	1,966
Mar 22	1,825	454	2,126
Apr 22	2,072	Unavailable	Unavailable
May 22	1,770	398	1,391
June 22	1,801	321	1,055

# Trends

Quarter 2 Jul - Sep 21	Quarter 3 Oct - Dec 21	Quarter 4 Jan - Mar 22	Quarter 1 April - June 22
Inaccurate bill or inaccurate estimated bill (1848)	Credit refund issue (1664)	PPM self disconnection (unable to credit meter) (2,065)	PPM self disconnection (unable to credit meter) (1,874)
Final account reconciliation (883)	Inaccurate bill or inaccurate estimated bill (1292)	Credit Refund Issue (1,453)	PPM affordability self disconnection unable to credit meter (1,610)
Difficulty contacting supplier (805)	PPM self disconnection (unable to credit meter) (1282)	Price/tariff information (1,384)	Disputed bill, customer not responsible (1,562)
Credit Refund Issue (757)	Price/tariff information (752)	Inaccurate bill or inaccurate estimated bill (1,275)	Inaccurate bill or inaccurate estimated bill (1,445)
Debt recovery practices (736)	Direct debit issues (689)	Disputed bill, customer not responsible (980)	Price/tariff information (1,113)
Direct debit issues (715)	Disputed bill, customer not responsible (662)	Debt recovery practices (832)	Pricing information (919)
Price/tariff information (631)	Debt Recovery Practices (653)	Pricing information (689)	Direct debit issues (864)
Catch up bill received (570)	New account issue (557)	Direct debit issues (654)	Debt recovery practices (864)
Meter accuracy (533)	Final account reconciliation (532)	Administrator/debt issue (632)	Administrator/debt issue (697)
Company contact details (non complaint purposes) (530)	Domestic supply disconnected (522)	Difficulty contacting supplier (605)	Difficulty contacting supplier (637)

# Q1 Trends split by nation

England	Wales
PPM self disconnection (unable to credit meter)	PPM self disconnection (unable to credit meter)
PPM affordability self disconnection unable to credit meter	PPM affordability self disconnection unable to credit meter
Disputed bill, customer not responsible	Inaccurate bill or inaccurate estimated bill
Inaccurate bill or inaccurate estimated bill	Price/tariff information
Price/tariff information	Disputed bill, customer not responsible
Pricing information	Pricing information
Debt recovery practices	Direct debit issues
Direct debit issues	Credit Refund Issue
Administrator/debt issue	Debt recovery practices
Difficulty contacting supplier	Catch up bill received

# Q1 new affordability codes

Code	Description	Advice only	Company referrals	EHU	Energy ombudsman	Other	Blank	Total cases
DD20 (new)	Credit meter affordability: direct debit or next bank transfer payment to cause financial detriment	218	39	23	1	9	0	<b>290</b>
DD19 (new)	Credit meter affordability: missed direct debit or bank transfer payment	64	29	18	0	0	0	<b>111</b>
DD18 (new)	PPM affordability: topping up causing financial detriment	215	18	132	0	2	0	<b>367</b>
DD17 (new)	PPM affordability: self-disconnection (unable to credit meter) - failed supplier	22	1	39	0	0	0	<b>62</b>
DD16 (new)	PPM affordability self disconnection unable to credit meter	1241	14	1529	1	4	0	<b>2789</b>

# Google analytics - energy pages

Top 10 energy website pages	Q1 2022/23	Q1 2021/22
Grants and benefits to help you pay your energy bills	291,789	24,548
How to read your smart electricity meter	60,508	6,903
How to read your energy meter	58,062	34,576
You can't afford to top up your pre-payment meter	57,062	10,162
How to read your smart gas meter	45,040	5,430
Find out who your gas or electricity supplier is	33,939	15,711
Struggling to pay your energy bills	33,176	9,477
Moving home and dealing with your energy supply	32,430	22,793
Energy bill too high	27,967	6,383

Total energy page views Q1 22/23	996,516
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# Signposted cases for Q1

Signposted to	Total signposts
Citizens Advice local office	3057
Energy ombudsman	648
Ofgem	226
National debtline	129
Information Commissioner's Office	60
Law Society	41

Signposted to	Total signposts
Shelter	29
Consumer council for water	22
Citizens Advice Scotland	28
Age Concern	16
Financial Ombudsman Services	9
Other	6,493



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Total signposts for Q1 - 10,758



# Good news stories

## What happened?

Kate was renting in a block of flats and her energy was supplied via a broker who were charging inflated prices but the landlord was not willing to change the broker. The broker also hadn't issued any bills for 18 months so Kate was facing a huge bill and threat of disconnection.

## How we were able to help

Following our advice Kate was able to use our guidance and to challenge the costs the broker was charging.

## Feedback

"WOW, thank you!! This is so helpful and full of really practical steps! The language is so clear and easy to understand. I really appreciate your time in putting this together. I'm extremely grateful, thank you!!"



## What happened?

Ryan was struggling with his mental health when he realised he was being billed for someone else's property. Ryan was unable to get through to his supplier and hadn't had a reply from the supplier.

## How we were able to help

Following our advice Ryan was able to resolve the issues with his supplier and receive a refund for the incorrect charges

## Feedback

Ryan called back to say thank you. He said it was great to have someone listen to him and give him the information he needed to resolve the issue. He said it was as though a weight had been lifted off his mind after speaking to us.

# Looking ahead

- Energy training materials
- 0345 telephone numbers are being phased out and will no longer be operational from the end of January 2023.
- Telephony system migration

Presented by: **Leanne Dullard**  
Date: **25 August 2022**

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# Advice Direct Scotland operations update

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Hazel Knowles

# Extra Help Unit operations update, impact of industry crisis and trends

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Natasha Gilmour and  
Angus Mcmillan

# Extra Help Unit

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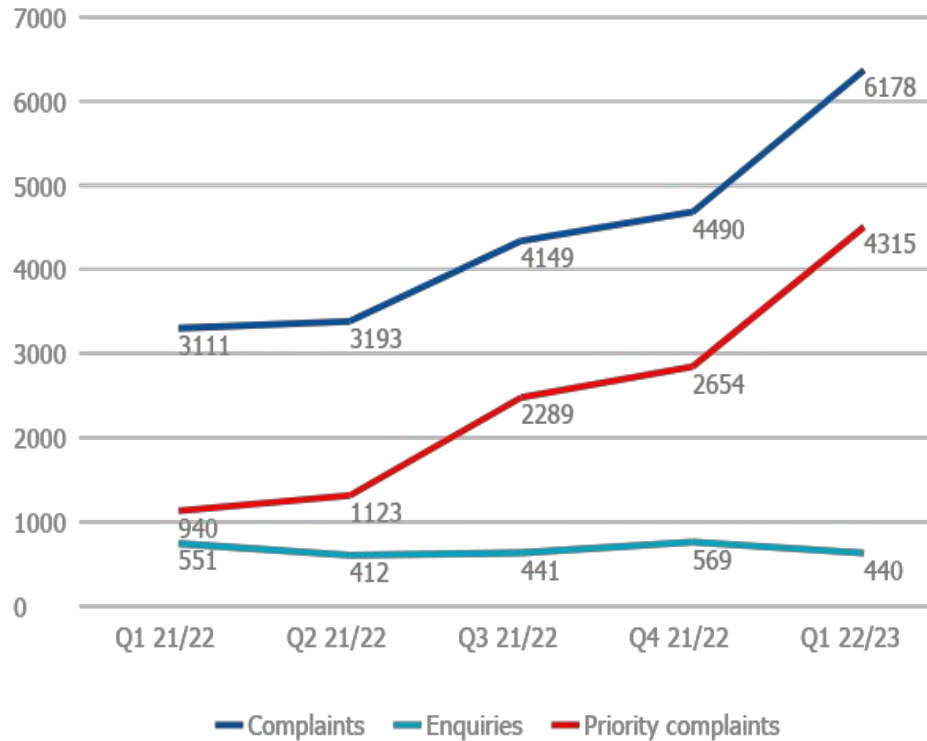
# Supplier Liaison update

25th August 2022  
Natasha Gilmour, Angus McMillan



# Casework Volumes

## EHU Casework Volumes - domestic and micro-business



## Changes from Q4 21/22 to Q1 22/23



Total Complaints (priority and non-urgent)  
Q1 22/23



Priority complaints  
Q1 22/23

# Accent Customer Satisfaction research

**81%** would recommend EHU Services

**86%** satisfied with referral handover to EHU

**95%** commented positively about manner of staff

**82%** felt EHU helped them find a way forward

**86%** said they understood there was help available

**75%** reported feeling less stressed

**89%** satisfied with length of time to resolve case

**68%** reported feeling less alone

**60%** said their mental health and wellbeing had improved

## Customer satisfaction comments



"I suffer from depression and they calmed me down and passed on feedback to other charities about other problems. They seemed to understand what I was going through. There was a lot of tears and I had a panic attack on the phone but the caseworker managed to calm me down."



"Amazing patience and effort. A service that I feel is undervalued."



"She made me feel at ease, she was calm and kept me calm (because I'm bipolar). She was really, really brilliant - she kept me up to date with every single step and if I needed to phone her, it didn't matter if it was a stupid question."



"I just like to say that we tried ourselves to get this sorted for over a year and we were ignored by Scottish Power and Anne and the whole team at Extra Help Unit were the only people that listened and helped us out. They kept us informed and told us to ring them if we were worried - I couldn't fault them at all. It was sorted out in a matter of months - they were brilliant."

*93% of consumers surveyed satisfied or very satisfied with quality of service, July 22*

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# KPI Performance



Q1 22/23

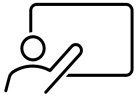
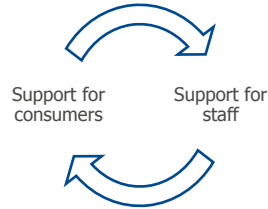
	60% of complaints closed within 35WD April and May	75% of complaints closed within 66wd April and May	70% of Priority complaints closed within 20WD April and May	70% of cases categorized as green, 90% categorized as green or amber	80% of complaints closed with a positive outcome	85% of consumers satisfied with service
Q1 22/23	67%	82%	76%	77% and 95%	84%	93%



**589 fuel vouchers** via Fuel Bank Foundation  
Requests up 78% from Q4 21/22  
Supporting 1600 people within households



# Operational Issues



## Training

Arranging training for staff – suicidal awareness, managers refresher on safeguarding and Managing your stress bucket

## Additional Support Pilot



Work is underway to pilot a more person centred approach for those needing extra help in understanding different sources of help available to them when the EHU has resolved their energy complaint, including income maximisation advice and personalised signposting advice and strengthened referral routes. We have secured a secondment from Renfrewshire CAB and will be seeking a further Support Worker.

## Creation of Lead Caseworker roles



# Recovery plan for non-urgent case allocation



From the point our funding was confirmed we have moved quickly to recruit the additional 11 Caseworkers (14 in reality) required to reduce our backlog of less urgent cases.

## **25<sup>th</sup> July – 820 Unallocated cases**

Majority of new Caseworkers started taking cases during the first half of August.

## **25<sup>th</sup> August – 375 Unallocated cases.**

Expectation is that we will have caught up on allocation by the end of September with non-urgent cases allocated within normal timescales.



## D365 roll out & reporting

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- The rollout to the team has gone well with some minor issues resolved quickly.
- We can directly export key data to excel spreadsheets, and this has allowed us to produce manual reporting for the purposes of case management
- We will be utilising Power BI to create dashboards for the industry and specific suppliers and this will allow us to start sending new automated reporting to agreed timescales within the next few weeks



## Portal: Timetable

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As we finalise work on the initial roll out and reporting, attention is turning to the development of the supplier portal.

**Q2 2022/23** – additional user story development and planning. Engagement with suppliers to discuss more focussed ideas;

**Q3 2022/23** – development of portal;

**Q4 2022/23** – user testing, including some live user testing;

**Q1 2023/24** – Available to all suppliers.



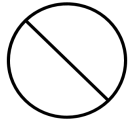
## Auto attaching responses



- When emails sent to suppliers from D365 are directly replied to this means that they will auto attach to EHU case files – reducing admin.
- This is due to code embedded in the email, not the text in the subject field
- Even if an email is forwarded internally, before a reply is sent the code should still be embedded in the email chain
- When emailing the Extra Help Unit without an original email, please ensure there is a reference number included or another identifier.

# Winding down Servicemail

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- **Intention to migrate Servicemail cases to D365 the week commencing 19<sup>th</sup> September;**
- Cases will be manually “rekeyed” to D365 as enquiries;
- Push to minimise the number of cases to be migrated whilst being conscious of new referrals and unallocated queue – **452 Servicemail cases remaining;**
- Fewer easily resolved cases, but important suppliers and EHU do everything possible to resolve the cases left as quickly as possible.



# Top 5 case types (5<sup>th</sup> May to 17<sup>th</sup> August)

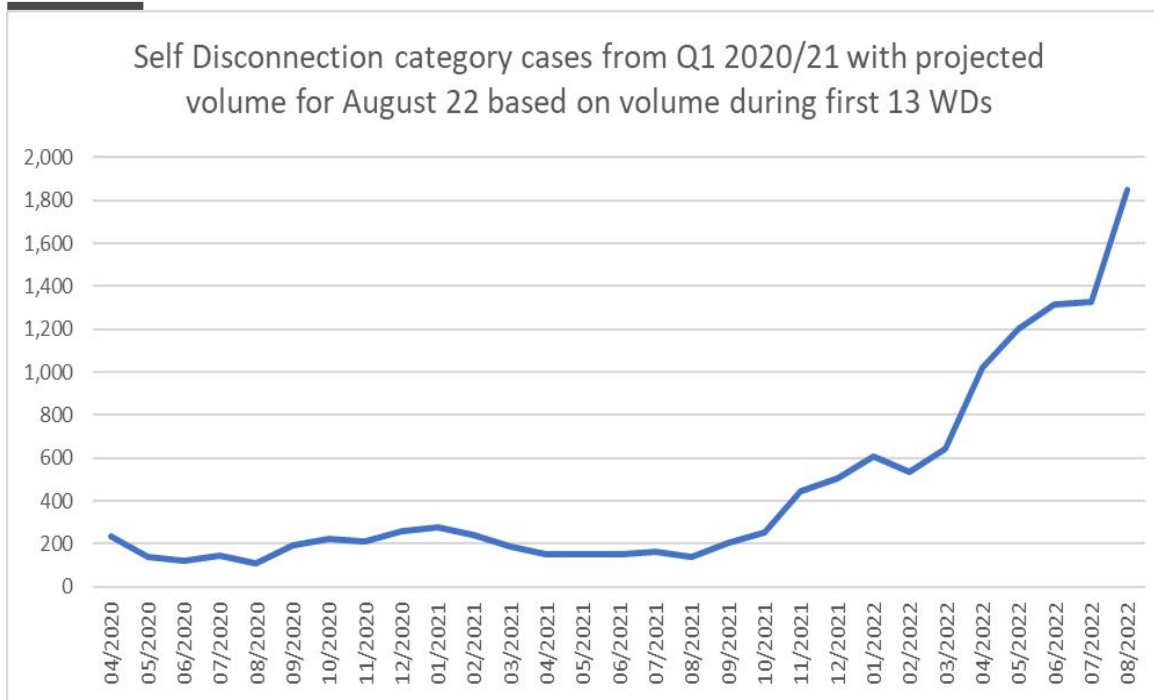
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PPM self-disconnection categories	4,780
Unable to credit PPM (faulty meter/ payment device)	393
Debt recovery practices	371
Disputed bill, customer not responsible	298
Meter provision or exchange	249



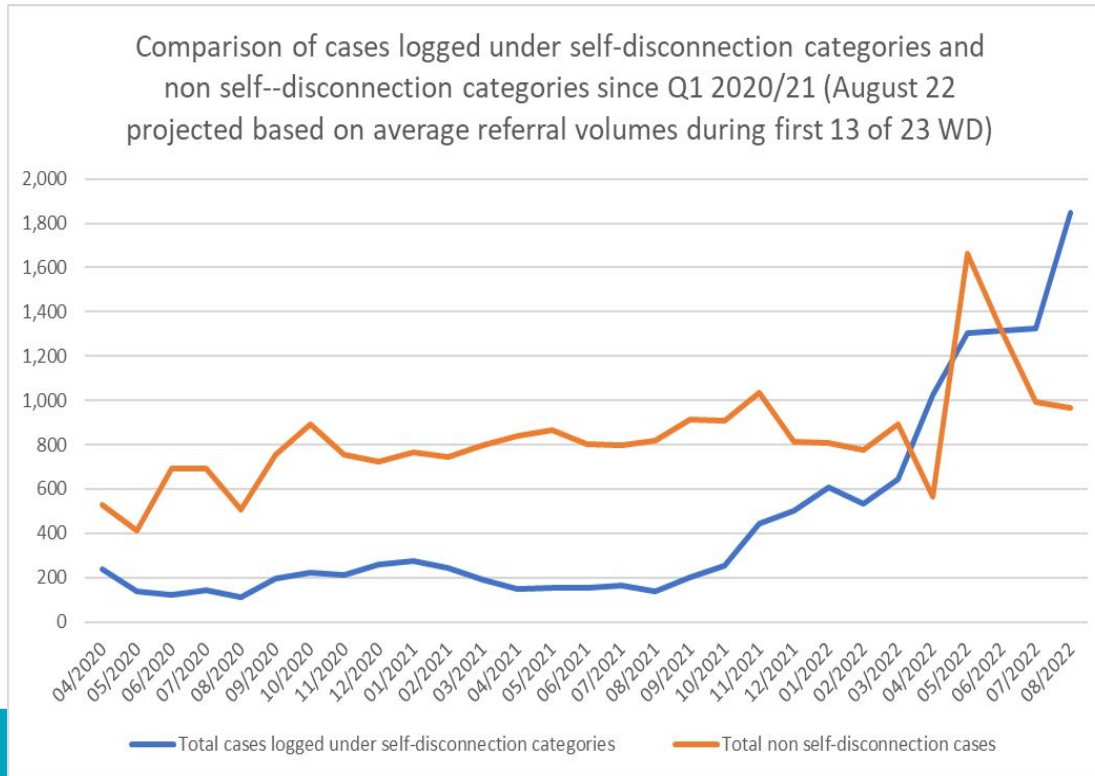


# Self-disconnection: Volumes



If projection is correct 1,847 self-disconnection cases will be logged by the EHU in August 22, compared to 140 in August 21. That's a 1,219% increase.

# Self-disconnection: Volumes



# Case study 1

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Very vulnerable consumer, with significant mobility issues.

Consumer has emphysema, arthritis and brittle bone disease. She uses a nebulizer and stair lift.

Consumer is in receipt of Employment Support Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit. Consumer's 24 year old daughter lives with her, and has mental health issues.

Consumer also has children aged 15 and 13 years old living in the property.



# Case study 1

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Consumer has come out of hospital recently, and is struggling to keep up with a large debt on her prepayment meter as well as struggling to maintain supply.

She is struggling to keep the meter topped up and is spending around £80.00 per week to keep the supply on.

This resulted in her having to prioritise feeding her children before feeding herself.



# Case study 1

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The energy supplier advised the Extra Help Unit that they would be unable to assist, given that they had exhausted the number of loans which they would be willing to provide to the consumer.

The Extra Help Unit applied to the Fuel Bank Foundation for a Fuel Voucher to give temporary credit to maintain the supply.

Consumer has advised that she is very concerned about the upcoming price increases, as she feels that this will increase the pressure on her financially and cause her to struggle to maintain energy supply.



## Case study 2

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Vulnerable consumer had a brain tumour a number of years ago which required a shunt to be fitted – the Consumer explained that being cold can exacerbate the issues with his brain.

Consumer also has memory problems and anxiety.

The consumer is also financially vulnerable, as he is in receipt of Universal Credit and has recently reached out to his local council for further financial support as he does not have enough money to get through the month.



## Case study 2

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The Consumer has a prepayment meter installed in his property and contacted the Extra Help Unit as he had £1 left on his emergency credit for gas and electricity.

The Extra Help Unit reached out to Consumer's energy supplier on his behalf, however were advised by the energy supplier that because the consumer had a small debt of £6.50 on his meter, and had had assistance recently, that they would be unwilling to assist further.



## Case study 2

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The Extra Help Unit applied for a Fuel Voucher for Consumer, and signposted him to his local Citizen's Advice Bureau in Aberdeen to help provide a Food Bank Voucher.

The Consumer was appreciative of the support, however feels that this is a “sticking plaster” and is very concerned at the lack of support from his energy supplier and the prospect of significant energy price increases over the coming months.





## Case study 3

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Consumer is immobile and bedbound due to serious mobility issues, and also has additional mental health concerns. He lives alone and is in receipt of PIP.

The consumer was declined support on the grounds that he had ASC on 3 previous occasions. Debt Recovery Rate not reduced.

A fuel voucher was obtained for the consumer, but we remain concerned about the ongoing situation.



## Case study 4

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Consumer lives at the property with a 5 year old child. She works but also in receipt of Universal Credit due to low earnings.

Additional Support Credit provided on 9 previous occasions and further support refused.

A fuel voucher was obtained by the EHU to get the household back on supply.



# Self-disconnection: Asks ahead of Q3

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- Review of high debt recovery rates – agreements made when energy was more affordable may not be suitable now
- Ensure your teams have a comprehensive understanding of vulnerability, when ASC shouldn't be refused and when Prepayment Meters are not a safe and practical solution
- Take on board guidance in CitA's Good Practice Guide for Winter 2022/23



# Self-disconnection: Monitoring of compliance and detriment

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- Volume of self-disconnection cases received – do certain suppliers become outliers which can't be explained based on prepayment meter customer numbers
- Trends which we believe show a supplier to be in breach of the licence conditions about affordability, and any other expectations set by Ofgem
- Details of cases highlighting detriment to people, when we feel a supplier has failed to act to safeguard a vulnerable person.



# Working Together

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It is vital that suppliers meet their obligations under the Complaint Handling Standards during Q3 and Q4 2022/23. Please ensure:

- EHU Caseworkers can speak to your complaints teams without being caught in a phone queue;
- An escalated contact is always available to pick up urgent escalations and responded quickly;
- Arrangements allow priority cases to be reported up to 5.15pm Mon – Fri, and action taken the same day
- Reporting is used for reconciliation exercises.



# Questions?

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# Break

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# Ombudsman Services

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Jay Ross



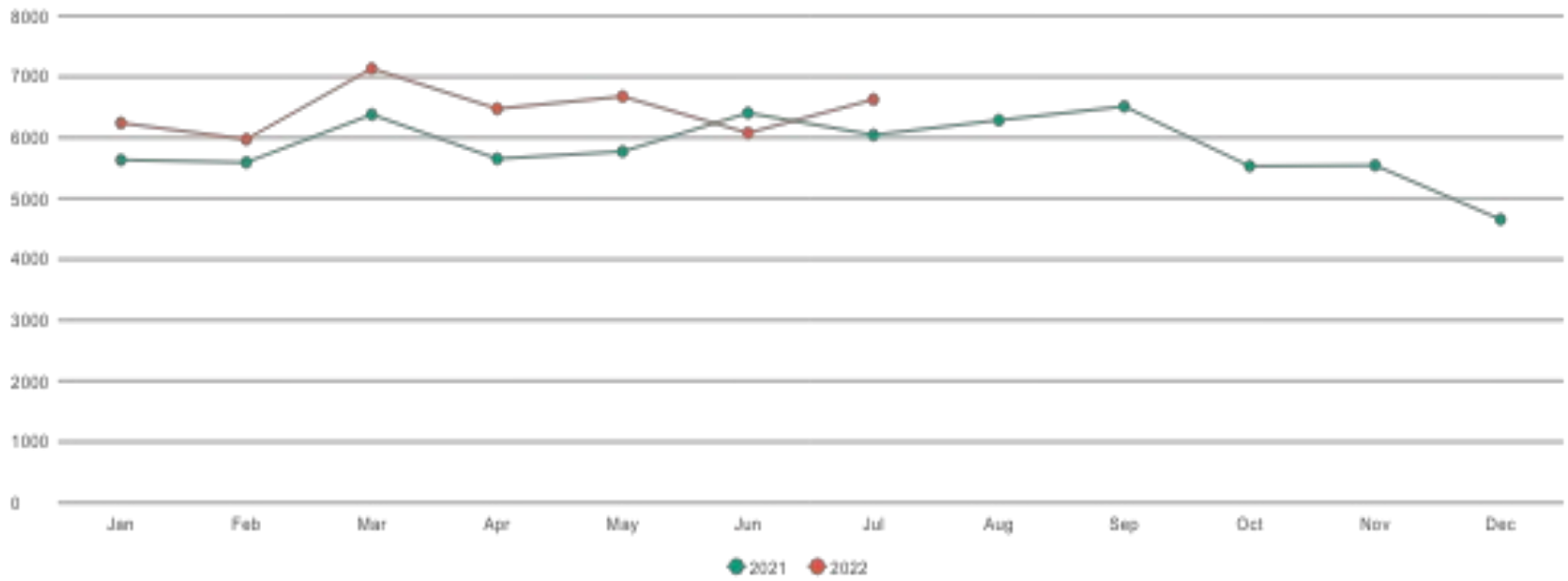
# Ombudsman Services

## Domestic Supplier Liaison

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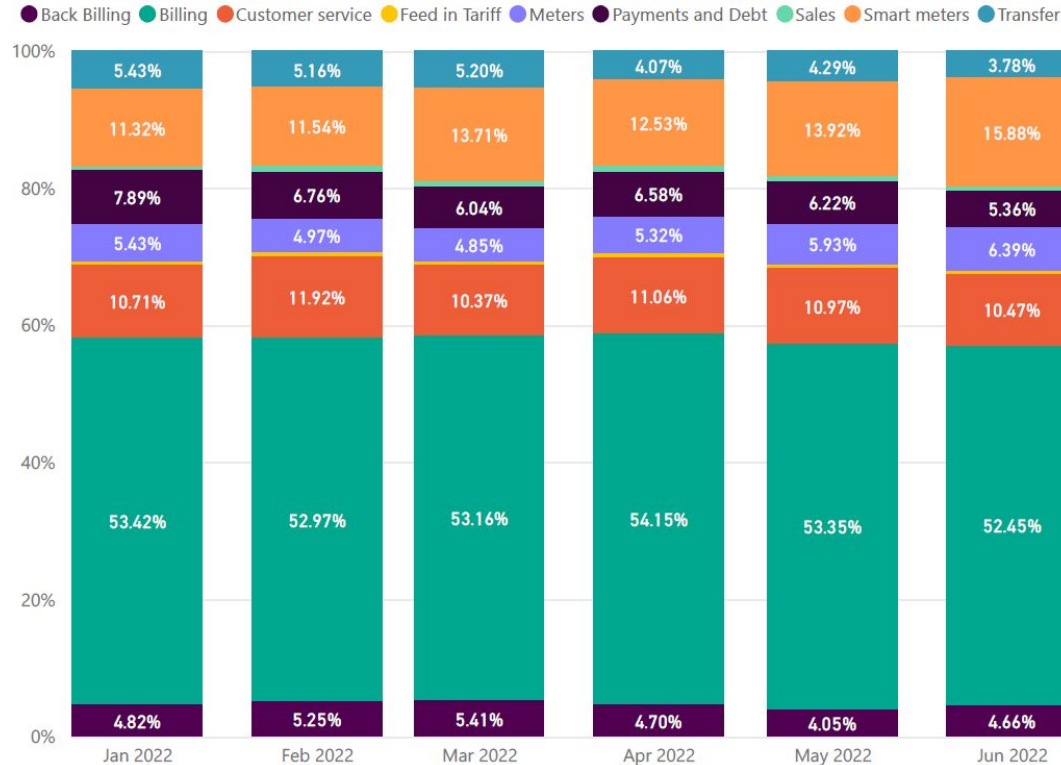
# Complaints in 2022 continue to exceed 2021

Cases Accepted



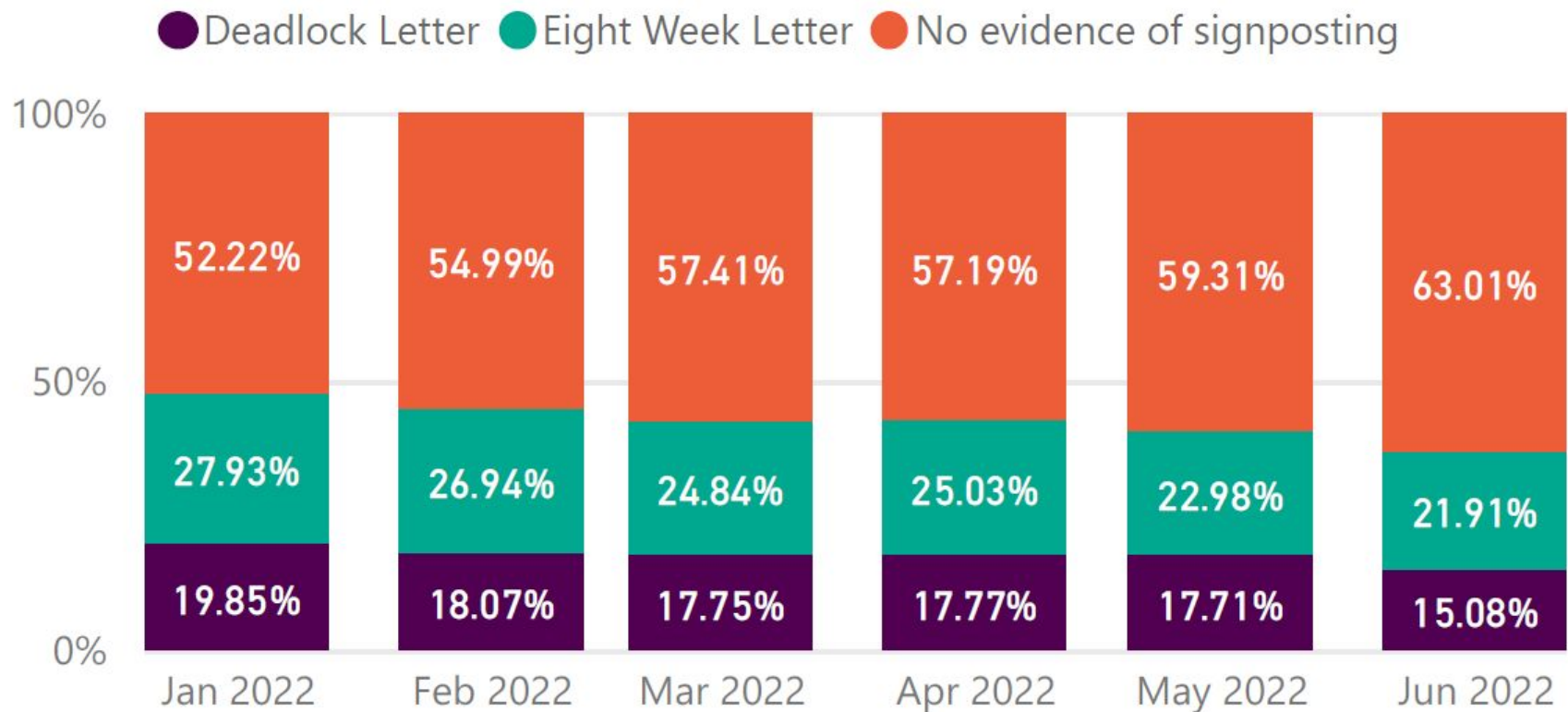
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	5633	5593	6380	5653	5772	6406	6044	6287	6513	5532	5545	4656
2022	6241	5972	7135	6475	6677	6077	6627					

# Complaint types



- Overall consistent split
- With the exception of an increase in smart meter complaints
- Between July 2021 and June 2022 we have had over 7000 smart meter cases, of which, 60% were in the last six months
- The trends of these include; supplier refusing to fit a smart meter, failed appointments and issues with appliance following an installation.

## Signposting rates continue to decrease



# Debt & Affordability

- We are still seeing high numbers of complaints relating to issues of debt and affordability
- However, these are remaining at a steady number, in line with the general higher case numbers
- Main trends include:
  - Debt recovery practices
  - Direct debit issues
  - Payment plans
- In July we hosted our first in person SLP in nearly three year, which included some breakout sessions relating to dent recovery practices

# Supplier spotlight

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# Supplier Spotlight

Group discussions around preparations ahead of the price increase in October

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# Citizens Advice Policy Team update



Abby Jitendra



# CA Energy policy team

<https://public.flourish.studio/story/1634399/>



# Citizens Advice Scotland

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Grace Remmington &  
Mohammed Hashimi

# Prepayment meters: research into frontline perspectives

Grace Remmington and Mohammed  
Hashimi

[Grace.Remmington@cas.org.uk](mailto:Grace.Remmington@cas.org.uk)



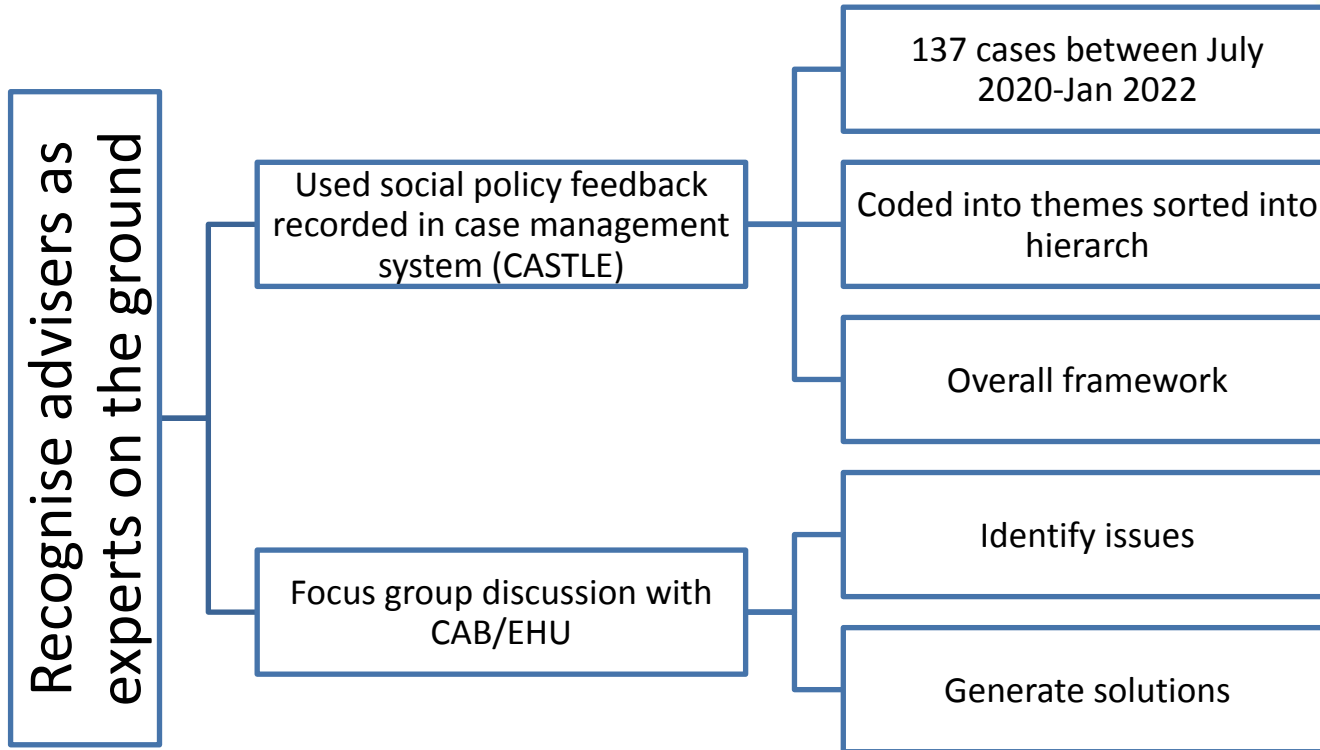
## Overview

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- Qualitative data of 137 PPM cases from previous winters (20-21 and 21-22)
- Highlights poor consumer journeys
- Provides baseline for understanding of energy consumers for this winter



# Methods/methodology

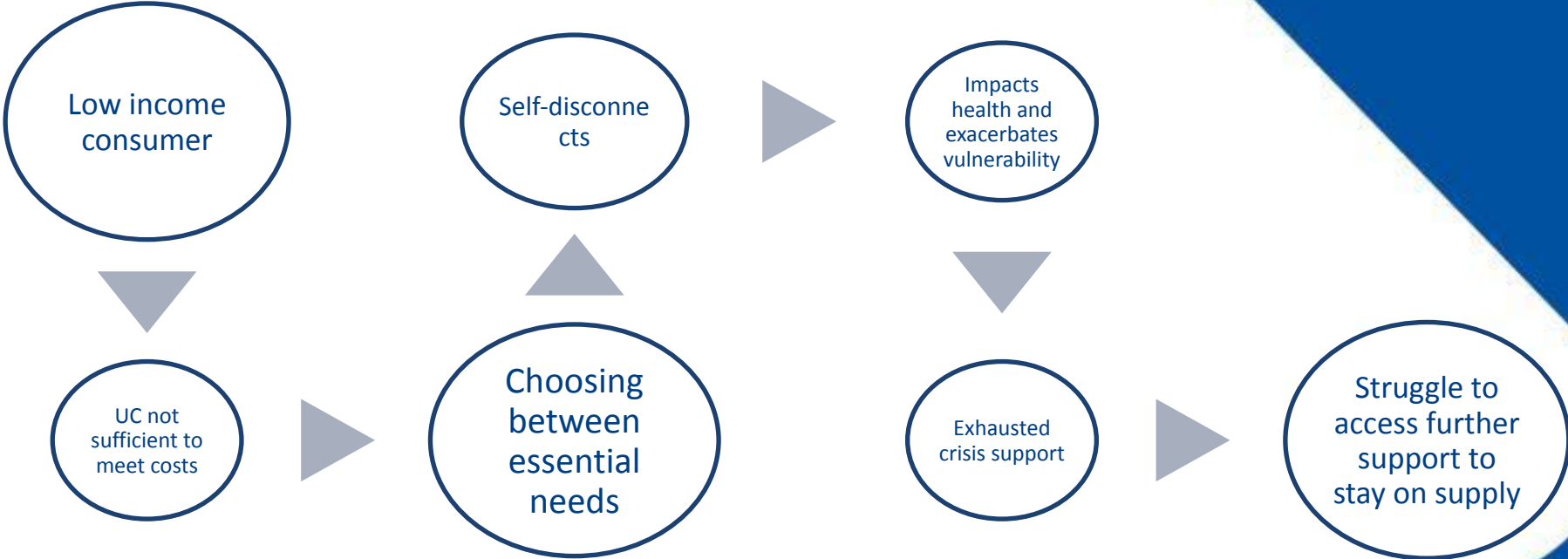


# Key themes

Impact of poor customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Low levels of knowledge</li><li>• Poor communication</li><li>• Digital exclusion</li><li>• Meter failure</li><li>• Threatened installation of PPMs</li></ul>
Adopting detrimental coping mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-disconnection</li><li>• Accruing debt</li><li>• Relying on wider networks</li></ul>
Unable to fulfil basic needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cutting back on essentials</li><li>• Can't meet health needs</li><li>• Emergency support</li><li>• Mental health impacts</li></ul>
Needing to access crisis support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Energy vouchers</li><li>• Food bank ref</li><li>• Scottish Welfare Fund</li></ul>

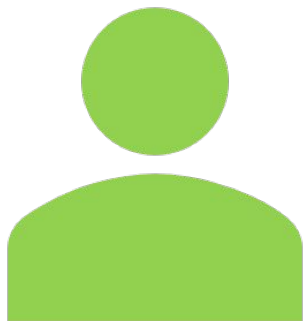


# Illustrative consumer journey: affordability



## Adviser insights: affordability

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“Family of four are having to ration their use of electricity as they cannot afford to top up the prepayment meter. They are living as frugally as they can, and cannot cut back further on their spending in other areas to compensate for the increase in electricity costs”

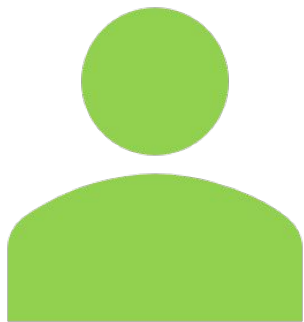
“Client is on Universal Credit and after rent is paid, he has around £690 every month and pay nearly half of the money for electricity”





## Adviser insights: affordability

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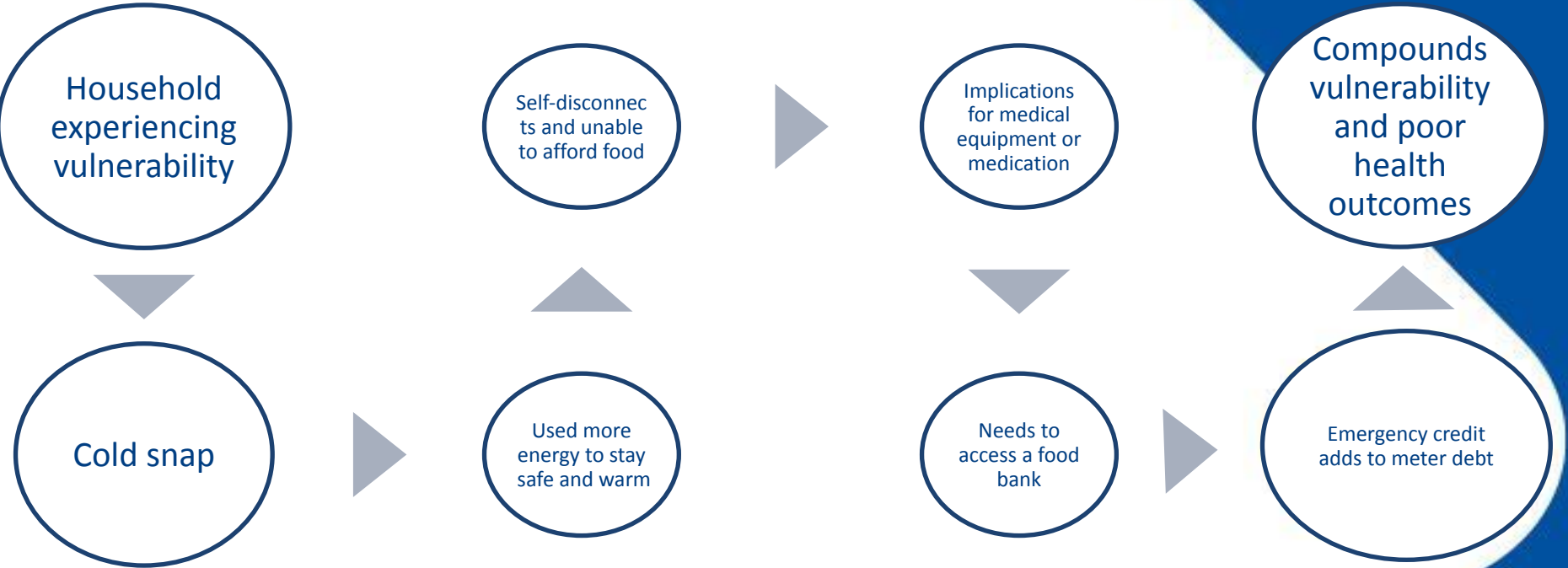
"She advised that her neighbour had given her £10 to put on her meter as she had seen that client was distressed"

"Mother of 3 children, one being only 11 weeks old, is struggling to manage to feed herself and her family and keep the home warm on benefits"

"...client has been staying at their partners house a lot to save money on their energy."

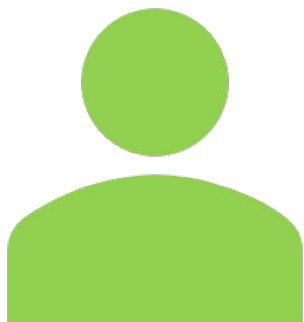


# Illustrative consumer journey: vulnerability



## Adviser insights: vulnerability

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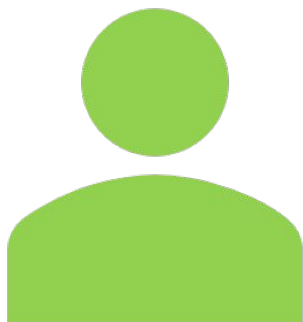


“Client is disabled...she has run out of money and not due more until next week. She has a prepayment meter and is low on credit, having needed to use more in a cold snap. She has now needed to switch off heating to preserve remaining credit for lights and has no food in the house”



## Adviser insights: vulnerability

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“Client was in a vulnerable position with his health conditions – his power has been off for 3 days”

“She is disabled and has run out of money. She...is low on credit, having needed to use more in a cold snap. She has now needed to switch the heating off to preserve remaining credit for lights and has no food in the house. She has medication which requires to be taken with food so she has not taken it”



# AOB

- Next meeting date - Wednesday 9th November 2022

