



Commission for Energy Regulation

An Coimisiún um Rialáil Fuinnimh

Consumer Protection in the Liberalised Electricity Market

Customers with Special Needs

Draft Proposal

CER/04/140

16th April 2004

Introduction

The Commission for Energy Regulation recently published a consultation paper detailing the criteria which will be used to assess a supplier's code of practice concerning consumer protection (CER/04/129). This further paper addresses the specific issues concerning customers with special needs and should be read in conjunction with the previous paper.

As stated previously this consultation paper addresses the issues which the Commission believes will be required as a minimum from suppliers. This is based on the Commission's interpretation of the EU Directive and from experience in other liberalised markets. However, the Commission cannot guarantee that the items covered in this paper are exhaustive or indeed completely consistent with the legislation currently being drafted to implement the EU Directive and should be taken as the Commission's initial thinking on these issues.

Submission of Comments

The Commission invites comments on this draft paper, preferably in electronic format which should be forwarded to John O'Connell at the Commission.

The closing date for receipt of comments is **5.00pm on Friday, 7th May 2004**. The contact details are:

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Customers with Special Needs - Code of Practice

Application

This code of practice will apply to the supply of residential customers.

General

A supplier's code of practice must ensure the supplier does not discriminate against customers with special needs. Customers with special needs are broken into two categories:

- **Customers with disabilities and the elderly** (e.g. customers with a visual impairment)
- **Customers with Medical Requirements** (e.g. customers that rely on special home medical equipment run by electricity, such as a home dialysis, an oxygen concentrator or an artificial ventilator.)

Specific Requirements

The supplier's code of practice must provide that it:

- must keep a register of special needs customers, broken into the two categories described above;
- when signing up a residential customer must query whether this customer is a special needs customer;
- must make customers with special needs aware that they intend to provide the customers details to ESB Networks and the intended use of this information;
- must advise ESB Networks which customers have special needs;
- must make customers with special needs aware of the additional services provided by the supplier;
- must provide additional services which take into account the special need of the customer;
- must ensure that its staff (and agents etc) are trained to implement the supplier's code of practice;
- must take all reasonable efforts to ensure that a customer with special needs is not de-energised; and
- must make customers aware of the supplier's arrangements for participation in the free electricity allowance scheme run by the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

Reporting

The code of practice must provide for an annual report to be submitted to the Commission detailing the number of customers with special needs being supplied, the services supplied and a commentary on the operation and adequacy of the service supplied.