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By Email Only

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Dear Chief Executive

Ombudsman Services response to Covid-19 and return to a more normal way of working

In April this year we wrote to you to outline the steps we were taking to adapt to the Covid-19 crisis. We set out the way we were aligning with industry in focussing on prioritising resources for the most vulnerable customers and how, where necessary, we would allow participating companies to do the same. Specifically, we:

1. Prioritised in-flight complaints according to our assessment of customer vulnerability.
2. Provided customers and suppliers additional time (an extra 28 days) to provide case evidence.
3. Allowed suppliers to focus on only the most vulnerable complaints, where this was strictly necessary.

We believe this was the right approach and provided much needed breathing space as suppliers and customers adapted to new ways of working.

Following the approach it previously set out to allow regulatory flexibility up to 30 June 2020, Ofgem have published a [letter](#) explaining its approach to regulating domestic and non-domestic supplier performance from 1 July 2020. In line with Ofgem's new guidance, I wanted to explain what this means for our service.

In summary, we will be returning to normal requirements and timelines. In practice, that means from 1 July 2020 the following changes will take effect:

1. All suppliers will be required to deal with all Ombudsman cases – there will be no prioritisation at point of contact with customers.
2. We will work with suppliers who have been working on only prioritised complaints, to agree how to release any held (non-priority) cases in a staged and manageable way.
3. The usual timeframes for providing evidence will apply – there will be no time extensions by default (the additional 28 days will not apply to new cases but will remain for cases accepted up to and including 30 June).

If you have any queries, the Relationship Team will be available to explain what this means for your business specifically.

Should the Covid-19 situation change materially in coming months, we will consider whether these changes remain appropriate. We also recognise that there may be exceptional situations that



arise beyond a supplier's (or a customer's) control that mean it is not able operate as normal with these requirements on each case. Should such situations arise we will consider and accommodate these where possible, and I would encourage you to keep in close contact with our team over the coming months to ensure we are aware of any challenges you may be having.

I would like to thank you for your continued engagement during this period. I fully appreciate that this transition back to a more normal way of working will be challenging for some suppliers and I would like to assure you that we remain open to supporting you wherever we can.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Vickers
Chief Executive and Chief Ombudsman

