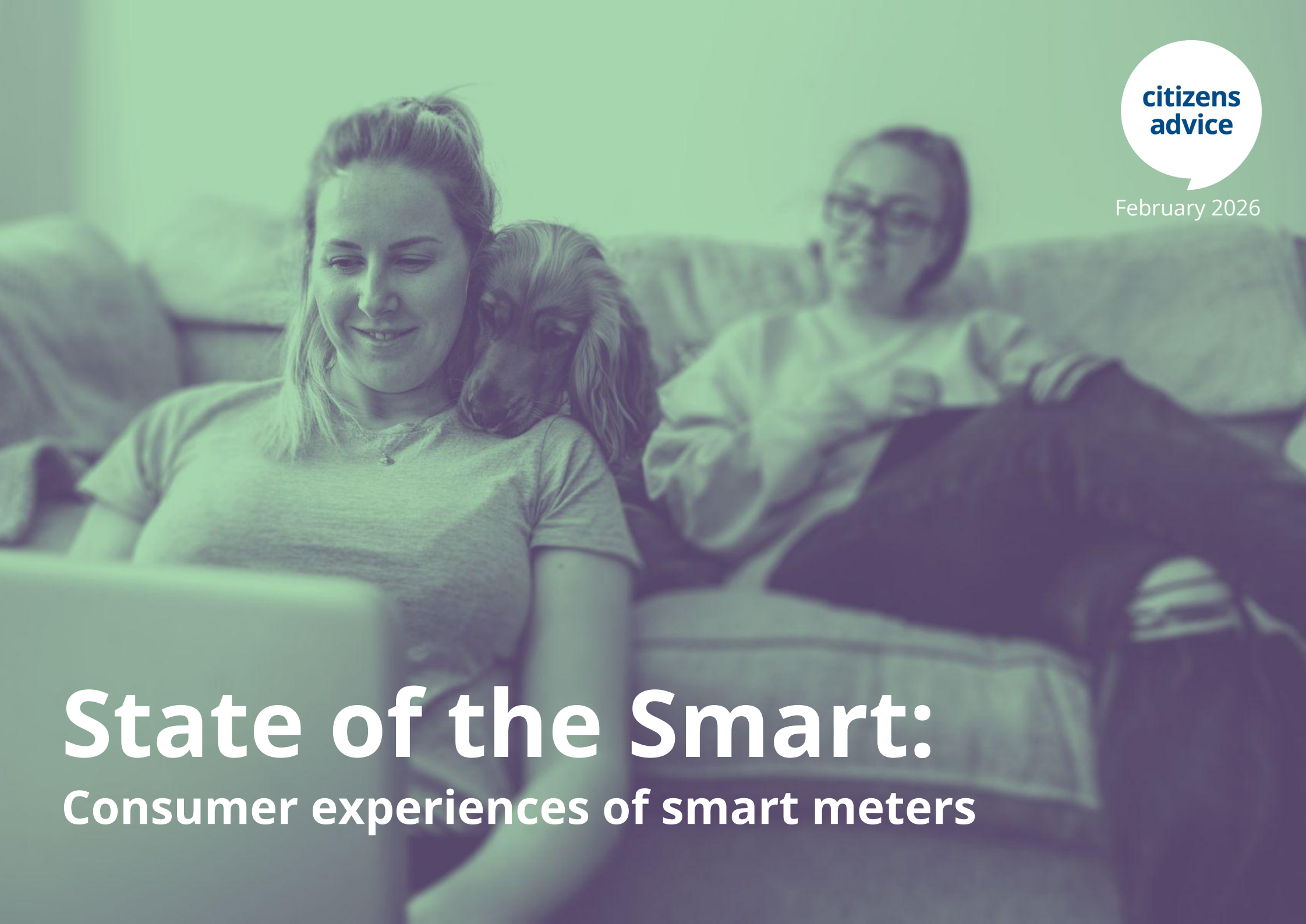
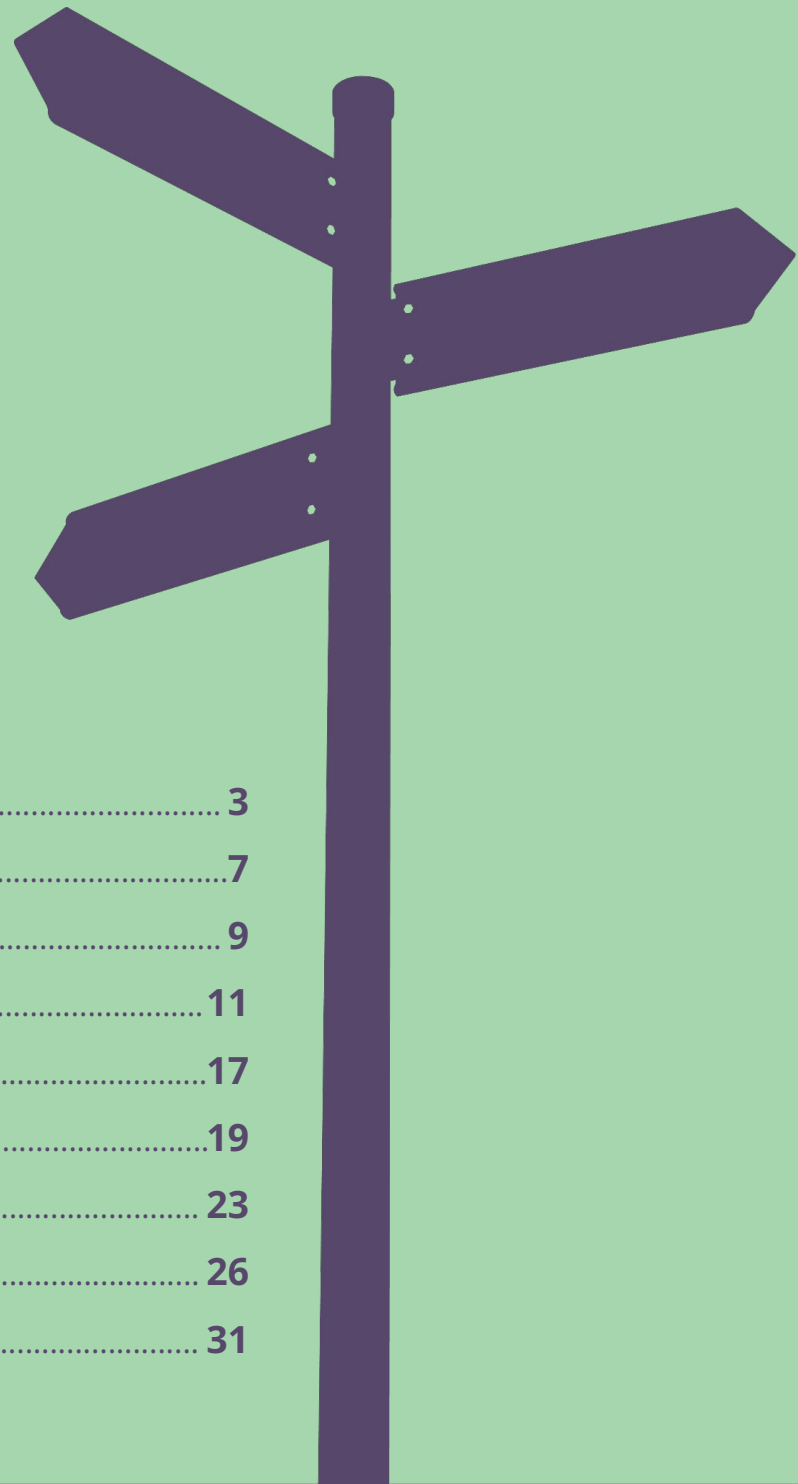


citizens advice

February 2026

State of the Smart:

Consumer experiences of smart meters



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1: Executive Summary

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Smart meters are a key part of modernising Great Britain's energy infrastructure with the potential to benefit both consumers and the grid. 70% of households had one by September 2025[1]. Citizens Advice has been involved in the smart meter rollout since its inception, advocating to keep consumer needs at the heart of the programme.

This research is an update to our previous report: Get Smarter[2]. We asked energy consumers many of the same questions to allow us to compare how things have changed in the 18 months since that earlier fieldwork took place.

Our research has again showed the significant impact smart meters can have. The majority of consumers with a smart meter are happy with them, in fact happiness has slightly increased from 68% to 72% since we last asked this question[3].

Recent research we commissioned with Ofgem showed that "Satisfaction with smart meter" is a significant predictive factor of overall satisfaction, after "ease of contacting supplier" and "satisfaction with bills". While people with a smart meter are generally more satisfied with their supplier than those without, 83% of those with a smart meter say they are satisfied compared to 75% of those on a standard meter[4].

However, this also shows the importance of getting smart metering right. People who aren't satisfied with their smart meter are nearly three and a half times less happy than those with a standard meter. Simply put, when consumers are promised benefits and improved service with a product, their expectations will rise accordingly, and their frustration will be stronger when they know they are missing out.

We continue to see many problems with smart meters and slow rates of resolution. The proportion of consumers with a smart meter still being asked to provide manual meter readings is as high as it was last time we ran the survey. This suggests that too many meters are not consistently communicating, or are not working as they should. This will in turn increase the risk of surprise backbills which should not occur with smart meters. Suppliers need to improve the experience for those experiencing issues with their smart metering equipment in order to increase the trust from those without.

The most often cited statistics when evaluating the reliability of smart meters are statistics around "meters operating in smart mode", with Ofgem reporting that between 86% and 99% of smart meters are operating, varying by supplier[5]. While these figures measure the minimum service consumers have the right to expect, they don't tell the full story of all the smart issues affecting consumers. For example, some meters that a consumer would reasonably consider not to be working can get a clean bill of health under existing metrics. Smart Mode statistics do not capture meters that only communicate occasionally, nor do they include equipment such as In Home Displays (IHDs) not working, despite many consumers viewing IHDs as the access point and core benefit of smart metering.

Dissatisfaction has significant knock-on effects. Those dissatisfied with their smart meter saw a 56% reduction in expressed interest in taking up smart-enabled products and services, including flexible time of use tariffs. This is a source of concern given the role that consumer flexibility is expected to play in helping decarbonise the grid[6].

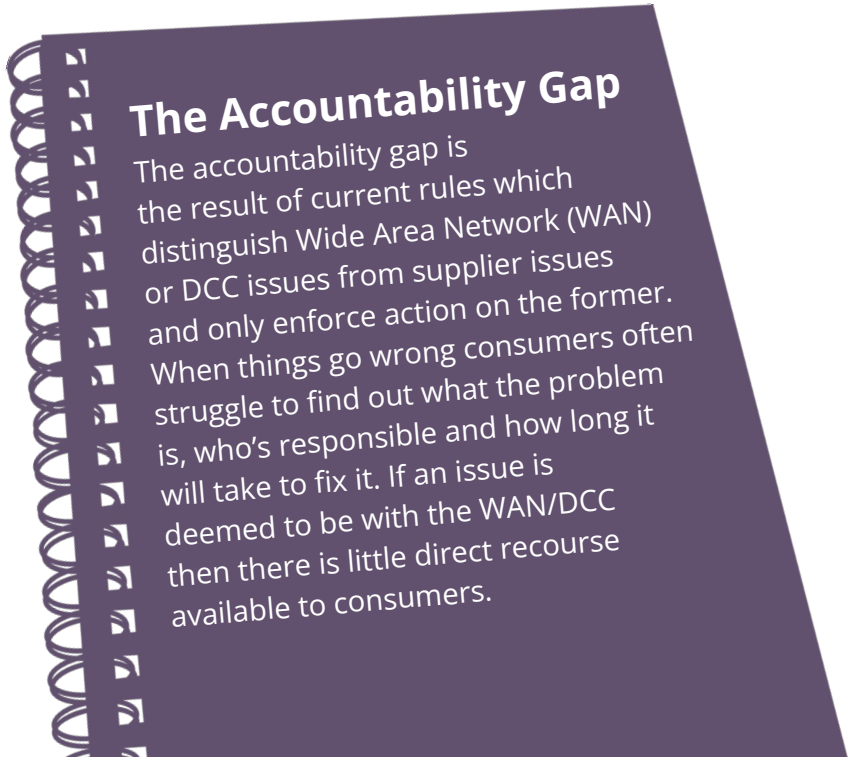
There have been some areas of improvement - most noticeably around IHDs. IHD usage remains high and the proportion of people reporting problems with their IHD has declined from 31% to 23%. This may be the result of the newly implemented voluntary standards for IHDs[7], designed to ensure that consumers with older IHDs can still expect to receive a working one. However, not all suppliers have implemented these standards, resulting in significant variance in experience by supplier.

There have also been developments in consumer protections since our last report, where we called for new Smart Metering Guaranteed Standards that would create a path to recourse for customers experiencing problems with their smart metering equipment. Most significantly, Ofgem has announced its intention to introduce Guaranteed Standards of Performance (GSoP) for smart meters, which will ensure consumers are compensated where suppliers fail to investigate and resolve communication issues or offer installation appointments within defined time frame[8] However, Citizens Advice is concerned by Ofgem's decision to delay some of these standards, especially those designed to address non-functioning smart metering equipment.[9]

A significant challenge raised in our Get Smarter report is what we call the "accountability gap" between energy suppliers and the Data Communications Company (DCC). **Closing the accountability gap and bringing energy back in line with other markets should be the top priority for the smart meter rollout**. This is one of the biggest changes that could immediately improve consumer experience with smart meters. We also welcome Ofgem's proposal to include DCC-related issues within the scope of eligibility for compensation under the new Guaranteed Standards but are concerned by the recently announced decision to delay the implementation of the guaranteed standards that seek to do this[10].

Issues with smart metering equipment not working as it should can no longer be treated as "teething troubles" and must be addressed promptly. We are calling for specific measures to address consumer issues with smart and break the negative cycle of poorly performing equipment resulting in negative media headlines, and lower consumer appetite for and trust in smart.

It is also vital that everyone who wants a smart meter is able to get one. Of those we surveyed without a smart meter, 35% have requested or agreed to have one but are still waiting for an installation. There is clearly demand still to be met and new benefits like smart tariffs are a growing factor in why people say they want smart meters. There are however certain groups who are still behind in getting smart meters, consumers in the private rented sector for example are over 9% more likely not to have a smart meter than other groups.



Recommendations

We are calling for the following specific measures to address consumer issues with smart meters:

1. Close the accountability gap between energy suppliers and DCC. If doing so requires changes to DCC contracts, then these should be made, but in the meantime it should be suppliers who are held accountable when smart metering equipment does not work.

2. Formalise the current voluntary IHD replacement standards into an enforceable requirement to bring all energy suppliers up to the quality of service that some are already achieving.

3. Reduce the back-billing window for customers with smart meters to six months. This should incentivise suppliers to get more meters working more quickly and reduce the extent of shock back-bills for consumers with smart meters.

4. Move to a more consumer-centric measure of how many smart meters are working. A smart meter's functionality should be judged by its ability to consistently operate a flexible tariff and prevent estimated bills or requests for manual reads. If these criteria are not being met, a consumer will reasonably consider their smart meter to not be working, even if it may count as "operating in smart mode" by current metrics.

5. The Government's forthcoming new rollout framework should incentivise suppliers to install smart meters for all consumers who want one, and tackle barriers for consumers who are currently less likely to have a meter, including those in the private rented sector. Suppliers should not just install smart meters where it is easiest but instead follow demand, particularly as so many consumers who have requested or agreed to a smart meter do not yet have one.

2: Context & Methodology

2: Context & Methodology

This report follows on from previous Citizens Advice research into consumer experience of and attitudes toward smart meters conducted by Savanta in 2023[11]. This included how satisfied consumers were with the installation process and their ongoing experience, whether they feel they benefit from their smart meter, and how people without a smart meter feel about getting one, or why they haven't so far.

We commissioned Savanta to conduct a further wave of research on the experiences of consumers with and without smart meters, allowing us to understand how things have changed since.

Both waves of research included a large-scale, nationally representative survey of more than 4,000 adults in Great Britain. Though the majority of this survey was conducted online, the research included an offline sample of 100 people to ensure that the views of groups who face digital exclusion were included. The online sample also included a boost of around 100 respondents with a disability or long-term health condition that impacts their memory or cognition. This research was undertaken between March and April 2025.

Around two-thirds of respondents at the time had a smart meter, matching the average rate of smart meter ownership at the time of the survey[12]. As anticipated, this is an increase from the 2023 research wave where around half of respondents had a smart meter.

We have supplemented this research with our own insights from contacts to our Consumer Service, data from our joint Energy Satisfaction survey conducted with Ofgem[13], and additional research commissioned from Opinium that is still pending publication[14]. We also draw upon our previous consumer research into consumer attitudes toward smart meters to provide a sense of how views and experiences have changed over time.

All case studies presented in this report are taken from calls to our Consumer Service and have been anonymised, and names have been changed.

3: Are smart meters meeting customer expectations?

3: Are smart meters meeting consumer expectations?

When we look at what motivates consumers to get a smart meter we found that just under half of all respondents with a smart meter (47%) cited the ability to monitor their real time energy consumption and costs as a key factor. The next most cited reasons were improving the accuracy of bills (45%) and avoiding manual meter readings (38%). These responses are for the most part unchanged compared to our 2023 research. One notable shift is a 37% increase in the amount of people citing new products and services, including time of use tariffs, as a reason they had a smart meter fitted. These new services are a growing draw for smart and all the more reason to ensure that such products and services work consistently.

While we understand what motivates people to get a smart meter, it's important to evaluate how well the promised benefits are being delivered. **The area where smart meters are consistently failing to meet expectations is around the reduction of energy use.** 44% of those with a smart meter cited this as an area where they didn't feel they were seeing benefits. This may be due to a lack of clarity from suppliers and the smart meter programme around what actions are needed in order to reduce usage or a perception that simply getting a smart meter would save them money. More care should be taken in the marketing of smart meters to make clear that consumer action is needed for the advertised benefits to be realised.

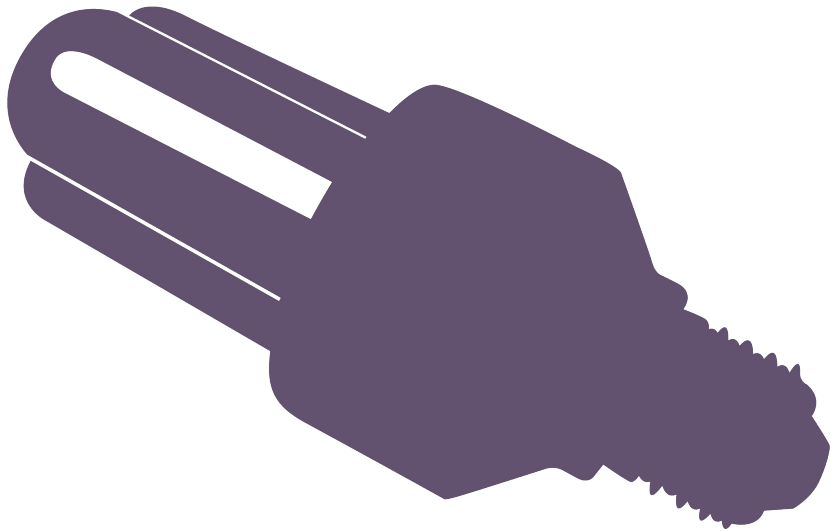
In other areas, almost 3 in 10 (29%) of people with a smart meter say it isn't meeting their expectations for billing accuracy. 28% say the same for monitoring energy usage. Close to 1 in 5 (19%) were disappointed by their smart meter's ability to eliminate the need for manual meter readings.

Unsurprisingly, respondents who feel that their smart meter isn't delivering on the promised benefits are less likely to report that they are happy with their overall smart meter experience.

Perhaps even more importantly, respondents who weren't happy with their smart meter were 56% less likely to show interest in smart products and services (including time of use tariffs) compared to those who were satisfied. There is a risk that smart meters not delivering on their promised benefits negatively impacts not only the smart meter rollout but the country's broader net zero goals.

The impact on those who are disappointed with smart meters is clear, but there are lessons to be found in what consumers are missing out on. With reducing energy consumption fairly high on respondents' priorities, and the most likely thing for them to feel underwhelmed by, **it's clear that consumers need more support with saving energy** using their smart meter and any devices or services that make use of it.

Ensuring that consumers are given the tools to make changes to their lifestyle and energy usage, as well as providing a more realistic picture of both the benefits of a smart meter, and the action required to make the most of it, will prevent people from disengaging from smart products entirely because the outcome doesn't meet their expectations.



4: Too many smart meters still aren’t working as they should

4: Too many smart meters still aren't working as they should

More than 7 in 10 (72%) of respondents with a smart meter were happy with it, a small increase from our previous research. 6% say they are specifically unhappy with their smart meter. Unsurprisingly, dissatisfaction is highest among those whose smart meter isn't working as expected, or who experienced issues during the installation of the meter. This further demonstrates the importance of smart metering equipment working as it should for consumers.

More than half (53%) of those who were unhappy with their smart meter had a bad experience with the installation, consistent with our previous research.

Around 1 in 8 (12%) people who had issues with their in-home display also reported they were unhappy with their smart meter. Respondents with IHD issues were significantly more likely to be unhappy than those who weren't; only 4% of those with functioning IHDs weren't happy with their smart meter.

Improving the average customer experience with their day-to-day smart meter use is therefore key. **However, smart meters continue to fall short of expectations for many people.** A third of respondents had to submit a manual meter reading to their supplier in the last year, despite having a smart meter installed.

This is around the same proportion as we saw in our previous smart meter report, Get Smarter, where 20% reported having to give manual meter readings regularly and a further 24% were giving them occasionally. For this report we used more specific categories with defined timescales: 16% said they provide regular manual meter reads (multiple times a year), 17% occasionally (at least once a year) and 11% said they give manual meter readings rarely (less than once a year).

Separately, our most recent Energy Satisfaction survey[15] showed that 1 in 8 (12%) people had issues with their smart meter sending automatic readings within the previous 6 months. Amongst all the issues reported this was the most common, impacting more than a third of those who had issues with their smart meter.

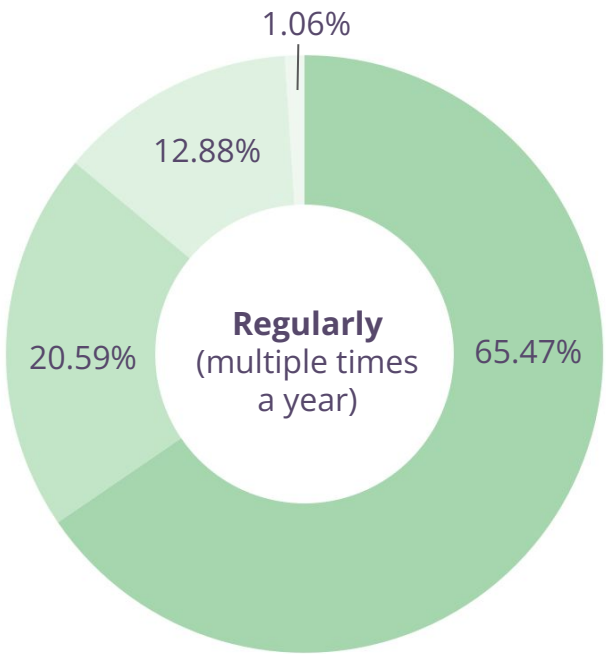
We also examined the traffic on our energy-related advice pages for the months between July 2024 and June 2025. We found that "how to read your smart electricity meter" had the third most traffic, right after "how to read your standard energy meter". This trend remains unchanged from 2024 which indicates that many consumers are still being asked for manual meter readings despite having smart meters.

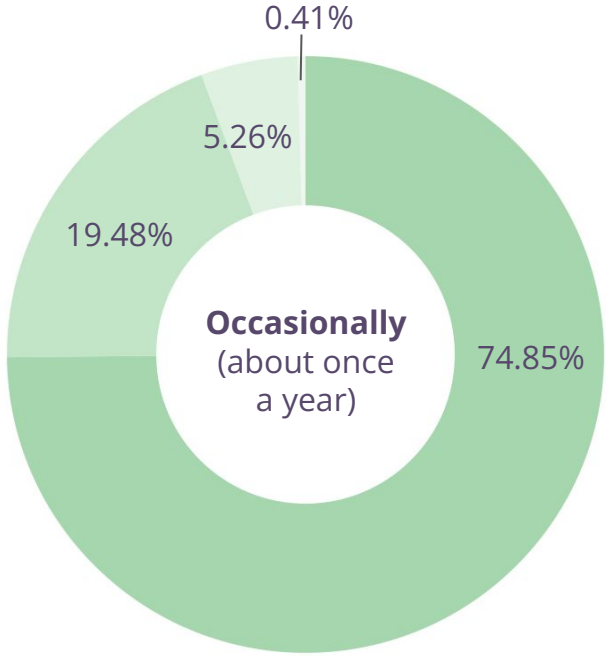
4: Too many smart meters still aren't working as they should

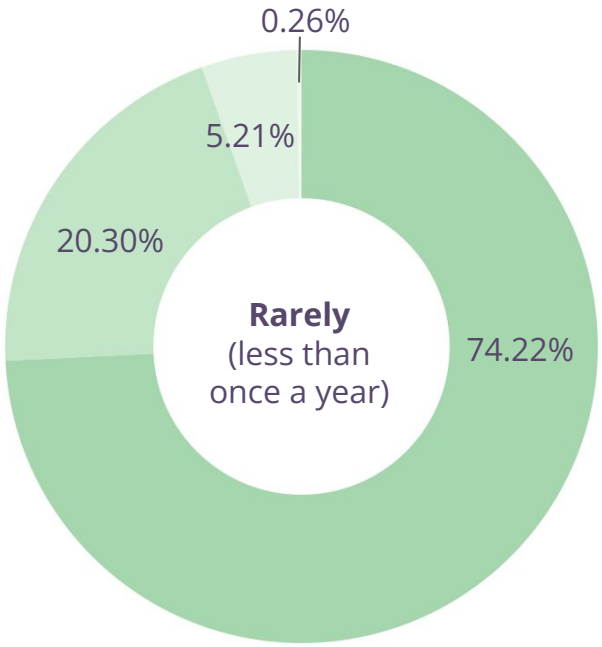
Smart meters not operating as they should significantly impacts people's experience and happiness with their smart meter. Nearly a third (32%) of respondents who had to provide manual readings regularly reported they were not happy with their smart meter. If a smart meter isn't sending automatic readings regularly, consumers will instead be asked to provide manual meter readings or start to receive estimated bills.

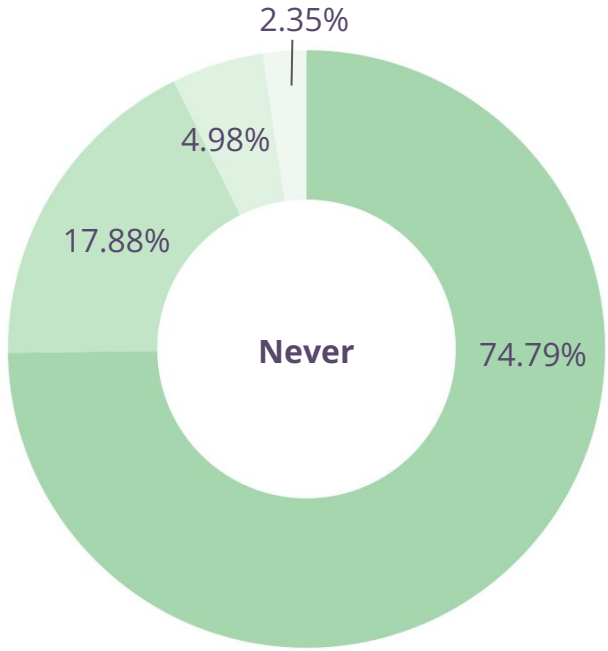
Since having a smart meter installed, have you had to submit a meter reading to your supplier?

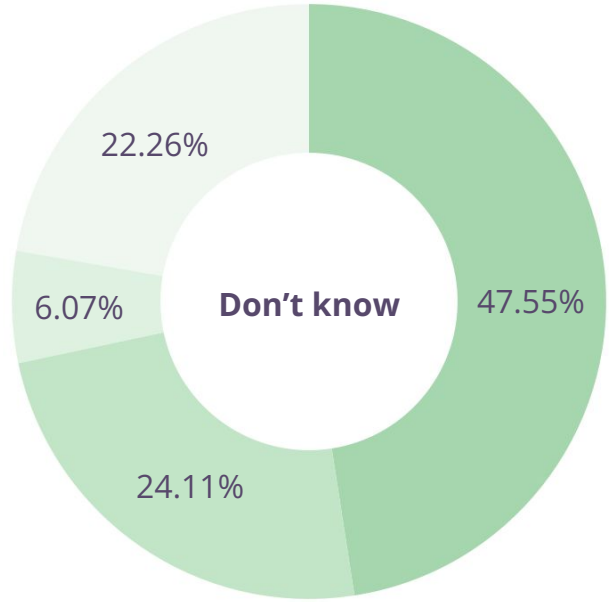
- **Happy**
- **Neutral**
- **Unhappy**
- **Other**











Mary's story

Mary's smart meter hasn't been sending meter readings for over a year. Within this period, she hasn't received a bill for her gas usage. After receiving £20 as compensation for the unresolved billing issue, Mary is now facing a catch-up bill of over £1,000 to be paid within the next few days. She has been asked to provide a manual meter reading in advance of the bill being sent. After paying this catch-up bill, Mary will have to continue sending in meter readings to her energy supplier despite having a smart meter installed.

Paulo's story

Paulo moved into a property with a smart meter and was paying his energy bills on receipt until he was asked by his energy supplier to start paying by Direct Debit. A year later, he started receiving debt collection letters which he was told by his supplier to ignore. Paulo has now received a letter from a debt collection agency asking for an immediate payment of £1,600. Up to this point, he had received no communication from his supplier to inform him that he was in debt. He believes that the issue occurred because his smart meter stopped sending meter readings and his supplier was billing him on estimated readings.

Around **a quarter of all smart meter related issues** raised with our Consumer Service in 2024 **focused on problems with billing.** When estimated bills are being provided, particularly in succession, suppliers should reach out to consumers to make them aware and ideally find a solution to the issue. However, in many of the cases brought to our Consumer Service or our local Citizens Advice offices, our clients hadn't been contacted at all or had not realised until several months had passed, leading to large catch-up bills. Consumers with a smart meter will generally assume that their bills are accurate.

These large catch-up bills can put consumers into debts that they were unaware of. For some vulnerable consumers, or those who struggle to access their meter to give their own manual readings, **a non-functioning smart meter can lead to serious harm, financial or otherwise.**

James’ story

James lives in a rented property with his child. He has dementia and significant visual impairment. After he had a smart meter installed his bills increased significantly, most notable was a single charge of £25,000. He has raised complaints in the past but his supplier claims to have no record of them. He cannot afford to pay these bills and doesn't know what to do next.

Following our Get Smarter report, Ofgem have announced that they will be introducing new Guaranteed Standards specifically for smart meters[16]. We welcome this decision and - if implemented appropriately - there is potential for these measures to help address some of these problems by further incentivising suppliers to keep smart meters working as expected. More detail on our views on how best to implement these Guaranteed Standards can be found in our response to the consultation[17].

We believe that the introduction of these Guaranteed Standards provides the perfect opportunity for Ofgem to address an issue that has been a point of dissatisfaction for many consumers. The current back billing rules, written for standard energy meters, protect consumers from being charged for energy used more than 12-months ago[18]. With smart meters this timeline is no longer proportionate. Reducing the back billing window from twelve to six months gives energy suppliers an incentive to either repair faulty smart meters in a timely manner or proactively contact consumers for manual meter readings.

When smart meters aren’t working as expected and suppliers fail to solve the issue quickly, consumers lose out. As people share their experiences with smart meters and talk about communication problems, this also leads to negative media coverage, a reputation of inconsistency, and family and friends becoming concerned about having one themselves.

Meters Operating in "Smart Mode"

A contributing factor when attempting to resolve these issues is a **lack of clear definition of what it means for a smart meter to operate in 'smart mode'**. Broadly 'smart mode' means that a smart meter is sending readings and receiving data like tariff information and updates, but the exact terms are different depending on who you ask.

In recent reports from the government's Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, a smart meter is operating outside of 'smart mode' if it needs to be manually read, without any publicly available guidance on how long that's been the case[19]. A recent consultation conducted by Ofgem aiming to improve the consumer experience with smart meters defines not operating in smart mode as a situation where "the respective energy supplier cannot obtain automatic meter readings as expected" but this must have occurred for 90 days before customers are entitled to recourse[20].

A more consumer-centric metric seems appropriate. When we asked people how long they expected a smart meter communication issue to occur before their supplier fixed it, **more than half of them (58%) told us they expected it to be solved within 2-3 days** and close to three quarters of all respondents (73%) told us they would expect it to be fixed within a week[21].

A consumer who wants to access a time of use tariff or ensure their monthly bills are accurate would very reasonably not consider a smart meter that sends one reading in 90 days to be working in smart mode.

Waiting for up to 12 weeks before a solution is found just to be told that's within the expected timeframe isn't acceptable in other consumer markets, and is definitely outside of consumer expectations.

It's not surprising then that while more people have smart meters than in our previous research waves, **a higher proportion of those who rejected a smart meter told us they did so because they didn't trust them, had seen negative media coverage, or heard concerns from family and friends**. We can't expect people's opinions to improve without change, suppliers need to improve the experience for those with a smart meter in order to increase the trust from those without. Stronger regulations relating to smart meter performance should help incentivise this.

Full functionality from a smart meter is more important than ever before, particularly for those who want to make the most of it, and we know that negative experiences lead people to lose interest in those benefits. That includes low-carbon technology, Time of Use tariffs (which reward smart and response energy use to make the most of low price windows), electric vehicles and much more. **This technology requires not only that someone choose to engage with it, but that their metering equipment is working as they expect**. Other equipment like In-Home Displays remain vital for consumers aiming to track their energy habits and make changes, and these too rely on regular smart meter communication to retain accurate tariff information.

DESNZ has now closed their consultation on the post-2025 framework. This is an opportunity to ensure that energy suppliers promptly fit smart meters for all who want them, clarify expectations of what constitutes working smart meter equipment and ensure that IHDs continue to be supported and, where possible, improved.

5: The accountability gap remains

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The data sent and received by smart meters uses the Wide Area Network (WAN) which is operated by the Data Communications Company (DCC) under a government contract[22]. When a consumer isn't getting service from their smart meter there are several reasons this might be the case. At times this might be due to a fault on the supplier's end, or an issue with the meter and equipment. But this can also be due to WAN issues, in which case it might be the DCC who needs to fix the issue. We provided more detail on this in our previous smart metering report, Get Smarter.

For a consumer, this distinction is immaterial. **Consumers shouldn't be impacted by who has responsibility over different aspects of how their smart meter operates.** The DCC has no public facing role and cannot be contacted by a consumer for support, nor are they bound by the Energy Ombudsman. Consumers have no contractual relationship with the DCC, only their energy supplier so it is their energy supplier to whom they should be able to turn to get these problems resolved.

In Get Smarter, we identified the **'accountability gap'** that arises when a consumer has a problem with their smart meter that falls within the scope of the DCC's obligations and therefore they lose the ability to hold their supplier to account for the issue.

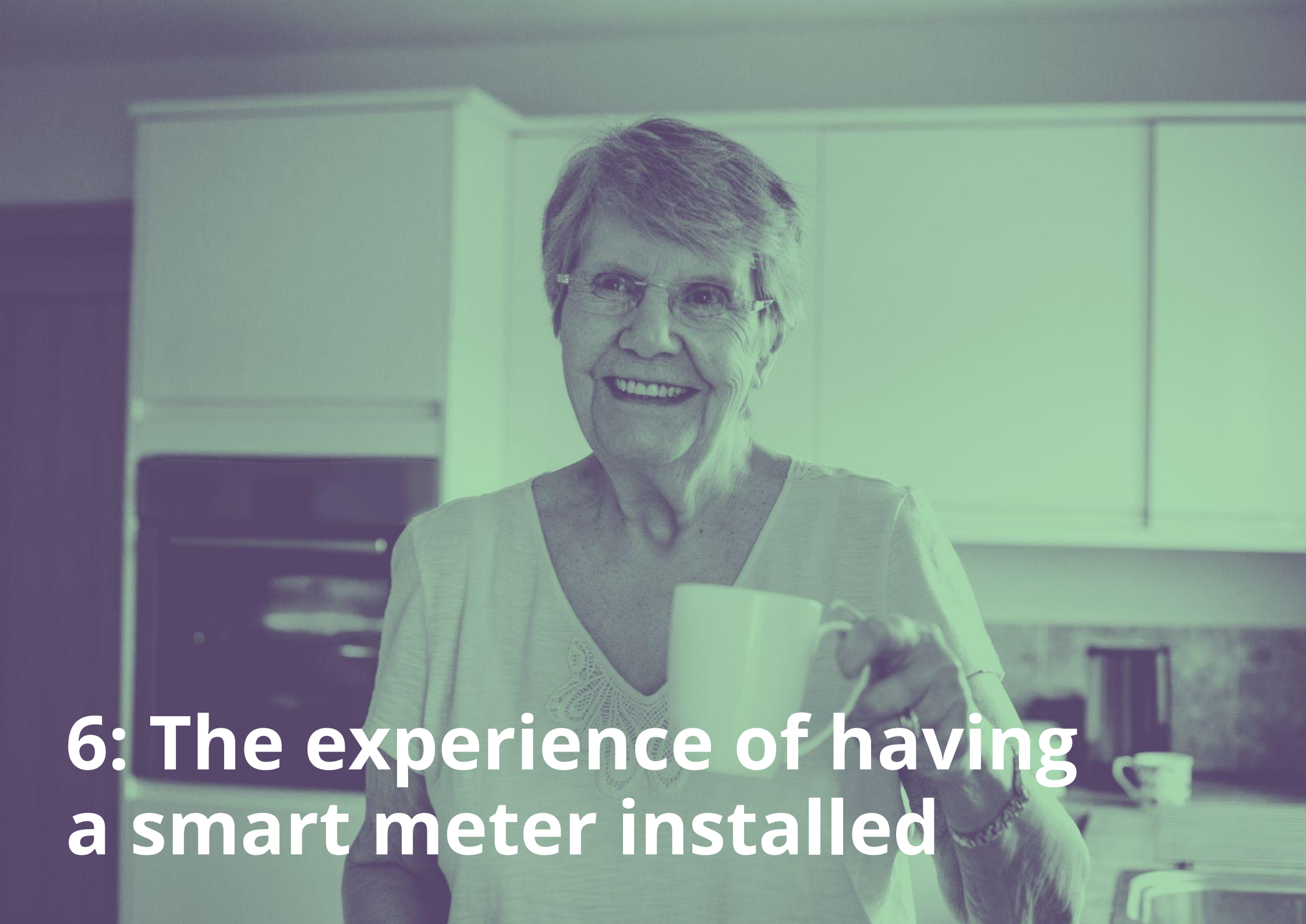
The introduction of Guaranteed Standards of Performance for smart metering is an essential step in giving consumers the protections that are required for them to engage with smart meters. However, implementing these standards without also addressing the 'accountability gap', poses the risk of causing significant confusion and detriment if any issue deemed by a supplier to be a WAN/DCC problem is out of scope for compensation or timelines to resolve. If the accountability gap is not addressed, a perverse incentive would also be created for suppliers to err toward blaming the DCC to avoid the need to compensate customers.

The renewal of the DCC's contract which is set to happen in 2027[23] poses the perfect opportunity to formally close this loophole by ensuring that contracted third parties are also accountable when things go wrong. This would bring energy into line with other consumer markets where accountability to consumers is not lost through the use of contracted third parties.

Until the accountability gap is closed contractually, **energy suppliers need to be responsible for ensuring that these issues are addressed and accountable when they aren't.** This will incentivise greater cooperation with the DCC to resolve issues promptly and help prevent the current situation where too much smart metering equipment is not operating as it should with no recourse for the consumer. We are hopeful that Ofgem's new smart Guaranteed Standards for smart metering can begin the process of adding accountability for DCC issues.

Sheila's story

Sheila had a smart meter and an electric vehicle (EV) charger fitted last year. Despite having a smart meter, she continues to receive estimated bills. She had an EV charger fitted under the impression that she would be paying lower prices under the new EV tariff, but that hasn't happened as her meter isn't working in smart mode. Sheila has requested a deadlock letter from her supplier but has been told that issues with the wireless connection have no time limit. She has had a smart meter installed for over a year now but has been unable to take advantage of any of the smart products and services she was promised when her installation was booked.



6: The experience of having a smart meter installed

6: The experience of having a smart meter installed

The number of households with a smart meter in the UK is at an all-time high. By the end of 2024, around 36 million UK households had a smart meter, with 32 million of these meters operating in smart mode[24].

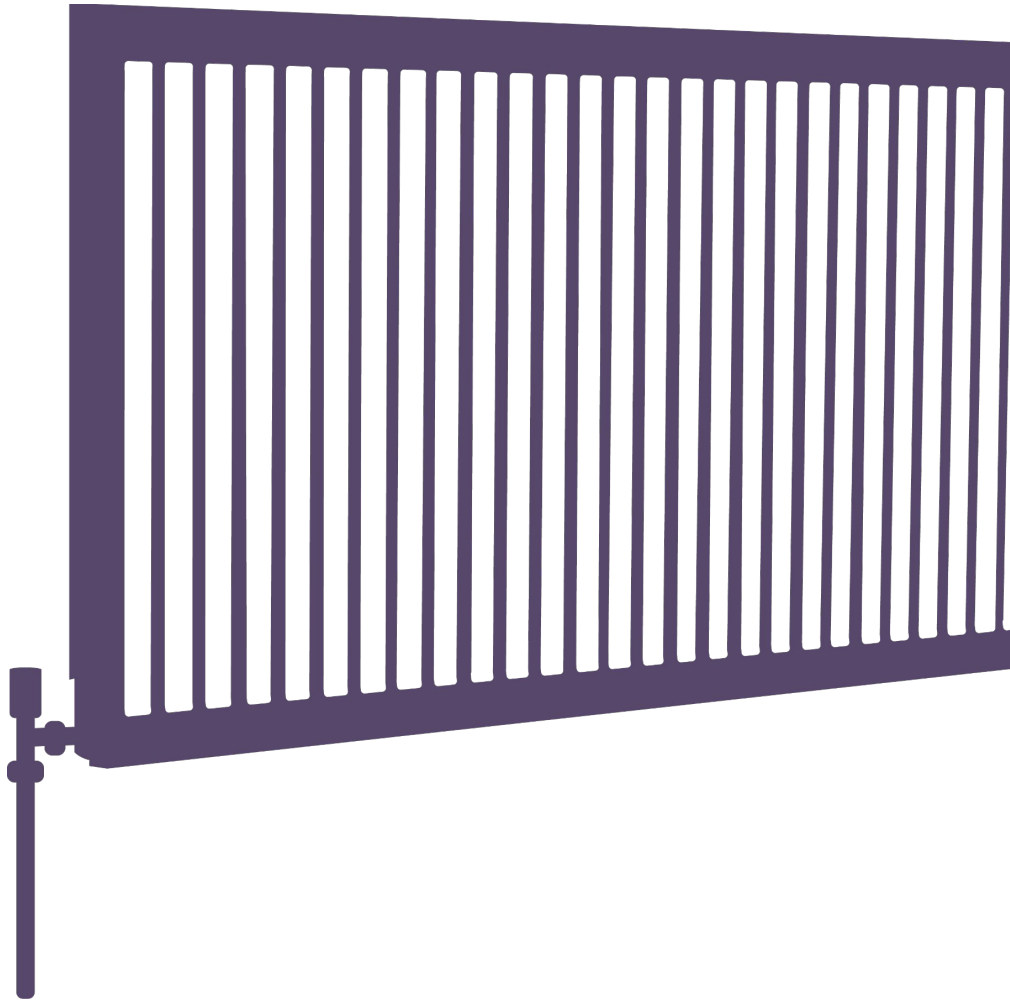
In 2023, the Government published plans to install smart meters in 75% of UK households by the end of 2025[25]. These targets focus primarily on the installation of smart meters rather than ensuring that all smart metering equipment is consistently working as it should. New plans for a post-2025 framework are currently in the post-consultation phase, and we are awaiting the government's decision.

As the push to meet our smart meter installation targets continues, more emphasis needs to be put on ensuring that these meters work for consumers. Just under 1 in every 5 (18%) of all smart meter related complaints reported to our Consumer Service last year had to do with smart meter installations.

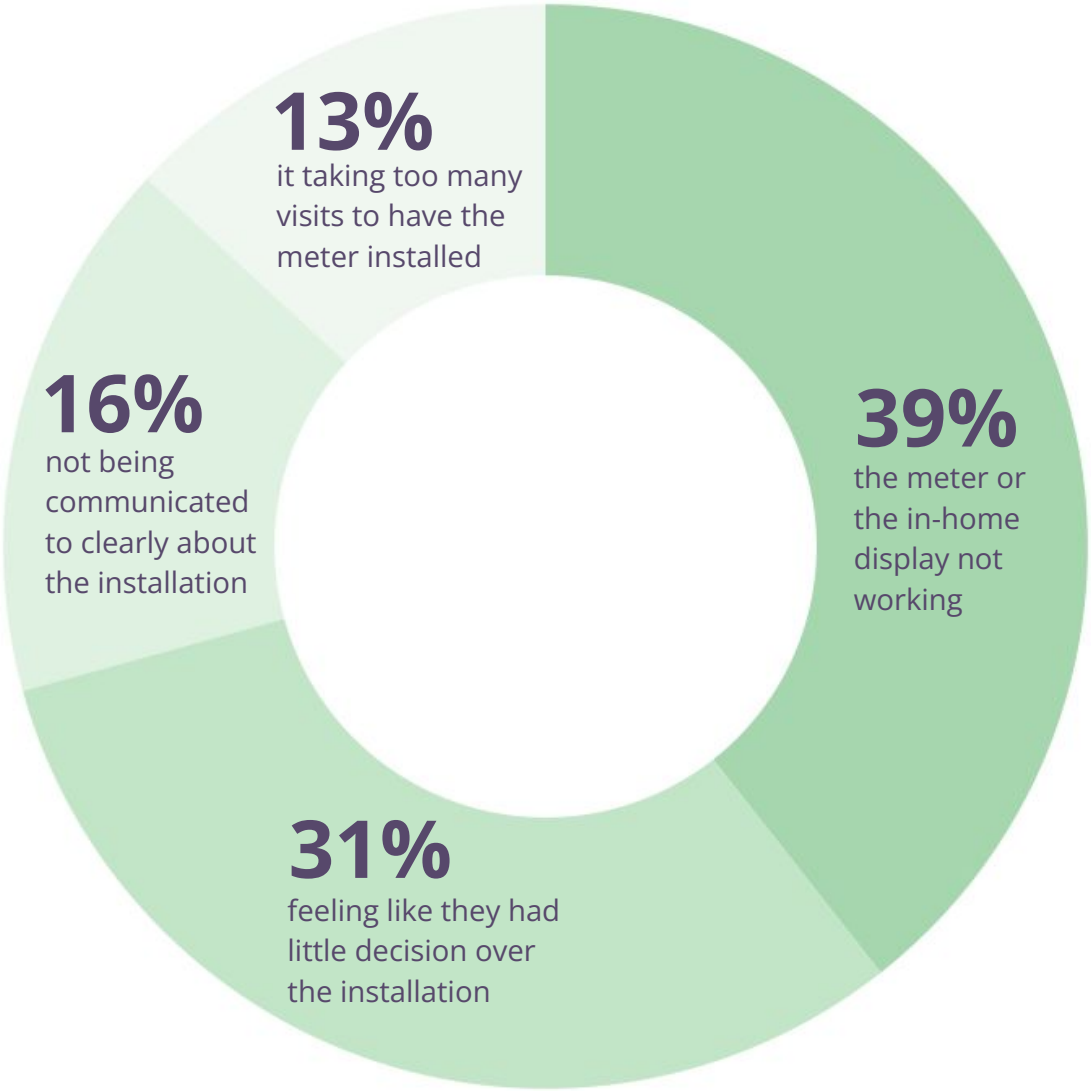
Sara's story

Sara is an elderly woman who recently had a smart meter installed. After the engineer left, she realised that her boiler and heaters which were connected to her gas meter weren't working. She contacted her supplier and was told that the engineer was responsible for the issue. The engineer informed her that it was her supplier's responsibility and asked her to pay £75 in out of hours fees. She managed to contact her supplier again, but was put on hold for an extended period of time before being instructed that they were busy and that she should consider paying the out-of-hours fees instead. Sara is now reconsidering her decision to have a smart meter installed.

This is especially crucial at the installation stage. Our research found that more than two-thirds of households (72%) were generally happy with their smart meter installation. However, 1 in every 14 (7%) households reported having a bad smart meter installation experience.



The primary reasons behind a bad smart meter installation include:

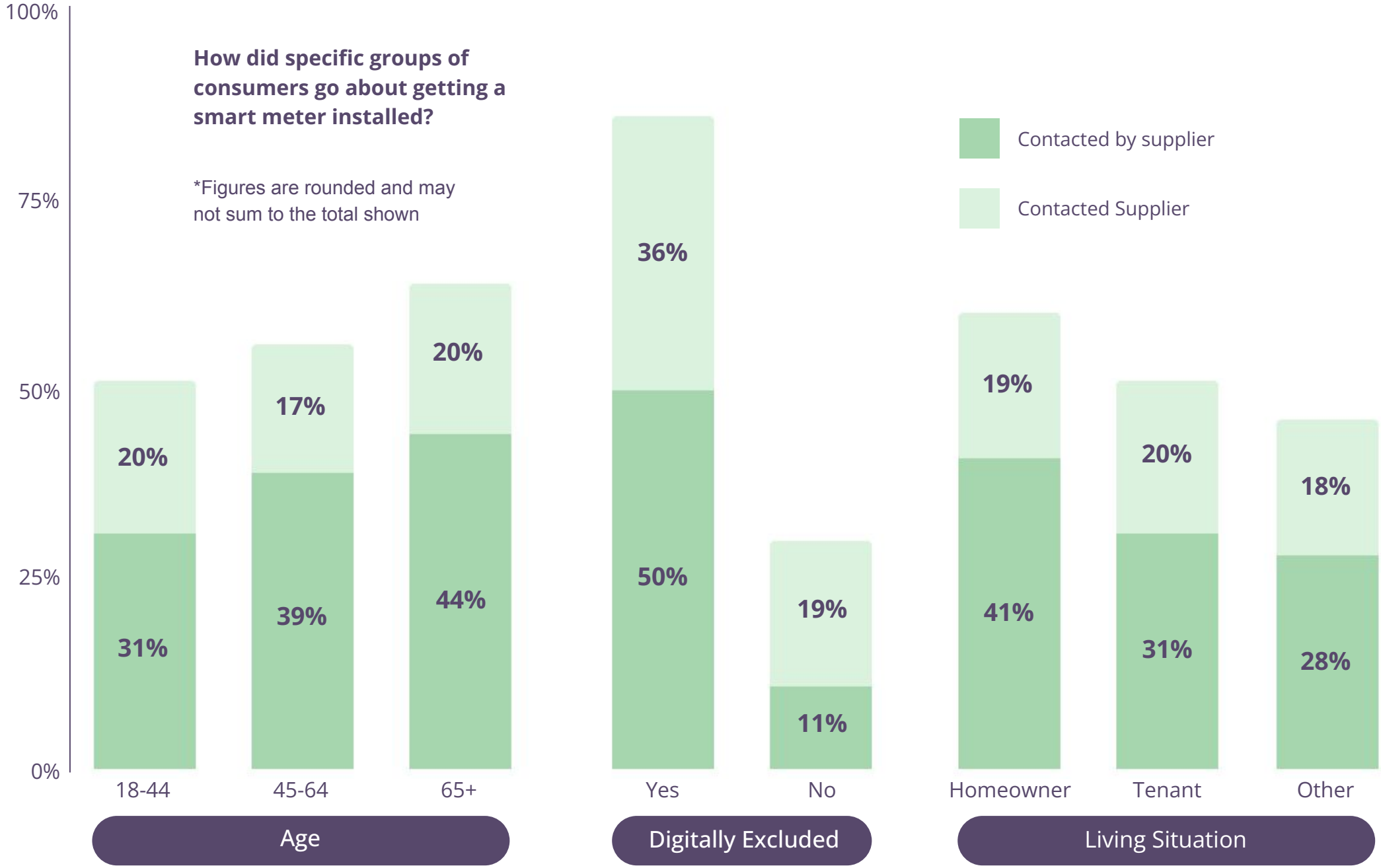


At the smart meter installation stage, consumers have the unique opportunity to engage directly with their supplier. When this goes wrong this can impact their view of the entire smart experience. Our research found that more than half (53%) of those who were unhappy with their smart meter installation were also unhappy with their smart meter in general.

Another factor that can impact a consumer's satisfaction with the smart meter installation process is whether or not they requested a smart meter. 1 in every 5 households reported having contacted their supplier to have a smart meter installed and only 17% of these consumers were unhappy with their smart meter. Whereas, around 3 in every 5 households reported that they were asked to get a smart meter by their supplier and 60% of these respondents reported being dissatisfied with their smart meter.

Energy suppliers need to ensure that consumers are provided with adequate information and supported at all stages of the installation process. Ofgem's proposed Guarantee Standards are particularly relevant here as they include potential measures to compensate consumers when an installation fails. Things going wrong at the installation stage can often impact a consumer's willingness to take full advantage of all the benefits that come with having a smart meter. Consumers who face detriment at this stage need to be adequately compensated.

6: The experience of having a smart meter installed



7: In home displays (IHDs)

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An In-Home Display is a small and portable display unit that allows users to monitor their real-time energy consumption and spending. Prepayment meter IHDs, known as PPMIDs, allow consumers to top-up their meter through the device. Our research revealed that IHD usage remains high amongst smart consumers with **85% of households that were given an IHD using it**.

Suppliers are required to offer consumers an IHD when they get a smart meter installed and over 7 out of 10 (74%) households report having been offered one. However, the amount of consumers **who weren't offered an in-home display has risen by 8%** since we last conducted this research.

Not having an in-home display means that consumers are less able to take advantage of smart technology as these devices allow consumers to save on energy costs with smart off-peak tariffs. It is an even greater inconvenience for those on prepayment meters who lose out on an easy means to top-up.

If a consumer's in-home display stops functioning within the first 12-months after it was given to them, their energy supplier is required to either replace or repair the IHD. As more consumers get smart meters installed, the number of people with older IHDs is increasing accordingly. This has led to a significant rise in people needing to have these devices repaired or replaced after the 12-month period has elapsed.

Gary's story

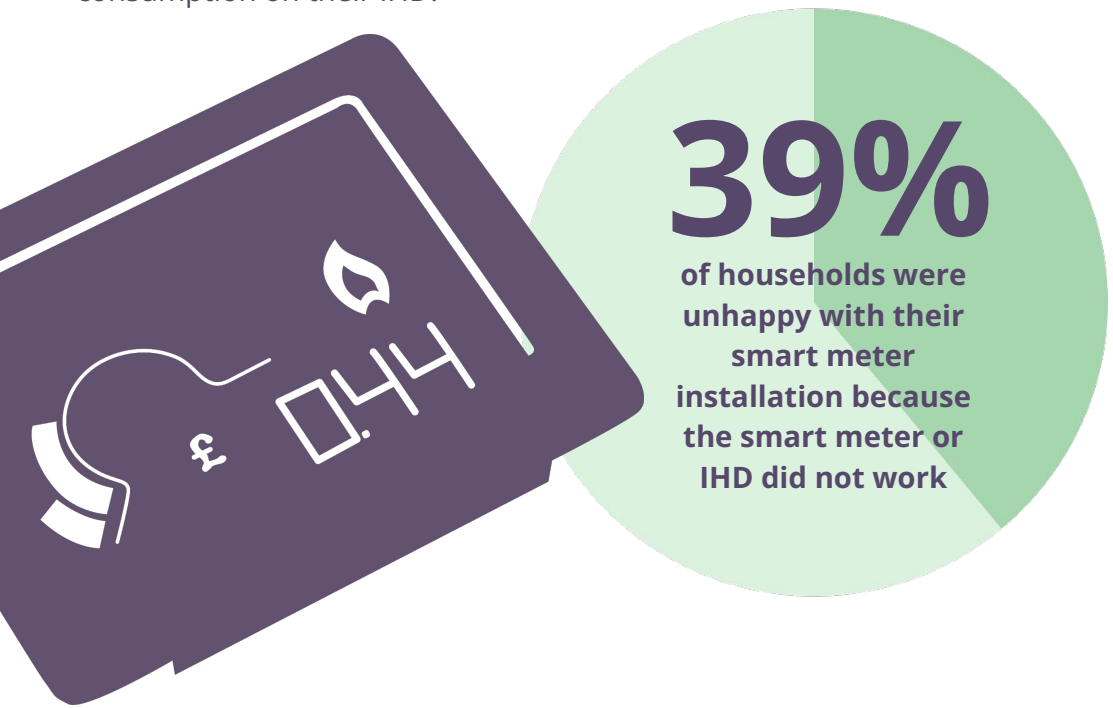
Gary received an in-home display approximately four to five years ago, which has now stopped working. Despite his repeated messages to the supplier via WhatsApp, the issue remains unresolved. Although his smart meter is still sending readings to his supplier, he is unable to see his current credit balance on his IHD. This led to him accidentally self-disconnecting from his energy supply last week when his credit ran out.

Raina's story

Raina is on the Priority Services Register[26]. Her prepayment meter is in her basement and following a previous fall she has been unable to access it. Her PPMID has recently stopped working and she has been asked to use an app instead. With the assistance of her adult child, she was able to access the app but it doesn't show how much credit she has. She requested a new IHD which was sent out in the post but her supplier has refused to send out an engineer to connect the IHD to her meter. Raina is unable to monitor her usage and is worried about going off supply.

To address this issue, a set of voluntary principles were introduced in May last year which all large suppliers have signed up to[27]. The principles mean that energy suppliers will replace IHDs even outside of the 12 month window. Since the new principles were introduced, some suppliers have seen a significant drop in the number of IHD replacement cases reported to our Consumer Service. However, for other suppliers, the number of cases has either remained the same or increased. **The lack of consistent improvements reinforce the need for a stronger requirement** on suppliers than the current voluntary rules.

Our research found that **over 1 in every 3 (39%)** households was **unhappy with their smart meter installation because the smart meter or IHD did not work.** There has been a 12% increase in the amount of people using other tools such as mobile apps to monitor their energy consumption, though many use this alongside not instead of their IHD. However, the large majority of consumers (85%) monitor their energy consumption on their IHD.



The in-home display voluntary principles have shown that suppliers are able to meet these standards but not all suppliers are taking them seriously. Recent calls from some energy suppliers to stop providing IHDs at all are of particular concern as they imply that suppliers are not prioritising the consumer benefits of smart[28].

Accessible IHDs

Many consumers have problems using traditional IHDs due to factors such as partial sightedness and dexterity issues. In 2019, suppliers were required to offer an accessible IHD (AIHD) at no extra cost to consumers who need them.

The findings from our recent research remain fairly consistent with our findings last year. Many disabled people without an AIHD believe they would benefit from one.

- **When told what an accessible IHD is, around 3 in 10 (27%) smart meter users with a disability or a health condition believed they would benefit from one.**
- **However, less than half (45%) of smart meter users with impairments reported being offered an accessible IHD by their energy supplier.**

This could be especially detrimental to households on prepayment meters who rely on their meters to avoid disconnection. Households on prepayment meters were 30% more likely than the average smart meter user to think they would benefit from an accessible IHD.

8: What about those without a smart meter?

8: What about those without a smart meter?

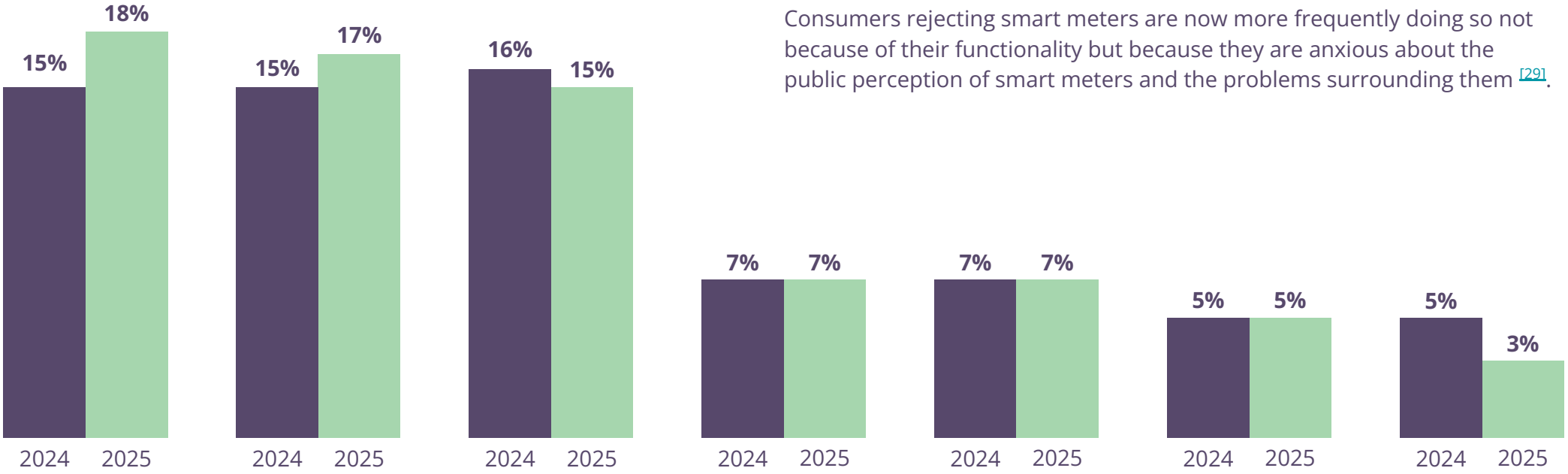
The number of consumers with a smart meter has increased since our last research. However our research found that amongst the remaining respondents who don't have one, 34% actively rejected an offer to install a smart meter, a slight increase (4%) compared to the year before. This is partly due to remaining consumers having lower trust in smart meters.

We looked at a number of factors that might lead a consumer to reject a smart meter, from the news, to advice from family or friends.

While more people have smart meters now than before, the views of those without them are largely stable, with some exceptions. In comparison to 2024, the proportion of people rejecting smart meters due to lack of trust has increased to become the most common reason. Similarly the proportion of people without a smart meter who said negative reports, news or media was part of their reason also increased.

Consumers rejecting smart meters are now more frequently doing so not because of their functionality but because they are anxious about the public perception of smart meters and the problems surrounding them [29].

Change in reasons for rejecting a smart meter



*People who rejected the offer of a smart meter because they didn't trust smart meters

*People who rejected the offer of a smart meter because they had heard or read negative reports about them in the media

*People who rejected the offer of a smart meter because they do not feel a smart meter will provide them with any benefits

*People who rejected the offer of a smart meter because they were concerned about switching suppliers in the future

*People who rejected the offer of a smart meter because their friends and/or family have had bad experiences with a smart meter

*People who rejected the offer of a smart meter because they were concerned about peak pricing/being moved to a time of use tariff

*People who rejected the offer of a smart meter because they were concerned about being remotely changed to a prepayment meter

***as a proportion of all respondents without a smart meter.**

8: What about those without a smart meter?

When asked why they have been unable to get a smart meter installed, respondents to our research reported the following:

47%

of people said it was because they rent their property and are not able to make the changes required to have one installed

26%

of people said it was because their meter wasn't accessible

20%

of people said it was because the local infrastructure (e.g. wireless signal) where they live was not yet compatible or ready

What would help people feel more comfortable having a smart meter installed?

There has been an increase in consumers that would feel more comfortable having a smart meter installed if they understood why their supplier wants them to install one. This points to a communication gap that could be fuelling skepticism and a reluctance to fully engage with smart technology.

However, the proportion of people who want smart meters but have been unable to get them has remained the same since the last version of this survey, with 35% of respondents who reached out to their supplier to get a smart meter installed unable to get one, and 21% of all respondents without smart meters reporting the same.

There remain many consumers who want a smart meter but do not yet have one. With those who don't want a smart meter increasingly citing issues around reliability, reputation and trust. It seems clear that tackling barriers and more consistently delivering smart benefits will be key to continuing to get better outcomes for smart meter users.

Young people in the Private Rented Sector

Despite a significant (29%) rise in smart meter uptake in the rented sector, private renters remain less likely to have a smart meter - 62% compared to 68% for homeowners. Consumers aged 18 to 44 were more likely than the average energy consumer to not have a smart meter. This group was also more likely to make use of smart products such as smart thermostats and energy management apps. Lower uptake rates for this group means that they miss out on the cost savings that could be realised from using smart products.

Norman's story

Norman would like to have a smart meter installed to help him manage his energy usage. He has been told by his supplier that he can't have one installed because the distance between his meters is more than 10m. This will make any communication between his gas and electricity meters unlikely to work, and it could also cause future problems for the meters. Norman wants a smart meter but his supplier has been unable to get him one.

What would help people feel more comfortable having a smart meter installed?

Older people who own their homes

People aged 45 and over were more likely to object to a smart meter installation because they either didn't trust smart meters or had heard negative reports about them. This group was also more likely than the average consumer to report needing more information to feel comfortable having a smart meter installed. This could include understanding the possible benefits and drawbacks of their new meter, its financial benefits, and why their supplier wants them to have one.

Andrew's story

Andrew is an elderly full time carer of two adult children with complex needs. He was told that he cannot get a smart meter fitted due to the lack of space in his property. He has an electric vehicle that takes 9 hours to fully charge and he lives in an eco-home with energy saving features such as air source heating. Due to his lack of a smart meter, he isn't able to charge his electric vehicle on a cheaper tariff and can't make use of the cheaper tariffs provided by his home. His supplier has asked him to pay £300 for the works required to have a smart meter installed. But he cannot afford this as he is already in £980 energy debt and survives solely on welfare benefits for him and his two children. Having a smart meter installed would help him better utilise his benefits-only income.

Energy suppliers need to take a more targeted approach to achieving their smart meter goals. If distinct customer groups are engaged in a way that meets both the challenges and opportunities stated above, suppliers will have a stronger chance of attracting these consumers to make the switch to smart.

9: What needs to be done now?

9: What needs to be done now?

Between 2024 and now, the smart meter policy landscape has seen positive changes in many areas. The smart meter rollout continues to push forward, with the large majority of households and small businesses across Great Britain now using a smart or advanced meter. These meters have become integral to consumer's participation in our future energy system by allowing them to better understand their usage through IHDs, take up new flexible tariffs and energy saving technologies. Customer experiences of smart meters have also been brought to the forefront with Ofgem's consultation on Guaranteed Standards of Performance (GSoPs) for smart meters.

However, these improvements don't take away from the reality that many consumers remain unhappy with their smart meters. These negative experiences influence their perception of smart metering, and by extension, the perceptions of those around them. Addressing the challenges these individuals face will require a comprehensive approach. As such we are calling for Government, the regulator and suppliers to work together to:

1. **Close the accountability gap** between energy suppliers and DCC. If doing so requires changes to DCC contracts then these should be made, but in the meantime it should be suppliers who are held accountable when smart metering equipment does not work.

2. **Formalise the currently voluntary IHD replacement standards** into an enforceable requirement to bring all energy suppliers up to the quality of service that some are already achieving.

3. **Reduce the back-billing window** for customers with smart meters to six months. This should incentivise suppliers to get more meters working more quickly and reduce the extent of shock back-bills for consumers with smart meters.

4. Move to **a more consumer-centric metric for measuring how many smart meters are working.** A smart meter's functionality should be judged by its ability to consistently operate a flexible tariff and the absence of estimated bills or requests for manual reads. If these criteria are not being met a consumer will reasonably consider their smart meter to not be working even if it may count as "operating in smart mode" by current metrics.

5. The Government's forthcoming new rollout framework should incentivise suppliers to install smart meters for all consumers who want one, and tackle barriers for consumers who are currently less likely to have a meter, including those in the private rented sector. Suppliers should not just install smart meters where it is easiest but instead follow demand, particularly as so many consumers who have requested or agreed to a smart meter do not yet have one.

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