

Community Energy Customer Charter



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Our Customer Charter relates to heat, cooling and private wire networks. We aim to regularly review our charter to give you a simple, transparent service and good value.

Our core focus is aimed at:

- **Making life easier for you**
- **Finding ways to save you money**
- **Helping you when you need us most**

Our charter explains what we are doing to help you. I'd be very interested in your thoughts on how we're doing; please email me at community.energy@sse.com.

We go above and beyond the Heat Trust Minimum Guaranteed Standards and offer our customers our own Customer Service Guarantee.

This enables you to hold our service to account. For each of the five commitments listed below that we fail to meet, let us know and we'll put the matter right. It's that simple.

- **We will call you back when we say we will**
- **We will never transfer you more than once when you call us, unless you agree**
- **We will give you the opportunity to speak to a manager if you ask**
- **When you call we will offer to find you ways to save money**
- **If you want help with your energy bills we will offer support**

Rochelle Dickson
Head of Customer Services

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Making life easier for you

Getting in touch

About getting in touch

You can contact us in a way that suits you best – by phone, by email, through our website, on Facebook or Twitter, or by letter. Regardless of whether you prefer to manage your account online or pick up the phone, we'll deal with your query quickly and without fuss.

Our contact commitments



When you go online or use our digital services

- We'll respond to emails as quickly as possible and aim to get back to you within one working day.
- We'll make sure it's easy for you to manage your account online whether you need to make a payment, view your bills, let us know you are moving in or leaving us.



When posting a message to our Facebook or Twitter pages



- We will respond to all reasonable requests within one hour during our opening hours.
- We will answer questions there and then if we can, and ensure any query requiring specialist attention is given to the appropriate department.
- We will protect your personal information and will not request that personal details be posted publicly.



When you call us

- We will answer your call as quickly as possible – most calls are answered within two minutes.
- We will call you back at the time we've agreed.



When you write to us

- If we need to contact you about your letter, we'll call you within five days of receiving it.
- If this is not possible, we will write to you.

Joining and leaving us

About your account

We will work with you to ensure that you can manage your account quickly and without fuss. If you're joining us, you'll be given a big welcome. And throughout your time with us we will ensure that our service to you will be personal and efficient.

Our account commitments

- We will do most of the work for you, keeping you updated at all times.

When you join us

- We will send you a welcome pack which includes a copy of our supply terms and conditions, tariff information and useful information about SSE.
- We will open your energy account with actual meter readings whenever possible as the majority of our sites have Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) equipment installed.

If you leave us

- We will produce your final bill promptly – usually within 10 working days

Metering services

About our metering services

The majority of our energy supplies have AMR meters installed. This means that we are sent consumption data from your property every day. Up-to-date readings mean accurate bills. Where the AMR system is not collecting data, we will send our metering contractor to collect readings for us. To help us, please allow these staff members to access your meters. They will be wearing ID Badges so you will know they are there on our behalf. If we haven't been able to gain access, please contact us to give us up-to-date readings.

Our metering commitments

- We will aim to visit your property every six months to read your meters if the AMR fails.
- We will give you a variety of ways to give us up-to-date readings yourself – by phone, online, or via e-mail.
- If we have to use estimated readings, we will base our estimate on the amount of energy you have used; in the past; on average usage patterns; and on the time of year.
- If you provide an actual reading within five working days of receiving an estimated bill, we can usually send a revised bill the following day.
- If you need extra assistance, we will take extra care to ensure you understand how your meter works.
- For Pay As You Go meter customers, our new smart hub will provide you with on-line payment options, with all the information you need easily available through a customer display unit.
- We will continue to carry out safety inspections on your meter at least once every two years.

Saving you money

Customer service guarantee

- **Prices and tariffs**
- **Payment options**
- **Using energy efficiently**

As part of our Customer Service Guarantee, we will offer to help find ways to save you money. This could include telling you about the practical tips to cut your usage and reduce your bills or signposting you to third party agencies like Energy Savings Trust, Citizens Advice or Stepchange, Money Advice Service and National Debt Helpline for debt advice. Our Customer Service Guarantee commitment in this area is:

- **When you call we will offer to find you ways to save money**

But if we don't meet this commitment, let us know and will we put it right.

Prices and tariffs

About our energy prices

We believe in charging a fair price for our products and services. Our energy prices are linked to the cost to heat or cool a similar sized property using an individual boiler or air conditioning unit.

For heat this includes the gas usage, boiler efficiency, repair/maintenance costs and the cost to replace a boiler at the end of its lifetime. We complement our pricing policy with practical advice on managing your bills and reducing your usage.

Our energy price commitments

- Our prices will be fair and linked to the market conditions in which we operate.
- We will give you reasonable notice, which will be at least 31 days, if the price you pay for your energy is going to change.
- We will provide a clear breakdown on your bills of how your energy costs are calculated.
- We will help you if you are struggling to pay your bills.

About our energy tariffs

Our tariffs for heat, cooling and power differ between networks and customers and are based on:

- the number of properties on the network taking energy from the Energy Centre.
- the length of the main agreement with the original developer of your network.
- the type of supply you have (domestic or commercial).
- the scope of services provided.
- the tenure of your property.
- You can speak to one of our advisers about our current tariffs by calling us or visit our website.

Payment options

We offer a number of ways to pay your energy bill to suit your preferences and help you budget.

Pay monthly

Direct Debit or **Standing Order** are our best value payment options and let you spread your costs over a twelve-month period. You can choose the day of the month your payment is taken and because it costs us less when you choose to pay by Direct Debit or Standing Order. There are two choices for Direct Debit – a monthly payment of a fixed amount, or a variable Direct Debit which allows you to pay your quarterly bills in full.

A **monthly swipe card** allows you to make monthly payments on an agreed date without using Direct Debit or Standing Order. You simply go to a PayPoint outlet to make your payment. To find your nearest PayPoint, visit www.paypoint.co.uk

Pay on receipt of your bill

To pay your bill **by phone** using a debit or credit card, call our payment line on **0345 078 3215**. If you'd prefer to pay by cheque or postal order follow the instructions on your bill. Remember; don't send us cash through the post.

A **Budget Card** is a flexible way to pay your bill using a PayPoint outlet. All payments will be shown on your quarterly bill and you can even make payments before you receive your bill.

If you've registered for an **online account** with us, you can pay your bill at any time of day or night. Once you've logged in, just click the 'Pay Now' button and follow the instructions.

If you prefer to pay through your **online bank account**, check to see if your bank allows you to set up an arrangement – you'll need your energy account numbers to do this.

Pay As You Go meter

Pay As You Go meters can help you manage the household budget and easily keep track of the energy you are using. They ensure you pay for your energy as you use it and avoids unexpected bills. You can top-up at any PayPoint outlet or by calling our customer service team on 0345 078 3215. Pay As You Go meters are not available on all of our Heat Networks currently, please check with the CS team to see if they are available in your area.

www.sseandme.co.uk

Our payment option commitments

- We will offer you a variety of ways to pay.
- We will happily carry out an Annual Energy Review to check you are on the best payment method for your needs. If you'd like a review of your account, please call us on **0345 078 3215**.
- We will process valid refund requests within ten working days.
- We will increase payments to Direct Debits if your previous payments haven't covered your usage. When doing this, we will take your ability to pay into consideration and agree a responsible repayment schedule.

Our Pay As You Go commitments

- We will maintain a 24-hour emergency service for Pay As You Go meter issues through our out of hours Emergency Service Centre. The number is **0800 316 2194**.

Using energy efficiently

One of the most effective ways to reduce energy costs is to make your home more energy efficient. We're confident that we can help you to use energy wisely in your home – give us a call or visit our website to find out more.

Our team of Customer Liaison Officers also visit your network on a regular basis to carry out customer surgeries. Visit our website (www.sseandme.co.uk) to see when they are next in your area. The visits are also notified via our social media channels [@sseandme](#), ([Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)).

Are you looking for ways to reduce energy because you're struggling to pay for energy costs? Help is available. Remember, if you are vulnerable to cold because of your age or health, using less energy may not always be the right thing for you. If you need extra assistance and are worried about keeping warm, please call us straight away on **0345 078 3215** so that we can offer you support.

Helping you when you need us most

- **Difficulty paying your bills**
- **Keeping you connected**
- **Assistance for our energy customers who need extra assistance**
- **Safe and warm with Operations Team**
- **If things go wrong**

As part of our Customer Service Guarantee, we will help you when you need us most. This could consist of either offering you a suitable payment plan which considers your ability to pay, or signposting you to third party agencies that offer specialist support. We can also discuss whether you could benefit from our priority services, such as Braille bills or a dedicated customer service adviser. Our Customer Service Guarantee commitment in this area is:

- **If you want help with your energy bills we will offer support**

But if we don't meet this commitment, let us know and we will put it right.

Difficulty paying your bills

About our assistance with payment problems

If you need help with your energy bills, just let us know and we can discuss the practical support that is available. We will offer you reassurance and work together on an arrangement that allows you to sensibly manage your payments.

Please talk to us about any concerns you have about affording your energy bills, so that we can help you.

Our energy payment assistance commitments

- We will take your ability to pay into consideration.
- We will agree a sensible way forward to help you manage your ongoing energy use and repay debt in a sustainable way.
- We may be able to check whether you can claim Government benefits.
- We may be able to fit a Pay As You Go meter to allow you to repay any debt at an agreed weekly rate while keeping control of your ongoing usage. If you have a smart meter, we can also change the meter's operating mode to Pay As You Go remotely- without visiting your property. Pay As You Go meters are not available on all of our Heat Networks currently, please check with the CS team to see if they are available in your area.
- It's simple to top up your smart Pay As You Go meter whenever you need to. The easiest way is to top up online. Or you can take your top-up card along to any PayPoint outlet.

Keeping you connected

We don't ever want to disconnect your supply. Talking to us about any payment difficulties you have is the best way to ensure this never happens.

- We will never knowingly disconnect the heat supply of a customer that may be in a vulnerable situation except for essential maintenance or safety reasons in the heating season (01 October to 31 March).
- If we need to disconnect your supply we will contact you in advance to let you know what we intend to do. We may charge you to resume your service once it has been disconnected.
- If we have suspended your supply due to non-payment, we will charge you to attend a breakdown or emergency.

We only ever suspend or disconnect your services as a very last resort.

Extra assistance

About our assistance for customers who may be in a vulnerable situation.

We have special responsibilities as an energy supplier to help protect our energy customers who may be in a vulnerable situation. Whether it's because of your age, your health, your income or your housing situation, please let us know if you need specialist help.

You may wish to register for our Priority Services Register. This lets us know that you may need more support with bills and correspondence and offers services to help you feel secure in your home and make it easier for you to communicate with us. If you are elderly, chronically sick or disabled, we'll sign you up for this free of charge.

Here are just some of the ways we might be able to help you

- When we visit, we can make sure to wait a little longer and give you more time to answer your door if you need it.
- You can have your bill in a different format, such as Braille, large print or audio.
- If you have someone helping you, you can let them manage your account. You can give your permission by writing to us, or you can call us when that person is with you.
- It's really important for us to know if you rely on electric medical equipment at home. If you're happy for us to tell your local electricity network company, they'll make sure you're a priority if there's ever a power cut and make you aware of any planned disruption.

Please contact the team on **0345 078 3215** to discuss this further.

Safe and warm with our 24/7/365 Engineering Team

About our Engineering Team

The standing charge element of your tariff is designed to help you maintain your home without the worry of up-front bills. As part of our service offering we offer both reactive and preventative maintenance for the supplies and equipment we cover using specialist, fully qualified engineers to ensure work is done safely and to the highest standards. There is no extra cost to you and no requirement for you to take out an additional insurance policy to cover these unfortunate events. Please refer to your supply agreement to check the equipment we are responsible for in your home.

Our maintenance commitments

- We work to the highest safety standards for the well-being of yourself, your home, and our staff.
- We will arrange your bi-annual service for a date which is convenient for you.
- We prioritise customers who may be in vulnerable circumstances for repairs and breakdowns.
- At your request we will use a password scheme for your security when visiting your home.
- Our breakdown and emergency lines are open 24 hours a day seven days a week.
- We will offer vulnerable customers an alternative form of heating if we cannot restore the heat and hot water within 12 hours.
- We will aim to attend heating and hot water emergencies within four hours.
- We will call you prior to attending your home to give you an estimated time of arrival.
- Our staff will wear identification badges at all times.

If things go wrong

About our complaints process

We aim to get it right first time, every time. But if we do something to upset or frustrate you, please contact us straight away. A quick conversation is usually all it takes to put things right.

Please also let us know when you receive great service. The more we know about what pleases you, the better our service will be. Email us at: communityenergy@sse.com.

Our complaint handling commitments

- If you are logging a complaint, our adviser will give you their name and extension number so you can contact them again if you need to.
- If the adviser cannot resolve your query, they will pass you to a manager to find a way forward.
- You can ask to speak to a manager at any point.
- In the unlikely event that we have still not solved your complaint you can write to our Head of Customer Service at Head of Customer Service, SSE Heat Networks, EU Customer Service, PO Box 261, Havant, PO9 9FE.

Independent help and advice

You can contact the Ombudsman for help if our Head of Customer Service hasn't resolved your complaint to your satisfaction, or if it has been six weeks since you first contacted us to make a complaint and we haven't resolved it.

When a complaint is referred to the Ombudsman, they will investigate this on your behalf. Any decision the Ombudsman makes is binding on us as a supplier, but not on you. The Ombudsman may refuse to investigate your complaint if you haven't followed our complaints process.

Treating customers fairly

We are committed to giving you excellent customer service and treating you fairly.

Our key objective is to ensure that you are treated fairly. To help achieve this, we are committed to meeting the following Standards:

- 1 We will behave and carry out any actions in a fair, honest, transparent, appropriate, and professional way.**
- 2 The information we give to you (whether verbally or in writing) will be:**
 - complete, accurate and truthful
 - in clear and plain language
 - fairly presented, with the most important information highlighted to you
 - sufficient to allow you to make informed choices about your energy supply.

We will continually review the way we do things to ensure our work is complete, thorough, fit for purpose and transparent.

We will always act promptly and courteously to help you. If something goes wrong or a mistake is made, we will work with you to fix this without fuss.

We will make it easy for you to contact us.

If you are in a vulnerable situation, we will provide extra help, support and flexible customer service arrangements to suit your needs.