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Customer Complaints Handling Research

Prepared For:

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A. Executive Summary

Background and objectives

As the regulator of Britain's gas and electricity markets, Ofgem's principal objective is to protect the interests of customers wherever appropriate by promoting effective competition. Within its remit of protection, Ofgem is required to measure satisfaction with the way in which complaints are handled by energy suppliers to ensure they meet the Complaints Handling Standards Regulations.

Ofgem initially conducted research in 2009 to assess suppliers' compliance with the new standards and measure customers' overall satisfaction with the way in which complaints were handled. The results of this initial round of research were treated as a benchmark against which future changes and improvements could be monitored. A second wave of research was carried out in 2010 to measure the impact of changes made by suppliers', following Ofgem's recommendations in 2009. This report presents the findings from the latest wave of research carried out in January 2012.

The overall objective of the research is:

- To assess energy suppliers' adherence to Ofgem's complaints handling standards by measuring customers' recollections of the process and satisfaction with the handling of their complaint.

Methodology

3,025 telephone interviews were conducted with customers who made a complaint to their energy supplier during **December 2011**. The research focused on customers of the six main suppliers in the GB energy market as follows:

- Centrica (British Gas)
- EDF Energy
- E.ON
- RWE npower
- Scottish & Southern Electric (SSE), and
- Scottish Power.

Across these six suppliers, two core groups were identified to participate in the research:

- Domestic customers
- Micro businesses.

Interviews lasted for approximately 15 minutes and were conducted by experienced interviewers from Harris Interactive between Wednesday 1st February and Thursday 1st March, 2012. Interviews were conducted with a random selection of customers, and those who could not recall having made a complaint were excluded from the process.

Overview of key findings

Overall satisfaction with complaints process

Dissatisfaction levels for both customer types remain higher than satisfaction levels, however there have been improvements in overall satisfaction since 2010, and satisfaction has increased year on year since 2009. These improvements now see two fifths (40%) of Domestic customers and over a third (34%) of Micro Business customers claiming to be satisfied.

Amongst Domestic customers, all suppliers have seen significant improvements in overall satisfaction levels since 2010. Scottish Power and SSE remain as the suppliers with the highest satisfaction levels, and are the only suppliers to have more customers satisfied than dissatisfied. npower, EDF and E.ON have the largest proportion of Domestic customers - more than a third - being 'very' dissatisfied with the overall complaints process.

Micro Business customers remain marginally less satisfied than Domestic customers, although there has been a significant decline in the proportion of Micro Business customers being 'very' dissatisfied – from over half in 2010 to just over a third in 2012.

Customers were asked why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the overall complaints process. According to both Domestic and Micro Business customers the top area impacting satisfaction was '*helpful staff / satisfaction with assistance'*, with the second most important factor relating to the '*quick resolution of the problem'*. In line with this, key reasons given for dissatisfaction were the complaints *'process taking too long'*, *'being unresolved'*, *'poor communication'* and *'unhelpful staff'*.

Complaints resolution

Where complaints have been resolved - both in the eyes of the customer and supplier - there have been significant satisfaction gains for all suppliers in relation to the resolution of complaints. Over two thirds of both Domestic and Micro Business customers are satisfied with the resolution of their complaint, a significantly higher proportion than in 2010.

- As with overall satisfaction, both Scottish Power and SSE have the higher proportions of satisfied Domestic customers as compared with other suppliers.
- Consistent with the findings in 2010, both EDF and E.ON have the least satisfied Domestic customers.

Satisfaction that the outcome adequately reflects the problems encountered has also improved for both Domestic and Micro Business customers, significantly so for Domestic customers.

However, there remains a high proportion of both Domestic and Micro Business customers receiving 'nothing' from their energy supplier in terms of confirmation that the complaint had been resolved. Only a third of customers receive any communication of apology or compensation of any sort[1] from their supplier.

As in previous years a discrepancy remains between what suppliers perceive as being resolved and what customers believe to be a resolution. For both Domestic and Micro Business customer complaints, over two in five of all complaints classified as resolved by the supplier were actually

[1] These are separate to the arrangements which exist for the Energy Ombudsman.

considered by the individual customer to be unresolved – 41% for Domestic and 44% for Micro Business customers. This is a marginal decline from the figures seen in 2010, but still remains a large disconnect in perceptions.

There are feelings amongst both Domestic and Micro Business customers that unresolved complainants are in a period of 'limbo' whilst they are still waiting to hear from their supplier. Some customers suggest they have 'given up' pursuing any further resolution or contact in relation to their complaint.

Contact with suppliers

Overall, the average number of contacts customers have with suppliers is significantly declining for both Domestic and Micro Business customers. This has reduced to an average of 3.4 contacts for Domestic customers (3.7 in 2010), and to 4.6 for Micro Business customers (5.6 in 2010).

However, the proportion of customers having their complaint resolved during the first contact is largely unchanged. Only one in six of Domestic customers and one in ten of Micro Business complaints are resolved during the first contact.

Dissatisfaction is still high amongst those customers not having their complaint resolved during the first contact. In particular, Domestic customers of EDF had the highest levels of dissatisfaction with needing to make multiple contacts. Potentially heightening this dissatisfaction is the lack of explanation as to why further contact is required.

Satisfaction with specific aspects of customer service

One stand out aspect of customer service - with significantly higher satisfaction levels than other aspects - is the language used being 'simple and easy to understand'. With over two thirds of customers being satisfied in this area, it suggests there is some appreciation for suppliers' efforts in ensuring communications are not too technical. Other areas where Domestic customers are more satisfied than dissatisfied include the attitude of suppliers, professionalism, ownership of the complaint, understanding of the complaint and ease of registering the complaint.

The remaining aspects of the process see higher dissatisfaction levels than satisfaction amongst Domestic customers. Areas where customers are most dissatisfied are speed of dealing with the complaint and being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint further if necessary.

All aspects of customer service are considered important to customers, but when asked, they believe the most important is to call them back when promised or agreed. This is an area where both Domestic and Micro Business customers feel energy suppliers are not performing well. An additional element crucial to Micro Business customers is ease of finding the correct person to speak to. Again, this is an area where energy suppliers are not perceived to be delivering the level of service required of customers.

An analysis technique used to determine the underlying factors influencing overall customer satisfaction shows that the following have the greatest impact on overall satisfaction, across both Domestic and Micro Business customers: calling back if promised or agreed; attitude; professionalism; and ownership of the complaint.

Priority action areas for improving overall satisfaction

Calling customers back when agreed or promised has been identified as a critical area for improvement, i.e. something that is proven to be important, but where performance is comparatively weak. Secondary areas for improvement have also been identified and include:

- Finding the right person to speak to
- Taking a proactive approach to resolving your complaint
- Ability to make decisions there and then to resolve the complaint
- Being provided with further contact details
- Speed in resolving complaints.

The analysis also identifies elements of the experience which need to be 'maintained'. Failure to do so could negatively affect overall satisfaction performance. These are highlighted as:

- Understanding of the complaint or problem
- Language used being simple and easy to understand.

Targeting areas having the greatest impact on improving overall satisfaction is crucial for energy suppliers in delivering a service both expected and required of customers.

B. Introduction

B1. Background

Ofgem, as the regulator of Britain's gas and electricity markets, has the principal objective to protect the interests of consumers, wherever appropriate by promoting effective competition. In carrying out its functions, Ofgem also has a statutory duty to have regard to the interests of vulnerable customers including those who are disabled, chronically sick, of pensionable age, on low incomes or living in rural areas.

The nature of consumer representation in the energy sector changed in October 2008 to introduce a three tier system comprising:

- Consumer Direct providing a single point of contact for consumers covering all markets for information and advice;
- the extension of redress schemes (Energy Ombudsman), approved by the Authority (Ofgem), to cover all energy complaints; and
- a consumer advocacy body (Consumer Focus) dealing with individual complaints relating to disconnection or involving a vulnerable customer.

Under these arrangements there is a greater emphasis on consumers being able to resolve their complaints at the first port of call with their gas or electricity company. The success of the arrangements depends largely on how successful energy companies are at handling complaints.

To support this change in emphasis, Ofgem was required to make regulations prescribing standards for the handling, by its regulated companies, of consumer complaints made to them. The Complaints Handling Standards Regulations came in to force in October 2008. They apply to complaints from domestic consumers and micro businesses to gas and electricity supply companies and also to network companies (gas transporters and electricity distributors).

The standards are designed to provide effective protection for customers and comprise a number of key requirements to which suppliers and network companies must adhere when a customer makes a complaint. If suppliers are found to be in breach of these obligations, Ofgem has the power to impose a financial penalty of up to 10 per cent of the company's turnover.

The Consumers, Estate Agents and Redress Act 2007 (CEAR) requires Ofgem to collect information with respect to the levels of compliance with the standards. Consumer Focus is required, under CEAR, to publish statistical information relating to the level of compliance with the standards.

Ofgem initially conducted research in 2009 to assess suppliers' compliance with the new standards and measure customers' overall satisfaction with the way in which complaints were handled. The results of this initial round of research were treated as a benchmark against which future changes and improvements could be monitored. A second wave of research was carried out in 2010 to measure the impact of changes made by suppliers', following Ofgem's recommendations in 2009.

Following the dissemination of results from the 2010 study, and the provision of further recommendations from Ofgem, a third wave of research was carried out in January 2012. This report presents the findings from the latest survey conducted in January 2012, and explores customers' satisfaction with suppliers' complaints handling during the period of December 2011.

B2. Research Objectives

The overall objective that the research aimed to address was:

'To assess energy suppliers' adherence to Ofgem's complaints handling standards by measuring customers' recollections of the process and satisfaction with the handling of their complaint'

Within this overall objective there were a number of overarching aims that the research sought to achieve:

- to gauge customers satisfaction with the six main energy suppliers' complaints handling process;
- to identify whether the experiences of customers indicate that gas and electricity suppliers are dealing with their complaints in accordance with the complaints handling standards set out by Ofgem in October 2008;
- to identify areas of good practice in the application of the complaints handling standards;
- and identify areas of weakness in suppliers' complaints handling processes in order to identify areas where improvements need to be made; and
- to assess the extent to which suppliers' handling of customer complaints and customer satisfaction has changed since the previous wave of research in 2010.

B3. Methodology

A total of 3,025 telephone interviews were conducted with customers who made a complaint to their energy supplier during **December 2011**. The research focused on customers of the six main suppliers in the GB energy market as follows:

- Centrica (British Gas)
- EDF Energy
- E.ON
- RWE npower
- Scottish & Southern Electric (SSE)
- Scottish Power.

Across these six suppliers, two core groups were identified to participate in the research:

- Domestic customers
- Micro businesses.[2]

[2] A micro business is defined as one with: an annual consumption of electricity of not more than 55,000kWh; or an annual consumption of gas of not more than 200,000kWh; or fewer than the equivalent of 10 full time employees and an annual turnover or an annual account balance sheet total not exceeding €2 million.

The methodology and timing of the research was designed to be the same as the two previous waves conducted in 2009 and 2010 to ensure that all waves of research are comparable.

In all cases, the interview was conducted with the person who made the complaint, either personally or on behalf of someone else to focus on their first hand, personal experience of the complaints handling process. As such, the nature and status of all complaints referred to in this report relates to the customers' own definition and recollection of their complaint and not the suppliers' definition. Where customer and supplier definitions differ, they are clearly highlighted.

Customers who could not recall making the complaint, or who were unfamiliar with the details of the complaint and/or the process were excluded from the research.

Interviews lasted for approximately 15 minutes and were conducted by experienced interviewers from Harris Interactive using a questionnaire designed by Harris Interactive in full consultation with Ofgem. All interviews took place between Wednesday 1st February and Thursday 1st March, 2012.

Throughout the interview customers referred to their energy supplier by individual name. However, for analysis purposes, all results are presented at a combined, parent-company, level. For example, SSE includes customers of Scottish & Southern Electric, Southern Electric, Scottish Hydro, Atlantic and Swalec.

The sample[3] was provided to Harris Interactive independently by each of the six energy suppliers. Interviews were conducted with a random selection of customers who had made a complaint during December 2011.

Weighting

Domestic customer data was weighted, based on market share figures for the GB domestic energy market, to ensure the results of the study were reflective of the market as a whole. Micro Business data has not been weighted but is presented at the overall level, i.e. based on all completed Micro Business interviews – Micro Businesses make up only a small proportion of the UK energy market.

Significant differences - i.e. between customer groups (Domestic and Micro Business), between customers of different energy suppliers, and between the 2010 and 2012 survey results - have been tested at the 95% confidence level and are highlighted where appropriate.

Questionnaires

A copy of the questionnaire is appended to this report for reference.

[3] i.e. names and contact details of all customers who were recorded as having made a complaint to one of the Big Six energy suppliers in December 2011

C. Main Findings

C1. Respondent Profile

The six main energy suppliers in GB provided contacts for all customers who had made a complaint to their gas or electricity supplier in December 2011.

From these records, a total of 3,025 interviews were completed, comprised of 2,769 interviews with Domestic customers and 256 interviews with Micro Business customers. By supplier, these interviews were divided as follows:

	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.ON	npower	SSE	Scottish Power	Total
Domestic	**452**	**473**	**450**	**454**	**471**	**469**	**2769**
Micro Business	51	27	52	55	33	38	256
Total	503	500	502	509	504	507	3,025

Table 1 – Proportion of interviews by customer type and supplier

C.1.1 Domestic Customer Profile

Just over half (55%) of all Domestic customers interviewed were female and slightly under half (45%) were male. The most common age band was 66+ (22% of Domestic customers), followed by 36 – 45 (19%), then 46 – 55 and 56 – 65 years (both 18%). As the age band drops, so does participation, with 16% completion from 16 – 25 year olds and just one in twenty aged between 18 and 24 (4%).

The proportion of men and women taking part was mainly consistent across all suppliers. However, there are some differences by age, with Scottish Power complainants more likely to be older. For this supplier just 1% were between the ages of 18 – 24 and 6% within the 25 – 35 age band, yet more than a quarter (27%) were 66 or older. Customers of npower are likely to be younger, with significantly lower levels than any other supplier of respondents older than 66 years (13%).

The profile of all Domestic customers is shown in table 2 below:

Table 2 – Domestic Customers by gender, age, working status & marital status

% of Domestic Customers	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.ON	npower	SSE	Scottish Power	Total
Base:	452	473	450	454	471	469	**2,769**
Gender							
Male	*43*	*49*	*46*	*48*	*43*	*46*	***45***
Female	*57*	*51*	*54*	*52*	*57*	*54*	***55***
Age							
18 – 24	*5*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*1**	***4***
25 – 35	*17*	*15*	*14*	*20*	*18*	*6**	***16***
36 – 45	*20*	*19*	*20*	*22*	*14**	*19*	***19***
46 – 55	*17*	*12**	*18*	*20*	*19*	*22*	***18***
56 – 65	*17*	*23**	*17*	*19*	*16*	*23**	***18***
66+	*21*	*24*	*26*	*13**	*23*	*27*	***22***
Working Status							
Working – full time	*31*	*30*	*30*	*37**	*31*	*29*	***31***
Working – part time	*15*	*13*	*10*	*15*	*11*	*14*	***13***
Unemployed – seeking work	*8*	*6*	*7*	*7*	*7*	*4*	***7***
Unemployed – not seeking	*11*	*9*	*16**	*16**	*14*	*9*	***13***
Retired	*31*	*38**	*35*	*22*	*34*	*41**	***33***
Marital Status							
Married/Living with Partner	*52*	*58**	*51*	*58**	*51*	*62**	***54***
Single	*26*	*19*	*19*	*24*	*22*	*12**	***22***
Separated / Divorced / Widowed	*19*	*19*	*27**	*14*	*22*	*22*	***21***

** Significant difference between customer types (by supplier) within the 2012 research*

C.1.2 Micro Business Customer Profile

Within the Micro Business interviews a range of business types were surveyed. The most common business type was Retail, accounting for 20% of all Micro Business interviews, followed by one in ten for Fast food/Restaurant/Catering and one in 20 for Farming (6%). The largest proportion of Micro Business customers were classified as 'Other' (42%) – a category containing business types which individually accounted for less than 3% of the total. This included businesses such as Personal Grooming, Beauty, Tailor, Hair, Accommodation, Consultancy, Local Authority, Construction, Charity / Volunteer, Education, Transport, Childcare, Engineering, Holidays & Leisure, Domestic Services, Church / Religion and Nursing / Care Home.

Micro Business respondents mostly held senior positions such as 'Owners / Managers' (29%) or 'Directors / MD' (16%). This is a familiar finding in research with Micro Businesses, and is often a result of their having smaller numbers of employees.

The profile of all Micro Business respondents is shown in the following charts:

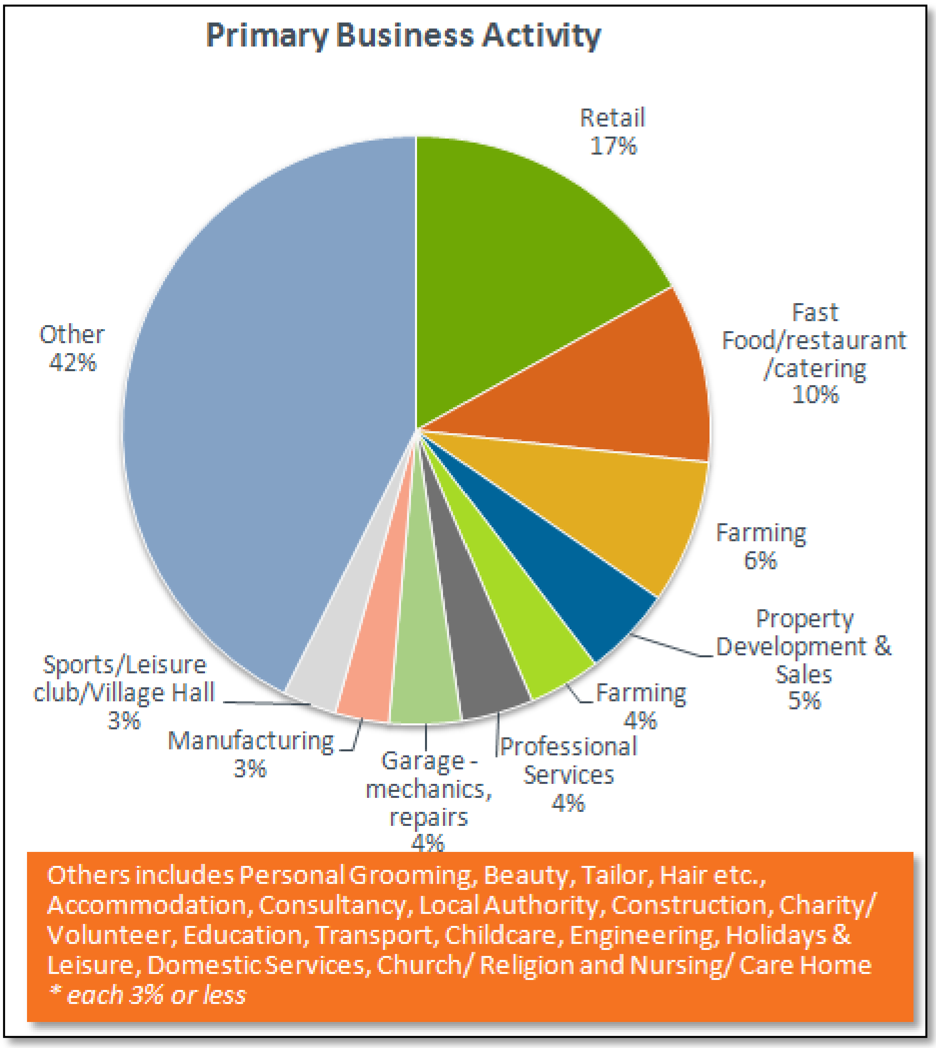

Chart 1 – Primary Business Activity

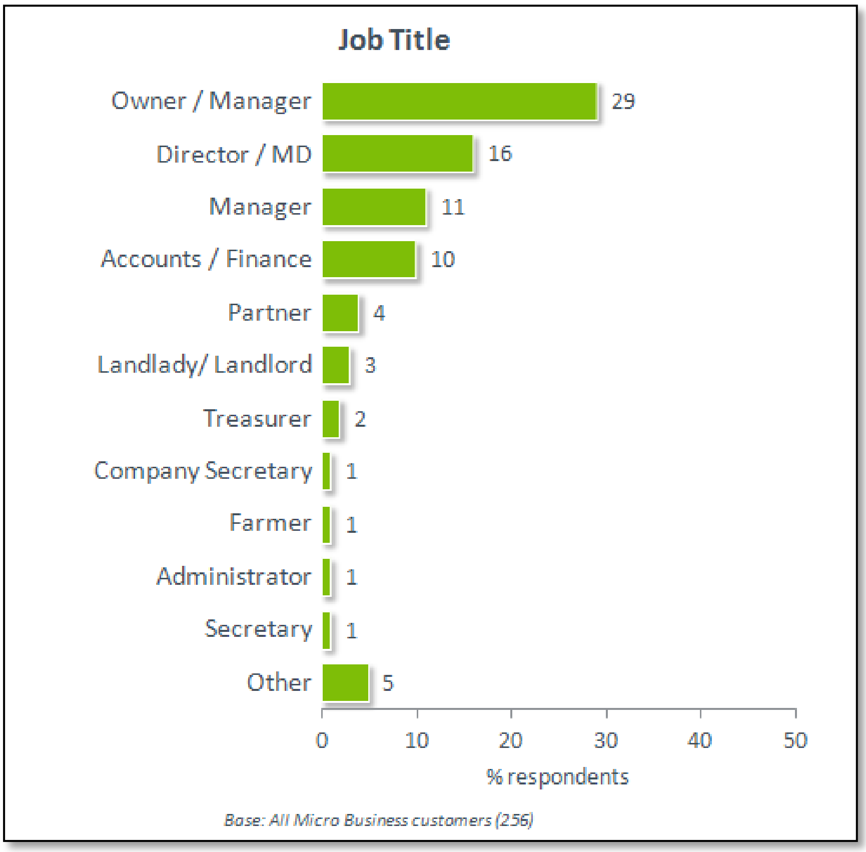

Chart 2 – Micro Business Customer Profile

C2. Method of Contact

The vast majority (93%) of both Domestic and Micro Business customers used the telephone as their contact method. Although around a quarter (26%) of Micro Business customers also used email and one in eight (13%) chose a letter. Domestic customers were less likely to use either a letter or email – 12% for email and just one in twenty opted for a letter.

Across the suppliers, the number of Domestic customers using telephone as their contact method was generally equally proportioned. There were two notable differences among suppliers, firstly Scottish Power used email contact more frequently (19%), and secondly, EDF customers also had higher frequency of email usage (17%) and letter (8%).

The main source of contact information when registering a complaint remains the bill or account statement, used by just under two thirds (63%) of all Domestic customers – a slight decline from 66% in 2010. This compares to a higher figure for Micro Business customers where just under three-quarters (72%) used a bill or account statement, and 9% used either an other communication from the supplier or the supplier website.

Approximately three-quarters of E.ON (77%) and SSE (75%) customers found locating contact information to be easy ('quite' or 'very'). This is marginally lower for EDF customers (71%), and British Gas, npower and Scottish Power customers (all 70%). E.ON customers finding the correct information 'very' easily is significantly higher than customers of other suppliers. SSE is the most improved and appears to be making the correct information significantly easier to find for customers than in 2010. This is illustrated in chart 3 below:

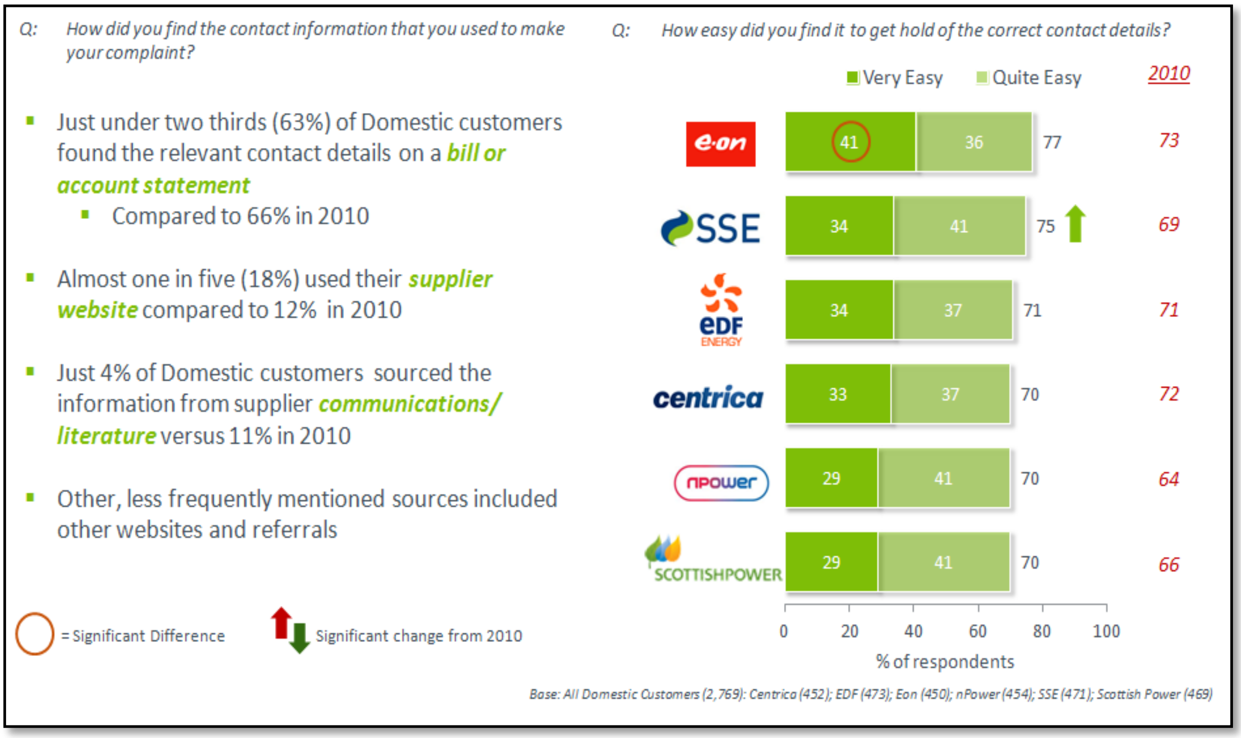

Chart 3 – Contact with Suppliers – Sources & Ease of Finding Contact Information

Similarly, three-quarters of Micro Business respondents found locating the information easy, split as 29% 'very' and 45% 'quite' easy to find.

C3. Complaint Topic

Each customer who took part in this research was asked to describe the nature of their complaint in their own words. This was then classified into one of seven pre-determined categories – Billing, Sales, Transfers, Meters, Prices, Debt and Other. We noted a large number of Prepayment Meter and Customer Service related complaints which have been removed from the 'Other' category and are reported separately below.

The table below details the proportion of complaints for each of the categories:

Q: *What was your recent complaint to your supplier about?*

% of respondents	Domestic Customers	Micro Businesses
Base:	2,769	256
Prices	⬆ *28 (17)*	⬇ *17 (22)*
Billing	⬇ *25 (34)*	⬇ *35 (43)*
Meters	*20 (21)*	*24 (22)*
Transfer	⬇ *7 (10)*	⬇ *8 (15)*
Sales	⬇ *4 (9)*	⬇ *2 (6)*
Debt	⬇ *3 (6)*	*4 (5)*
Prepayment Meters	*9 (9)*	*1 (<1)*
Customer Service	*8 (7)*	*6 (9)*
Other	*23 (23)*	*26 (34)*

⬆⬇ = Significant change from 2010 ('10 figures in brackets)

Table 3 – Nature of Complaint by Customer Type

Among all Domestic customers surveyed the most common topics of complaint were Prices (28%), Billing (25%) and Meters (20%). Compared to the 2010 research when they accounted for 17% of complaints, the proportion of Price related complaints has experienced a significant increase. Within Prices, 15% complained about the amount of the price increase whilst around one in ten customers (11%) complained about Direct Debits.

Billing complaints have significantly declined to 25% from 34% in 2010, and again are predominantly focused on accuracy (14% of all complaints related to the accuracy of the bill) with smaller proportions of all customers making a complaint about other aspects of billing – Estimates and Frequency (4%), and Refunds (3%).

Most complaints related to Meters were made in regards to Meter Readings (12% - consistent with 2010) and the Accuracy of the Meter (4%).

The proportion of complaints related to Transfers to/from a supplier in now 7%, a decline from 10% in 2010. Complaints relating to Sales and Debt (4% and 3% respectively) have significantly declined from 2010, which saw complaints for sales at 9% and Debt complaints at 6%.

Just under one in ten (9%) of Domestic customers complained about prepayment meters – e.g. setting / faults / general use, whilst 8% complained about general customer service matters. 23% of Domestic customers complained about something else. The full make up of the 'other' comments can be found for both Domestic and Micro Business customers can be found in Appendices D1 and D2 of this document.

Among the six energy suppliers

- the proportion of complaints related to Prices has increased for all suppliers other than EDF;
- E.ON has the highest number of Price complaints at 38%, followed by Scottish Power (32%), npower and SSE (both at 28%), EDF (25%) and Centrica (23%);
- complaints relating to Billing have significantly declined for Scottish Power (down to 18%), E.ON (23%), Centrica (14%) and npower (26%). Billing complaints remain highest for both EDF (33%) and SSE (30%).
- for SSE the number of complaints relating to Meters has increased from 16% to 23%, whilst complaints for Transfer (4%) and Sales (2%) have significantly declined
- complaints about Meters have significantly declined for both npower (to 18% from 26% in 2010) and Scottish Power (16% from 23% in 2010). Scottish Power has also seen significant declines for complaints relating to Transfer (8%), Sales (5%) and Debt (17%).

Table 4 below details the topic of complaint by supplier among Domestic customers:

Table 4 – Domestic Customer topic of complaint

% of Domestic Customers	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.ON	npower	SSE	Scottish Power	Total
Base:	452	473	450	454	471	469	**2,769**
Prices	23	25	38*	28	28	32	**28**
Billing	24	33	23	26	30	18	**25**
Meters	22	19	16	18	23	16	**20**
Transfer	7	10	6	7	4	8	**7**
Sales	3	1	7	5	2	5	**4**
Debt	3	7*	2	4	3	1	**3**
Prepayment Meters	10	8	7	12	9	6	9
Customer Service	8	11	8	6	6	12	8
Other:	24	18	16	29	25	28	**23**

** Significant difference between customer types (by supplier) within the 2012 research*

For Micro Business customers the top complaint category continues to be Billing with npower (44%) and EDF (41%) having the most complaints of this nature. However, overall the number of complaints about this issue has significantly declined from 43% in 2010 to 35%. The most common specific issue is the accuracy of the bill, at 25%. The second most common area of complaint for Micro Business customers is regarding Meters which has marginally increased to 24% from 22% in 2010; 15% of these relate to meter readings.

Price issues have significantly declined for Micro Business customers from 22% in 2010 to 17% in 2012. The two most common areas within Prices are Direct Debits and the amount of increase (7% and 6% respectively). There have also been significant declines for complaints relating to Transfer (down to 8% from 15% in 2010) and Sales, now at 2% as compared with 6% in 2010. The number of complaints categorised as ‘Other’ has also significantly declined to 33% from 45% in 2010.

C4. Seriousness of complaint

The number of Domestic customers believing their complaint to be 'very' serious has significantly declined to 41%, from 48% in 2010. Whilst those customers deeming it 'quite' serious has remained static at 23%, therefore suggesting a general decline in perceived severity of Domestic complaints. This is further reinforced by a significant increase from 6% in 2010 to 9% for 'not that serious', and a marginal increase, from 4% to 5% for 'not very serious'.

Among Domestic customers, with the exception of SSE there have been declines in the perceived severity of the complaint for all suppliers. Although SSE has only increased by 1 percentage point, given the declines seen by other suppliers, it now has marginally more serious complaints than all other suppliers.

As found in previous years, Micro Business complainants are more likely than Domestic customers to consider their complaint to have been 'very' serious – just over half (51%) stated that it was 'very' serious, though this has declined from 55% in 2010. Also in decline is the number of complainants stating it was 'quite' serious, now less than one in five (19%), from 22% in 2010. However both 'not that serious' and 'not very serious' have remained the same from 2010.

The chart below details the perceived severity of the complaint for both Micro Business and Domestic customers, and also by supplier among Domestic customers:

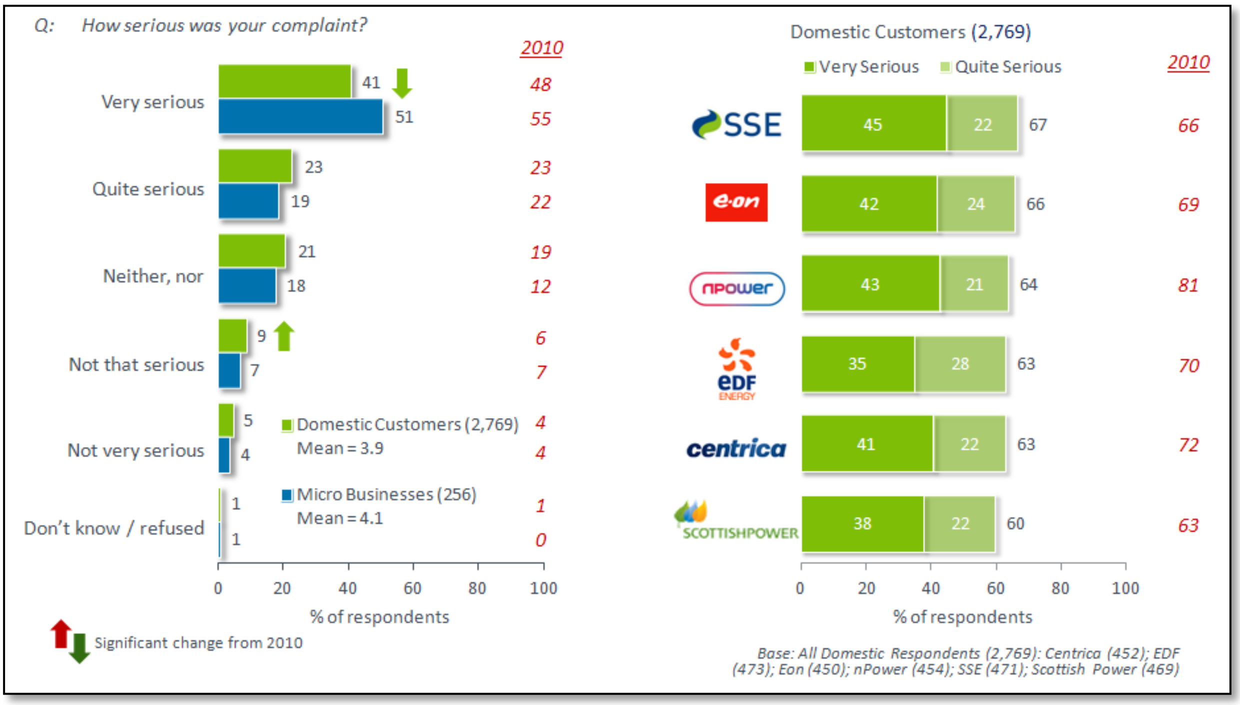

Chart 4 – Severity of Complaint by Customer Type and Domestic Supplier

C5. Frequency of Contact

Across all Domestic complaints made to an energy supplier in December 2011, around one in four (26%) customers had contact with their supplier about their complaint on just a single occasion. This has increased significantly from 22% of complaints during the same period in 2009. Almost half (46%) of all Domestic customers had contact with their supplier between two and five times and a further 9% had contact with their supplier between six and nine times. However, one in ten customers (10%) required 10 or more contacts with their supplier with regards to their complaint.

The average number of times that a customer had contact with their supplier is shown in table 5 as follows:

	2012	2010
All Domestic Customers	⬇ **3.4**	**3.7**
E.ON	⬇ 2.8*	3.2
SSE	3.1	3.3
Scottish Power	⬇ 3.2	3.7
Centrica	⬇ 3.3	3.9
EDF Energy	⬇ 3.3	3.9
npower	⬇ 3.9*	4.5
Micro Business Customers	⬇ 4.6	5.6

⬆⬇ = Significant change from 2010

**Significant difference between suppliers*

Table 5 – Average number of contacts with supplier

C6. Complaints History and Confidence

Customers were classified by whether or not they had a made a complaint, of any kind, to an organisation other than the energy supplier to whom their existing complaint related, in the last 12 months. During the 2010 research customers were also asked about their degree of confidence in making such complaints. This part of the questionnaire was removed for 2012, and instead we asked customers to rate whether the experience of the complaint in question was better or worse than their complaints experience with other organisations.

In the 2010 research, Micro Business customers were more likely than Domestic to have made a complaint in the last 12 months to other organisations. However this has changed during the 2012 research and for Micro Business customers the proportion who have complained to another organisation as well as their energy supplier is down from 39% to 26%. Domestic customers remain constant, with 29% making a complaint to other organisations in 2012 versus 30% in 2010. Micro Business customers were however, more likely to make a complaint to another energy supplier (not the one in question for this research) – 11% compared to just 4% for Domestic customers, as seen in the table below:

% of respondents	Domestic Customers	Micro Businesses	Domestic Customers by Supplier					
			centrica	EDF Energy	e.on	npower	SSE	Scottish Power
Base:	*2,769*	*274*	*467*	*446*	*440*	*448*	*490*	*443*
Complained in last 12 months	**29**	**26**	**35**	**32**	**25**	**28**	**30**	**30**
Telephone Provider	*8*	*6*	*7*	*10*	*9*	*8*	*10*	*10*
Bank or Building Society	*6*	*7*	*6*	*8*	*6*	*6*	*6*	*8*
Internet Service Provider	*5*	*5*	*5*	*7*	*4*	*6*	*6*	*6*
Local Council	*5*	*4*	*5*	*7*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*6*
Energy Supplier	*4*	*11*	*4*	*5*	*3*	*5*	*5*	*4*
Water Company	*2*	*4*	*2*	*2*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*3*
Transport Company e.g. Trains or Buses	*1*	*0*	*1*	*1*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*
Others	*3*	*2*	*3*	*3*	*3*	*2*	*4*	*3*

Table 6 – Making complaints to other providers

Generally for Domestic customers the complaints experience to their energy supplier is considered better than complaints made to other organisations. However, the seriousness of these other complaints was not tested, and so the findings should be approached with some caution.

The table below shows how the complaints experience with their energy supplier faired in comparison to other organisations:

% of Domestic Customers	Water Company	Telephone Provider	Internet Provider	Bank or Building Society	Transport Company	Local Council
Base:	57	248	158	181	31	147
Complaints experience with energy supplier was....						
....much better	*37*	*47*	*49*	*36*	*44*	*41*
....about the same	*21*	*32*	*24*	*26*	*18*	*29*
....much worse	*42*	*21*	*27*	*38*	*38*	*30*

Table 7 – Domestic Customer experience of energy supplier complaint versus other companies

Where Domestic customers believe they had a comparatively better experience with their energy supplier, the main reasons given for this are:

- dissatisfaction with the other companies, e.g. due to poor customer service and/or the complaint not being resolved; and
- the speed in which the complaint was dealt with by their energy supplier was perceived as being quicker than when making a complaint to other organisations.

The chart below details the reasons for having a better service from the energy supplier:

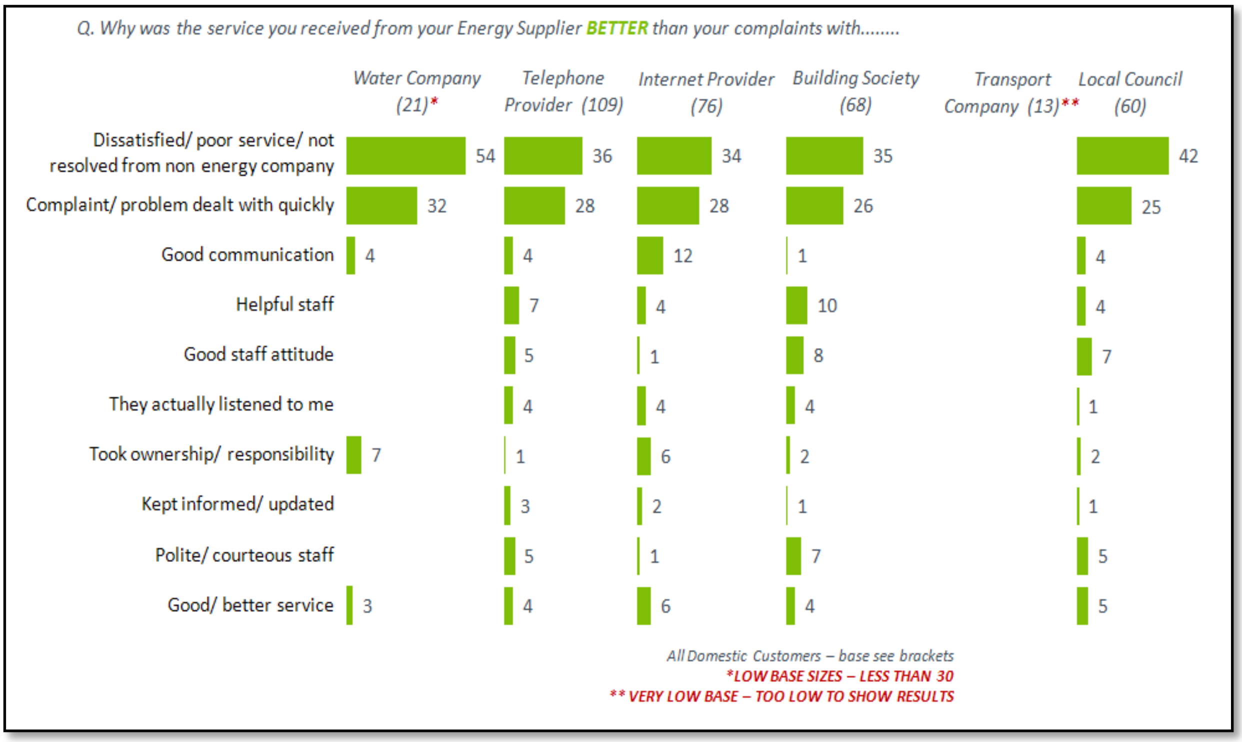

Chart 5 – Reasons for better complaints experience from energy supplier compared to other companies

Where customers believed they had a comparatively worse experience complaining to their energy supplier, the main reasons given were:

- better service received from other companies;
- claiming their energy supplier had done nothing to resolve the complaint; and
- the poor communication and slow service provided by the energy supplier.

Below are the reasons provided by Domestic customers as to why the experience was better from other companies as compared with their energy supplier:

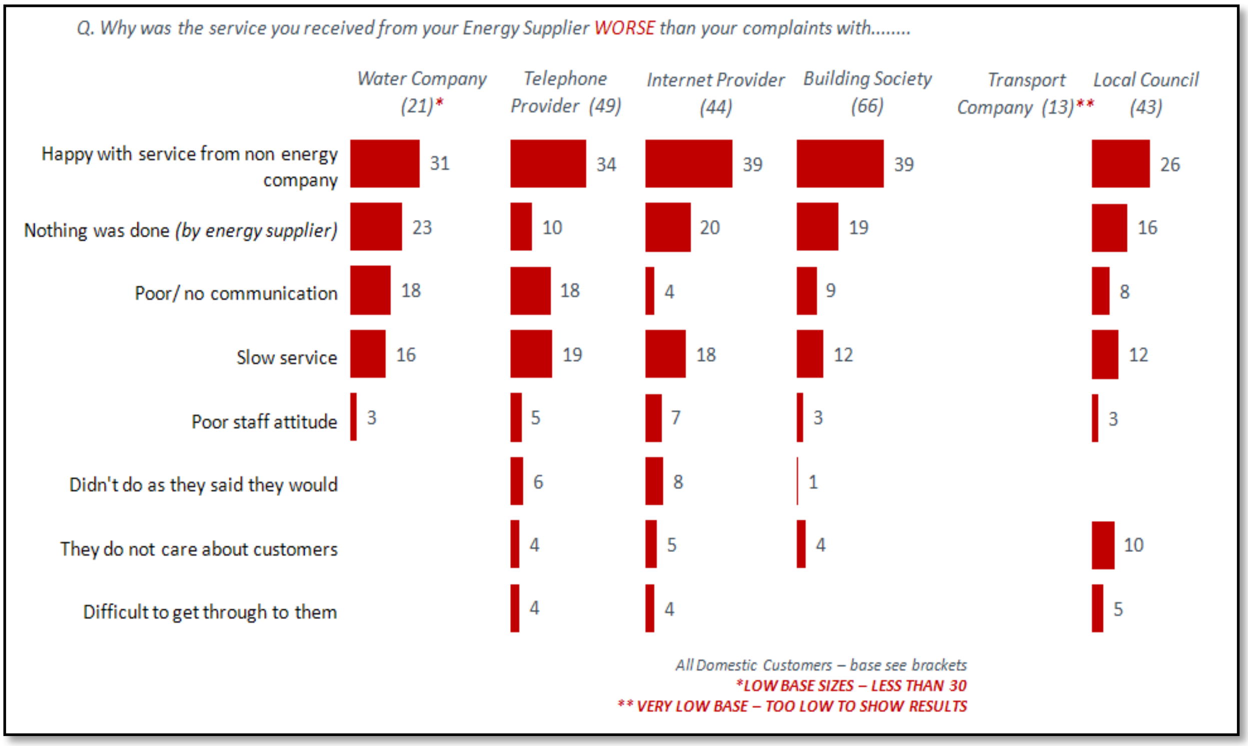

Chart 6 – Reasons for better complaints experience from other companies compared to their energy supplier

Due to insufficient base sizes we are unable to report on Micro Business customer complaints experience versus the experience when complaining to other organisations. However, there are indications from the data their experiences are in line with those of Domestic customers.

C7. Complaints Resolution

C.7.1 Resolution

In looking at the process of resolving customer complaints, there remains a significant discrepancy between the proportion of complaints that each of the six major suppliers considers to be resolved and the proportion considered to be resolved in the eyes of the customer.

To avoid uncertainty between supplier and customer definitions of resolved complaints, the research focused solely on the customers' opinion of whether or not their complaint was resolved.

For both Domestic and Micro Business customer complaints, over two in five of all complaints classified as resolved by the supplier were actually considered by the individual customer to be unresolved – 41% for Domestic and 44% for Micro Business customers. These figures are slightly less than those seen in 2010 (42% for Domestic and 47% for Micro Business customers).

The figures for all suppliers, and Domestic and Micro Business customers, are shown in chart 7 below:

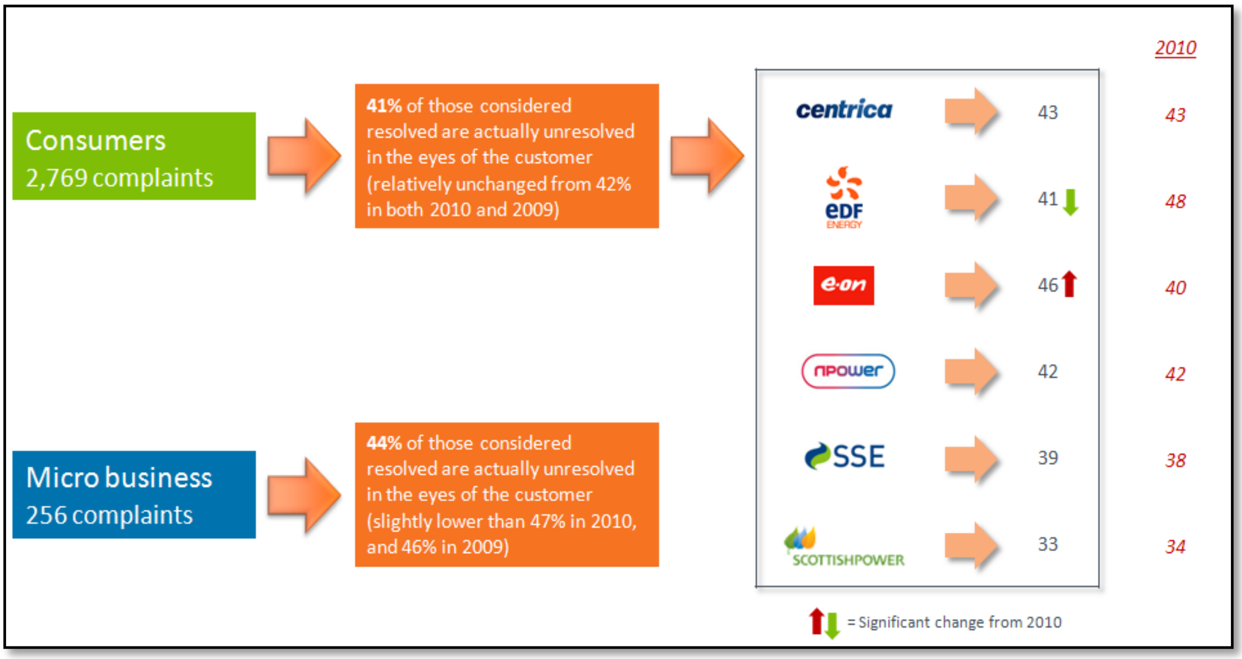

Chart 7 – Resolution of Complaints – Supplier vs. Customer definition

Overall, there has been a decline in the number of complaints considered by customers as 'Not Resolved' – this applies to both customer types. For Domestic customers this is now just over a quarter (27% – from 35% in 2010), and down to 38% from 47% for Micro Business customers. Although there are declines in the proportions of complaints considered unresolved, this is not matched by an increase in the number perceived to be 'resolved' due to the large increases seen in the number of customers not knowing the status of their complaint. For Domestic customers this has increased to 14% from 7% in 2010, and amongst Micro Business customers it has risen to 9% from 4% in 2010.

Where complaints have been resolved (both in the eyes of the supplier and the customer), how the complaint was resolved, is largely consistent with the 2010 findings. For Domestic customers just under three-fifths (58%) were resolved directly by the supplier (57% in 2010) and just 1% were referred to as being resolved by the Ombudsman[4] – consistent with 1% in 2010.

For Micro Business customers, there is a minor increase in the number of complaints being resolved directly by the supplier – this is from 48% in 2010 to 52% in 2012.

The proportion of resolved and unresolved complaints, as well as the proportion resolved on first contact, can be seen in chart 8 below:

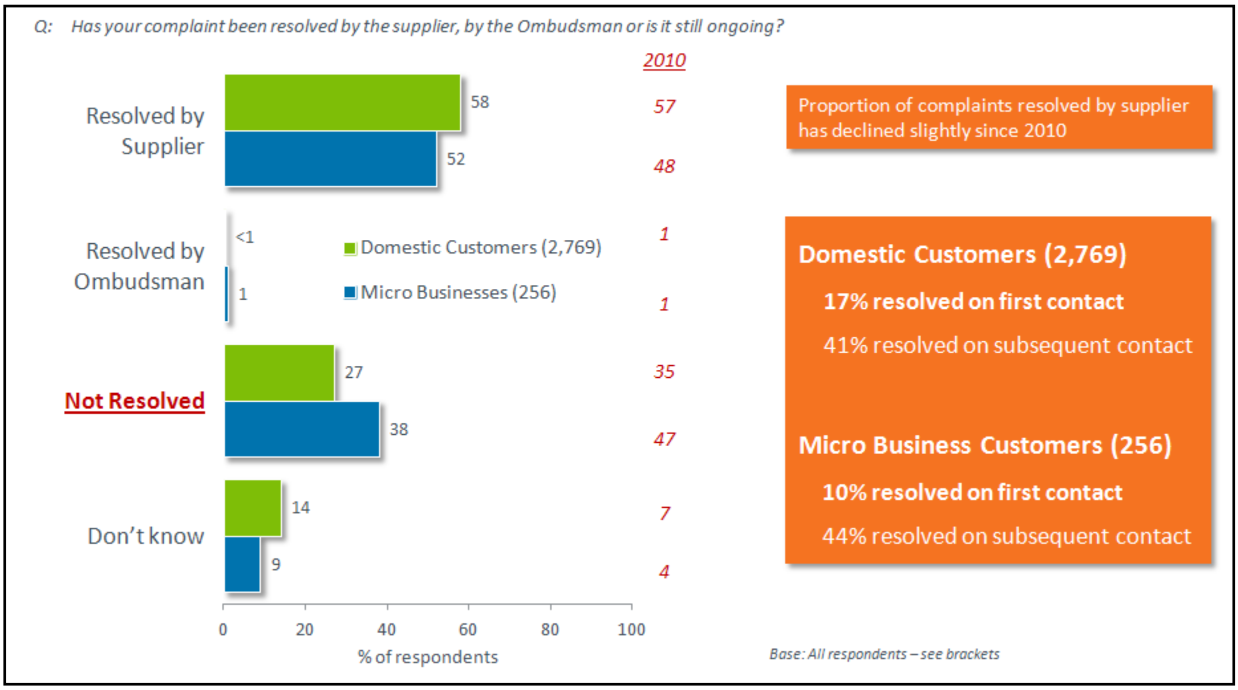

Chart 8 – Resolution of Complaints

Generally, across all suppliers, the proportion of resolved / unresolved complaints was consistent. As with 2010, E.ON (22%) is more likely than other suppliers to resolve complaints during the first contact, followed by SSE (19%), and Scottish Power (18%). npower is least likely to resolve on first contact (14%).

Scottish Power (33%) remains least likely than the other suppliers to have complaints that were perceived to be unresolved in the eyes of the customer, followed by SSE (38%).

Amongst the suppliers, other than SSE, there have been significant reductions in the average number of calls required to resolve the complaint since 2010. Although not significant, SSE has also seen a decline in the average number of contacts required, and is second only to E.ON in having the fewest number of contacts on average.

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[4] This figure is likely to be the result of the timing of the research and when the sample was taken; customers can go to the Energy Ombudsman after eight weeks or deadlock if sooner.

There have also been improvements among Micro Business customers, with first contact resolution rising to 13%, from 11% in 2010. Between two and five contacts were required for 44% of Micro Business customers, and 13% had contact between six and nine times, with a further 18% needing 10 or more contacts to resolve their complaint.

C.7.2 First Time Resolution by Nature of Complaint

Looking at the different complaint topics and the proportion of each resolved on the first contact, suppliers were significantly more likely to resolve Domestic customers' complaints about Prices than all other topics – 26% resolved on first contact, significantly more than 2010 (18%). E.ON (32%) and SSE (29%) are the suppliers most likely to resolve Price complaints first time.

Areas of weakness in resolving Domestic Customer complaints during the first contact for both npower and SSE are those related to Transfers, with just one in twenty-five claiming it to have been resolved during the first contact. However, EDF fares worse with just 3% of Transfer complaints being resolved during the first contact. npower is also seen as being weaker at solving Billing and Debt complaints during the first contact, at just one in twelve.

The table below details the proportion of each of the complaint issues being resolved first time by suppliers for Domestic customers:

% of Respondents	centrica	EDF Energy	e.on	npower	SSE	ScottishPower
Base:	*452*	*473*	*450*	*454*	*471*	*469*
Billing	15	17	19	8	20	16
Sales	7	25	8	12	25	23
Transfers	12	3	12	4	4	10
Meters	12	17	18	12	10	11
Prices	25	25	32	16	29	25
Debt	13	10	22	8	15	25
Other	13	8	15	11	10	15
Total	***16***	***16***	***22***	***14***	***19***	***18***

Table 8 – Number of contacts made for each complaint category – Domestic Customers

Similarly, among Micro Business customers, Prices were the most likely complaint to be resolved on the first contact (19%), significantly up from 2010 (8%). First time resolution continues to be non-existent for Sales complaints, and also now for Transfer complaints – down from 10% in 2010. However, base sizes are low and do not allow for looking at this information by suppliers for Micro Business customers.

C.7.3 Satisfaction with the Need for Additional Contact to Achieve Resolution

Similar to both the 2010 and 2009 research, slightly more than two-fifths (41%) of Domestic and (44%) Micro Business customers required contact with their supplier on more than one occasion before their complaint was resolved.

The proportion being dissatisfied with needing additional contact about their complaint remains high. However, for both customer groups the proportion of customers reporting that they were ‘very dissatisfied’ with having to have more than one contact with their supplier has continued to decline. In 2010 just under half (48%) of both Domestic and Micro Business customer were ‘very dissatisfied’, this is now 42% for Domestic and 45% for Micro Business customers. There has also been a decrease in the proportion of customers being ‘quite dissatisfied’ – from a quarter in 2010 to 18% for Micro Business and 22% for Domestic customers. This has therefore meant there have been some increases in the number of customers that are ‘very/ quite satisfied’.

Domestic EDF customers showed the highest levels of dissatisfaction with needing multiple contacts to resolve their complaint. Almost three-quarters (48% Very Dissatisfied and 26% Quite dissatisfied) of EDF customers were dissatisfied.

The proportion of customers that were satisfied/ dissatisfied with the need to have multiple contacts in order to resolve their complaint can be seen in the following chart:

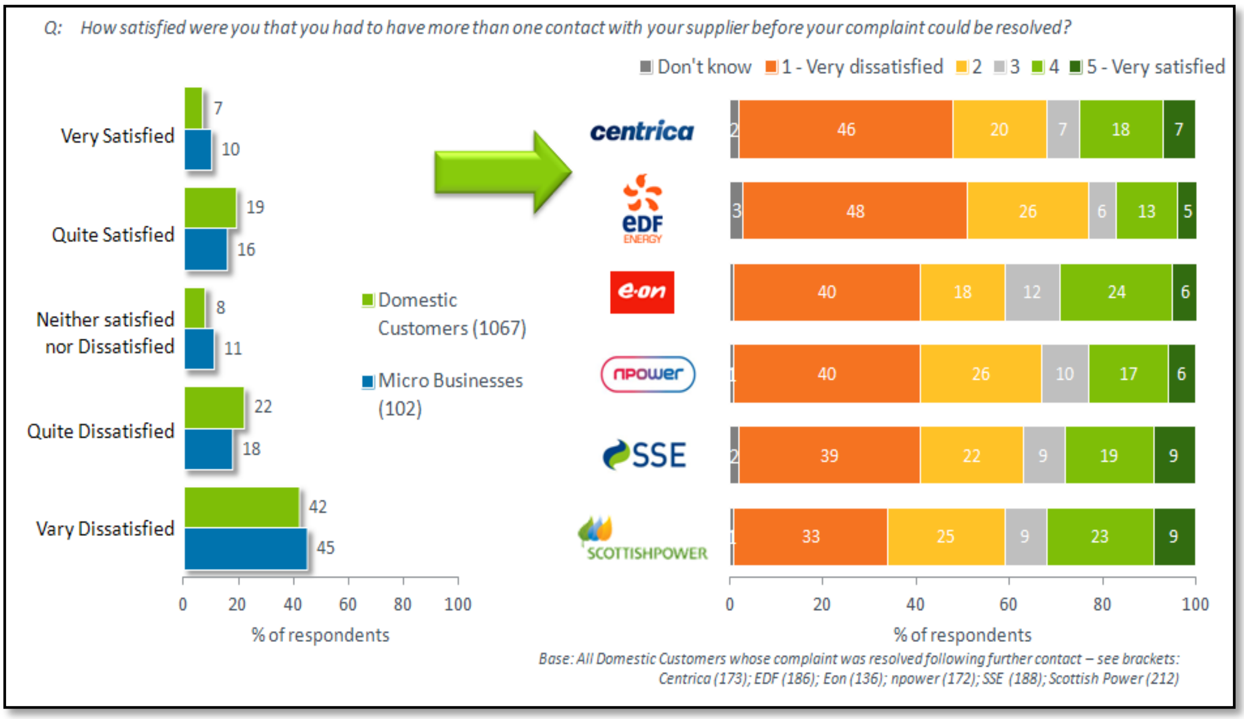

Chart 9 – Satisfaction with the need for further contact

C.7.4 Additional Contact to Achieve Resolution – Information Provided

Domestic customers who required additional contact to resolve their complaint were given an explanation as to why this was in two-fifths of cases (42% given an explanation). The proportion was slightly less among Micro Businesses customers with just a third (37%) being given an explanation – down from 46% in 2010.

As was the case in 2010, there were no significant differences between the two customer types or among suppliers and the remaining customers were not given an explanation.

Around one in five (18% Domestic and 22% Micro Business) customers recalled being offered a copy of their suppliers' Complaints Handling Procedure, either as a free copy or by being directed to the suppliers' website. This remains consistent with findings from the 2010 research.

Domestic customers of Scottish Power are significantly more likely to be offered a copy of the complaints handling procedure than others – 14% of Scottish Power customers claimed to have been offered compared to a market average of 8%.

% offered	Micro Business	Domestic Customers	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.ON	npower	SSE	Scottish Power
Base:	***182***	***1,611***	*269*	*303*	*202*	*273*	*274*	*290*
Directed to complaints procedure on website	**12**	**10**	10	5	7	13	10	13
Offered copy of complaints procedure	**10**	**8**	8	6	7	6	7	14*
Neither of these	**71**	**80**	78	86	86	78	82	71
Don't know	**12**	**6**	7	4	3	7	5	8

Table 9 – Supplier Actions – Unresolved complaints ** Significant difference across customer groups (by supplier)*

Just over half (54%) of Domestic customers were not provided with any information with which to re-contact their supplier (e.g. a named contact, phone number or reference number), with E.ON (67%), EDF (61%) and Centrica (59%) performing worst. The proportion of customers being provided with no information of this kind was significantly lower for Domestic customers of Scottish Power (38%), npower (44%) and SSE (45%).

The most common information to be provided was a named contact (28%), closely followed by a telephone number (27%), then a reference number (23%). Outperforming the other suppliers on most of these measures is Scottish Power, specifically reference number (39%), telephone number (38%), email address (18%) and named contact (35%). npower continue to provide many Domestic customers with various information, including telephone number and reference numbers (both 37%) and named contact (27%), as well as leading the suppliers in offering customers the relevant contact hour information. SSE is also comparatively strong in offering information to customers, including named contact (37%) and telephone number (31%). However, E.ON, EDF and Centrica are least likely to offer further information, with around a two thirds (67%) of E.ON customers, and three in five customers for EDF (61%) and Centrica (59%) receiving no information at all for use in future contacts.

Micro Business customers were more likely than Domestic to be provided with information for further contact – less than a third (30% - same as 2010) of Micro Business customers were provided with no information compared with more than half of Domestic. Micro Business customers were significantly more likely than Domestic customers to be provided with additional information on every means of contact.

Table 10 below outlines the information provided to customers:

% offered	Micro Business	Domestic Customers	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.ON	npower	SSE	Scottish Power
Base:	***182***	***1,611***	*269*	*303*	*202*	*273*	*274*	*290*
Telephone number	**43**	**27**	24	18	17	37	31	38
Reference number	**40**	**23**	19	14	16	37*	23	39*
Named contact	**44**	**28**	27	22	17	27	37*	35*
Contact hours	**15**	**11**	9	9	9	16	12	13
Email address	**22**	**11**	10	11	8	12	12	18*
None of these	**30**	**54**	59	61	67	44	45	38

Table 10 – Further contact information provided ** Significant difference across customer groups (by supplier)*

The vast majority (85%) of Domestic customers who had additional contact with their supplier to resolve their complaint had some record of their complaint retained for subsequent contact. Three-quarters (74%) had their contact details recorded and just under two-thirds (62%) had a record of the complaint. Across the suppliers, one in five (20%) of E.ON customers believe no information is available about their complaint, followed by EDF at 17%.

The figures for Micro Business customers are consistent with those of Domestic customers, with 88% feeling their correct contact details were held by the supplier and four-fifths (79%) had a record of their complaint. Over two-thirds of all customers (70%) stated they had a record of the complaint and over half (57%) had full details about the complaint.

C.7.5 Additional Contact – Confirmation of Resolution and Timescales for Resolution

Receiving confirmation that the complaint had been resolved was consistent across both Domestic and Micro Business customers, with just under half (45%) receiving no communications from their supplier. A letter was the most common method used (31% Micro Business and 29% for Domestic customers) by suppliers, followed by a telephone call (20% Micro Business and 22% for Domestic customers), and finally email (7% Micro Business and 10% for Domestic customers).

Among Domestic customers, npower (64%) is more likely to confirm the resolution of complaints, followed by SSE (63%) and Scottish Power (60%). Customers of npower (40%), E.ON (37%) and EDF (36%) are more likely to receive a letter confirmation compared to other suppliers. However, over half of E.ON customers claim to have received nothing from their supplier confirming resolution, and almost as many Centrica (47%) customers feel the same.

The proportion of customers requiring additional contact with their supplier to resolve their complaint being given no timescale in which the supplier would resolve the issue is consistent with 2010. Just under two-thirds (62%) of Domestic and over half (55%) of Micro Business customers were not provided with a timescale for complaint resolution.

Between the suppliers, E.ON is least likely (71%) to provide a timescale for resolution, followed by EDF (67%), whilst npower, as in 2010, is more likely to provide one (54%) than any other supplier.

For both Domestic and Micro Business customers there have been improvements in suppliers meeting these timescales when they are provided to customers. For Domestic customers this was met for three quarters of customers (75% versus 65% in 2010), whilst four fifths of Micro Business customers had their timings met by the supplier (80% compared to 69% in 2010).

Among Domestic customers, Scottish Power (90%) is much more likely to meet the timings provided, followed by E.ON (84%). Whereas, just two thirds (69%) of complaints to Centrica meet the timescales given, with npower just marginally above (70%).

C.7.6 Additional Contact to Achieve Resolution – Referral to a Manager

The proportion of Domestic and Micro Business customers having to refer their complaint to a senior member of staff or manager has declined since 2010. For Domestic this is now just over a quarter (27%) compared to a third (33%) in 2010, whilst this has declined from two in five (41%) in 2010 to a third (33%) for Micro Customers. Again this is a year on year decline from the 2009 research.

As with the 2010 research, npower customers are more likely than others to escalate their complaint to a senior member of staff (33%), although this has significantly declined from half (50%) in 2010. E.ON customers are least likely to seek a referral with now just one in five (21%) referring their complaint to a senior member of staff versus more than a quarter (28%) in 2010.

The effect of escalating a complaint is considered more beneficial by Micro Business customers than Domestic, as three fifths (61%) believe this to have had a positive impact, compared to less than half (45%) of Domestic customers.

C.7.7 Unresolved complaints - Information about Other Sources of Help

Just over a quarter (27%) Domestic and nearly two fifths (38%) of Micro Business customers' complaints were not resolved by their supplier.

As in previous years, Domestic customers are less likely to have any further action taken in resolving the complaint either by the supplier or taking action themselves. More than three-quarters (78%) of Domestic customers' unresolved complaints received no further action while two-thirds (67%) of Micro Business complaints saw no further action taking place. However, Domestic customers are more likely to be informed of the Energy Ombudsman, significantly so for customers of Scottish Power.

The actions taken by the supplier and/or the customer themselves are highlighted in the chart below:

Q: You say that your complaint was not resolved by your supplier, have any of the following taken place?

%	Domestic Overall	centrica	EDF Energy	e.on	npower	SSE	ScottishPower	Micro Business Customers
Base:	*736*	*135*	*139*	*107*	*131*	*129*	*95*	*99*
No further action	**78**	81	77	79	77	75	68	67
Supplier made you aware of the Energy Ombudsman	**10**	8	11	8	10	9	20	8
You contacted another organisation	**6**	5	7	5	7	5	6	7
Supplier made you aware of Consumer Direct	**3**	4	2	3	3	3	2	6
Supplier made you aware of additional sources of information and advice	**3**	3	4	6	2	5	-	5
Anything else	**3**	4	2	3	3	4	3	6

= Significant Difference

Base: All customers whose complaint was not resolved by supplier – see above

% of respondents

Chart 10 – Unresolved Complaints – Action Taken

C.7.8 Unresolved Complaints – Satisfaction with Supplier Actions

Where the supplier did take action but the complaint remained unresolved, nearly three-quarters (73%) of all Domestic customers who complained reported that they were dissatisfied ('very' (57%) / 'quite' (16%)) with the actions that were taken, and only one in seven (14%) of these customers reported being satisfied with the actions taken. Of the suppliers, EDF see the highest levels of dissatisfaction (83%) with the action taken, followed by Scottish Power (81%) and SSE (80%).

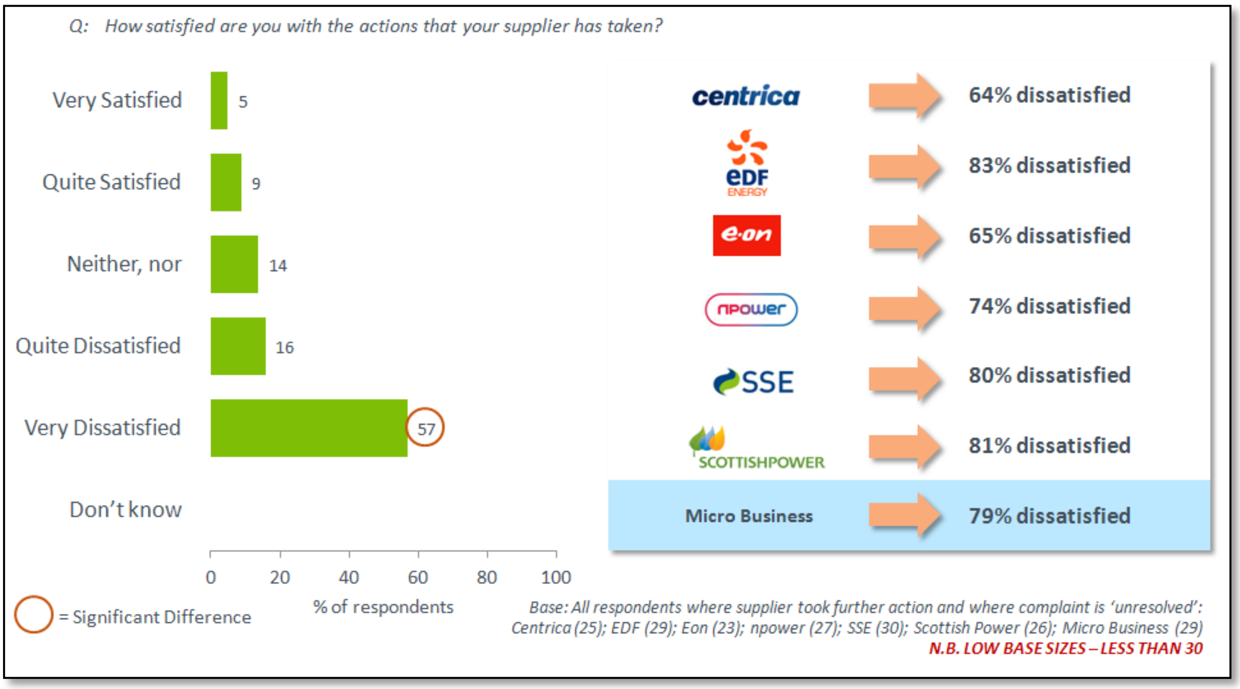

Chart 11 – Unresolved Complaints – Satisfaction with Supplier Actions

All customers whose complaint had not been resolved (736 Domestic customers and 99 Micro Business customers) were asked the question, "What is happening with your complaint now?". There is a high proportion who feel their complaint is at a stage where not much is happening, and, in some instances they have given up pursuing any further resolution.

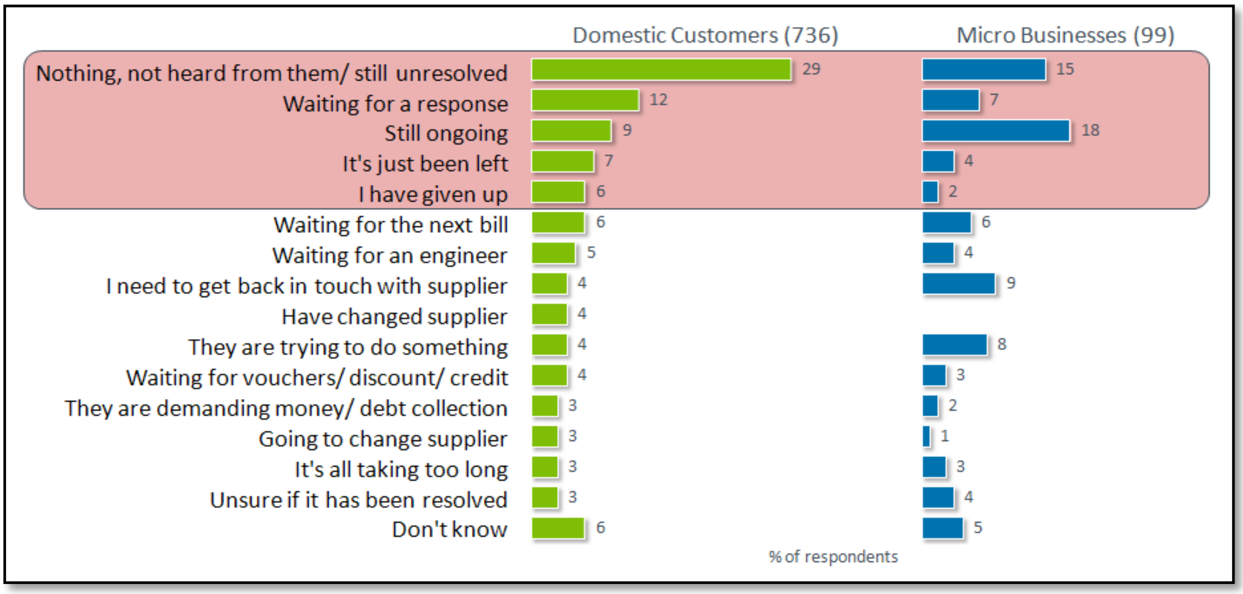

Chart 12 – Unresolved Complaints – Current Status of Complaint

C8. Overall Satisfaction with Complaints Handling Process

As in 2010, more customers are dissatisfied with their overall experience of the complaints process than satisfied. This applies to both Domestic and Micro Business customers. However, levels of dissatisfaction have declined significantly for both customer types – for Domestic customers the proportion stating they were 'very' dissatisfied has declined to a third (32%) from two-fifths (40%) in 2010, and from half (52% in 2010) to just over a third (37%) for Micro Business customers.

For both Domestic and Micro Business customers there has been an increase in overall satisfaction. Significantly so for Domestic customers with one in five (20%) now rating 'very' and 'quite' satisfied for the complaints process overall. This has improved from one in ten (11%) 'very' and 16% 'quite' satisfied in 2010.

Chart 13 below details the satisfaction levels amongst both Domestic and Micro Business customers:

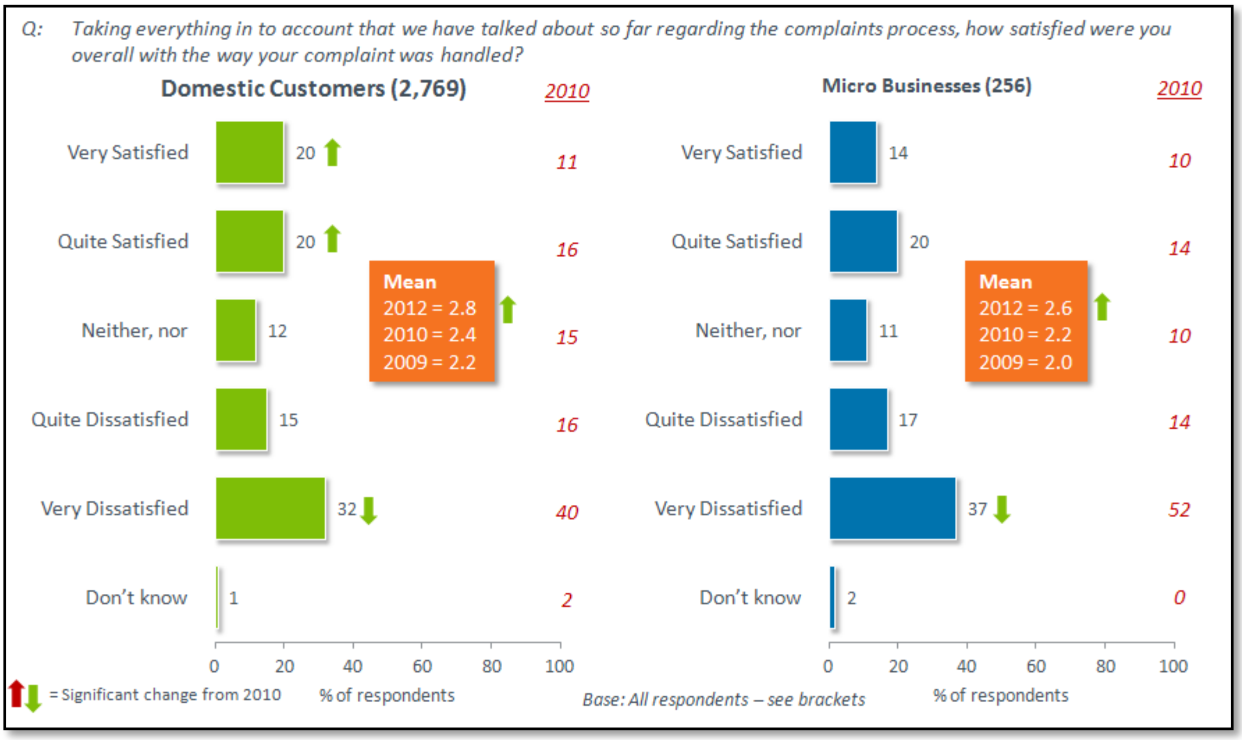

Chart 13 – Overall Satisfaction with the complaints process

For Domestic customers overall satisfaction with the complaints process has significantly improved for all suppliers. This is reflected in the mean scores for satisfaction which have improved year on year since 2009. Scottish Power (3.0 out of 5) and SSE (2.9) are marginally ahead of Centrica and E.ON (both score 2.8), followed by npower (2.7) and EDF (2.6).

However, overall dissatisfaction ('very' and 'quite') with the complaints process remains higher than satisfaction ('very' and 'quite') for all suppliers, with around a third of customers for npower (36%), EDF (35%), E.ON (34%) and Centrica (32%) stating they were 'very' dissatisfied with how the complaint was handled by their supplier. SSE and Scottish Power are the only suppliers who have more customers satisfied than dissatisfied. This is evident within the figures detailed in chart 14 below:

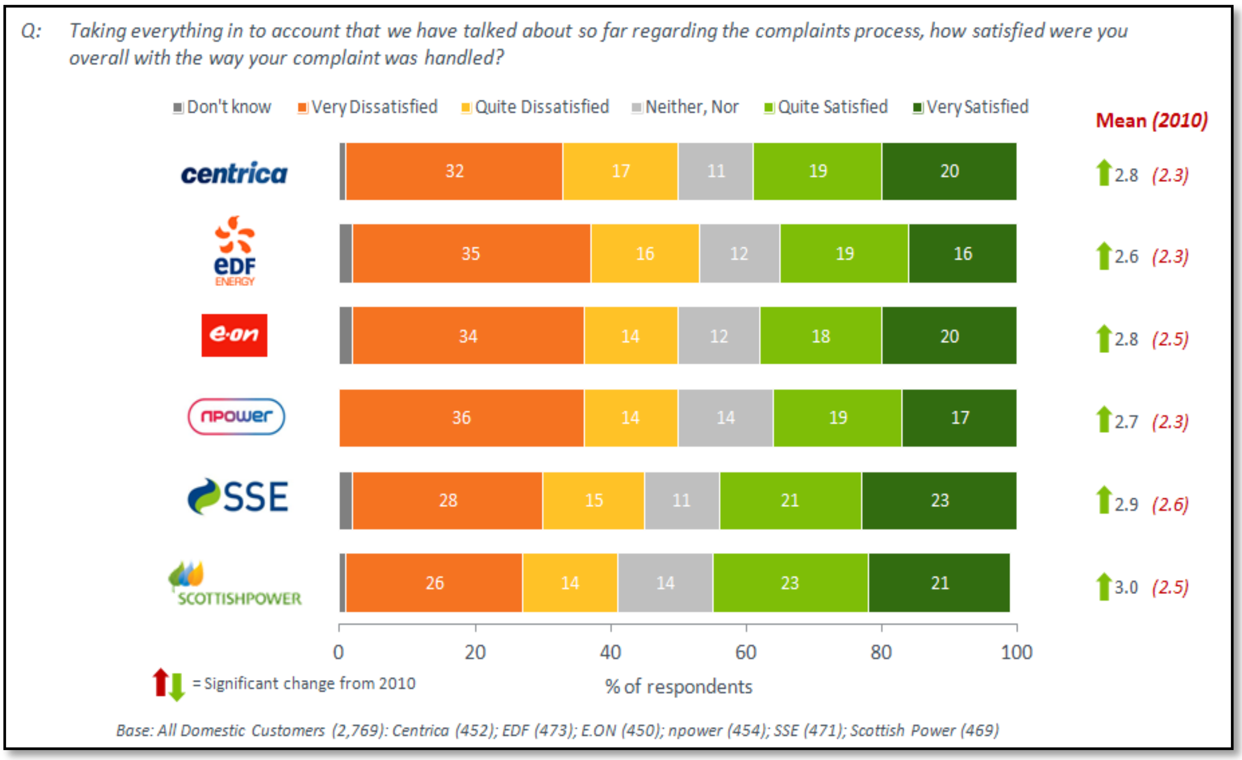

Chart 14 – Overall Satisfaction with the complaints process by Supplier

C.8.1 Overall satisfaction with Complaints Handling – Reasons for Satisfaction

Customers were asked why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the overall complaints process and among both Domestic and Micro Business customers the top area impacting satisfaction was *'Satisfied with assistance/ helpful staff'*. For Domestic customers the second factor was *'Dealt with / resolved quickly'* by the supplier, whilst *'Problem resolved'* was the second reason provided by Micro Business customers.

Chart below details the key factors provided by both Domestic and Micro Business customers as to why they stated they were satisfied with the complaints handling process from their supplier:

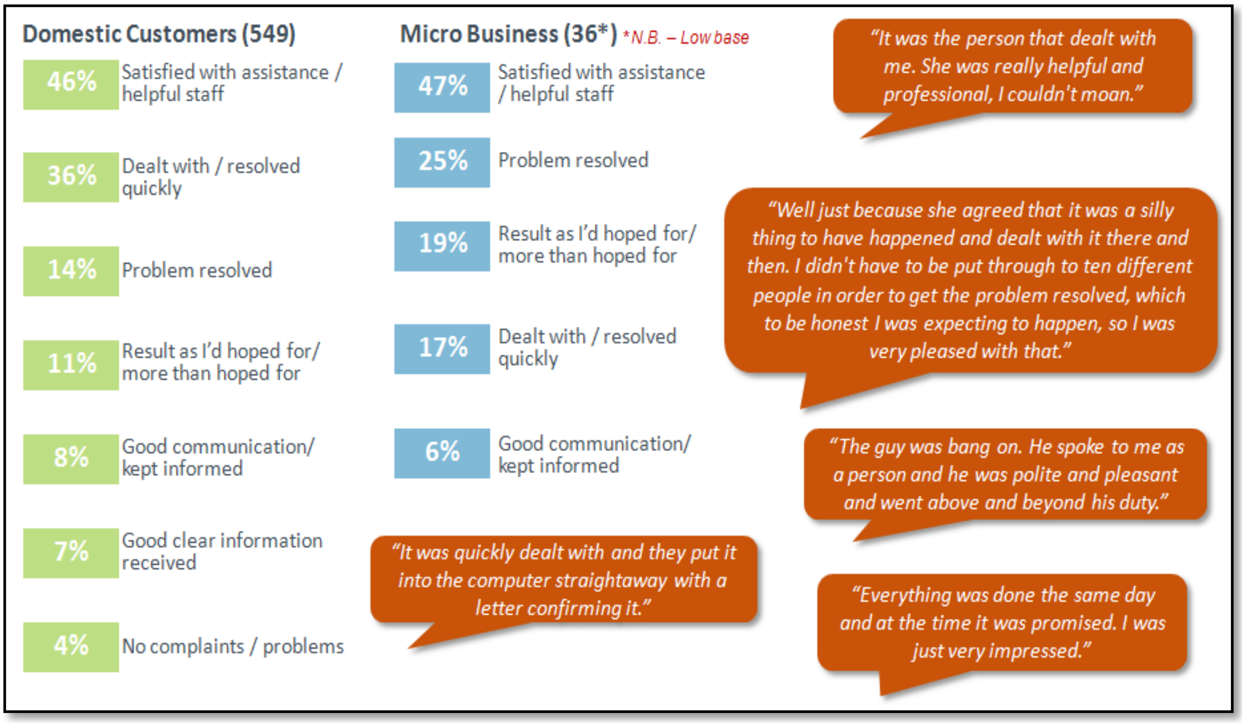

Chart 15 – Reasons customers are Satisfied with the complaints resolution process

C.8.2 Overall satisfaction with Complaints Handling – Reasons for Dissatisfaction

As in 2010, in the eyes of both Domestic and Micro Business customers the issues connected to dissatisfaction continue to be ***'Not having the complaint dealt with or resolved'***, ***'Lack of/ poor communication'***, ***'Unhelpful staff'***, or the ***'Process taking too long'***.

Chart 16 details the reasons given by customers as to why they were dissatisfied with the overall complaints handling procedure:

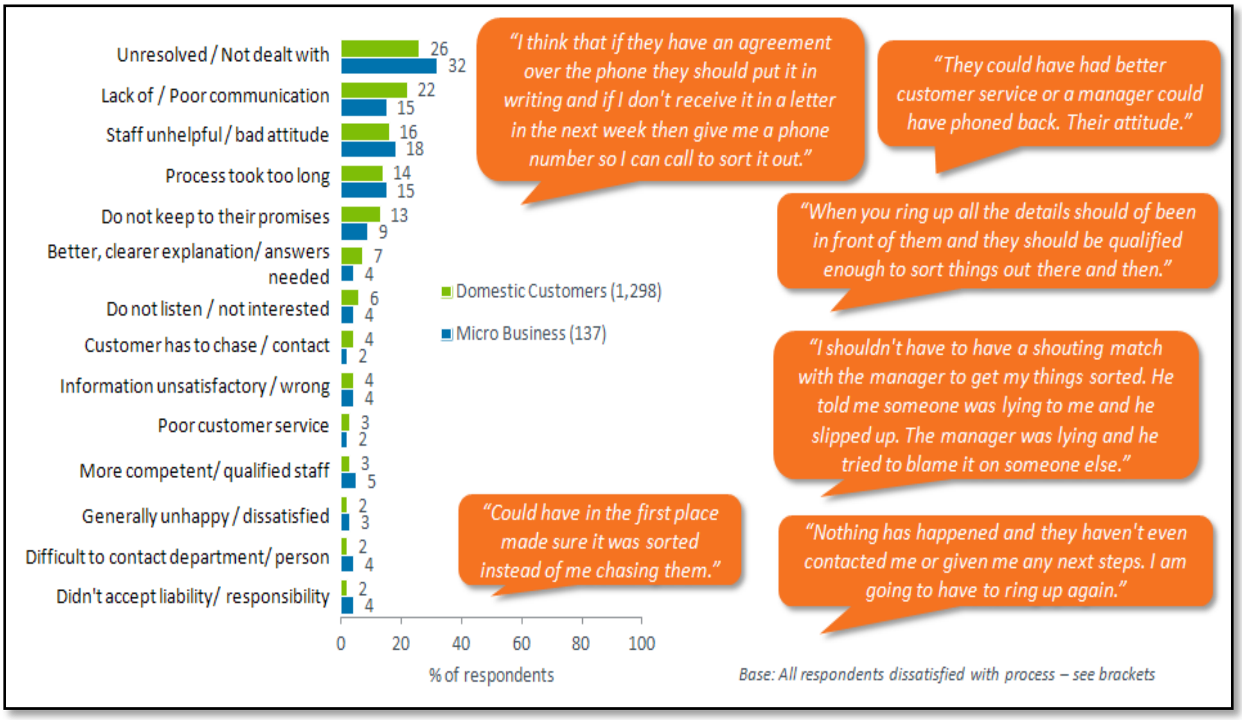

Chart 16 – Reasons customers are dissatisfied with the complaints resolution process

There were some differences between the suppliers in terms of reasons for overall dissatisfaction. EDF customers are more likely than others to report that they were generally unhappy or dissatisfied that the complaint remained *'unresolved / not dealt with'*, they received a *'lack of / poor communication'* and also to report that the '*process took too long*'. However, they were the least likely to report that the staff were unhelpful or had a bad attitude.

E.ON customers are more likely to be unhappy with staff being unhelpful or having a bad attitude, whilst Scottish Power customers are more likely than others to suggest better / clearer explanations and answers are needed from staff members.

The table below highlights the different reasons given by customers between suppliers:

	centrica	EDF Energy	e-on	npower	SSE	Scottish Power
Base:	*220*	*242*	*215*	*228*	*206*	*187*
Unresolved / Not dealt with	24	30	23	28	28	26
Lack of / Poor communication	23	30	22	19	18	20
Staff unhelpful / bad attitude	12	12	22	16	19	16
Process took too long	12	21	7	19	14	12
Do not keep to their promises	17	14	6	12	11	8
Better, clearer explanation/ answers needed	6	7	9	4	6	14
Do not listen / not interested	7	5	7	4	7	8
Customer has to chase / contact	3	6	3	6	3	5
Information unsatisfactory / wrong	5	5	2	4	3	3
Poor customer service	4	2	3	4	3	3
More competent/ qualified staff	3	2	5	2	2	3
Generally unhappy / dissatisfied	3	1	3	1	2	4
Difficult to contact department/ person	1	4	1	-	2	3
Didn't accept liability/ responsibility	2	1	1	4	3	1

% of respondents

Table 11 – Reasons customers are Dissatisfied with the complaints resolution process by Supplier

C.8.3 Overall Satisfaction with Complaints Handling Process by Contact Method

There are some differences in the levels of overall satisfaction depending on the method used to make the complaint. For both customer types, satisfaction is highest amongst those customers making the complaint via telephone. In the case of Domestic customers, those using the telephone are significantly more likely to be 'very' satisfied than those using email or letter, as detailed in the chart below:

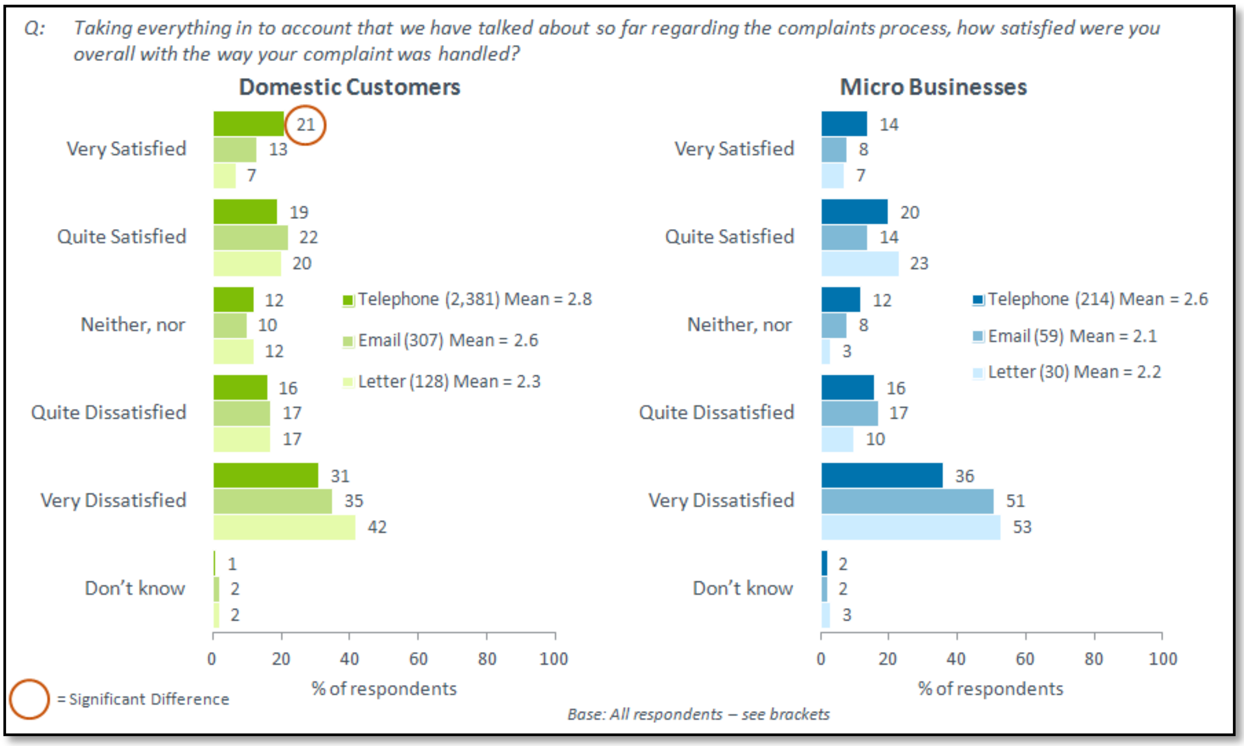

Chart 17 – Overall Satisfaction with the complaints process by Contact Method

C.8.4 Overall Satisfaction with Complaints Handling Process by Nature of Complaint

The following chart illustrates the different levels of satisfaction with the complaints handling process overall for each of the different types of complaint made. There were no significant differences by nature of complaint. However satisfaction was highest for Price related complaints for both Domestic and Micro Business customers whilst for Domestic complaints it was lowest for Sales issues.

Base sizes for many of the Micro Business issues are small, and should therefore be looked at as indicative results:

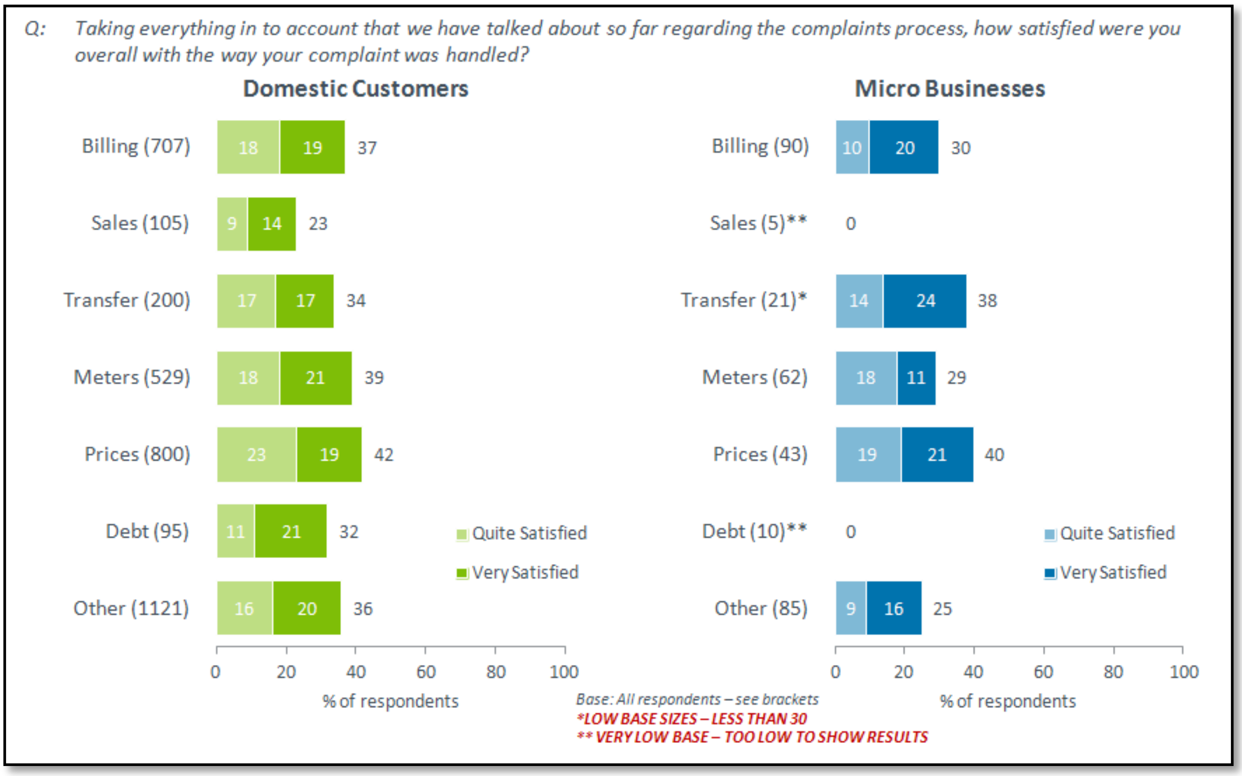

Chart 18 – Overall Satisfaction with the complaints process by Nature of Complaint

C9. Overall Satisfaction with the Resolution of Complaints

Although satisfaction with the different service elements and the process overall continues to be low, customers were more positive about the resolution that they had received than in 2010. Over two thirds of both Domestic and Micro Business customers (both 70%) who considered their complaint to have been resolved stated that they were satisfied with the resolution. Further, for both customer types the proportion of customers claiming to be dissatisfied has declined resulting in a significant upward shift and significantly higher mean scores than seen in 2010.

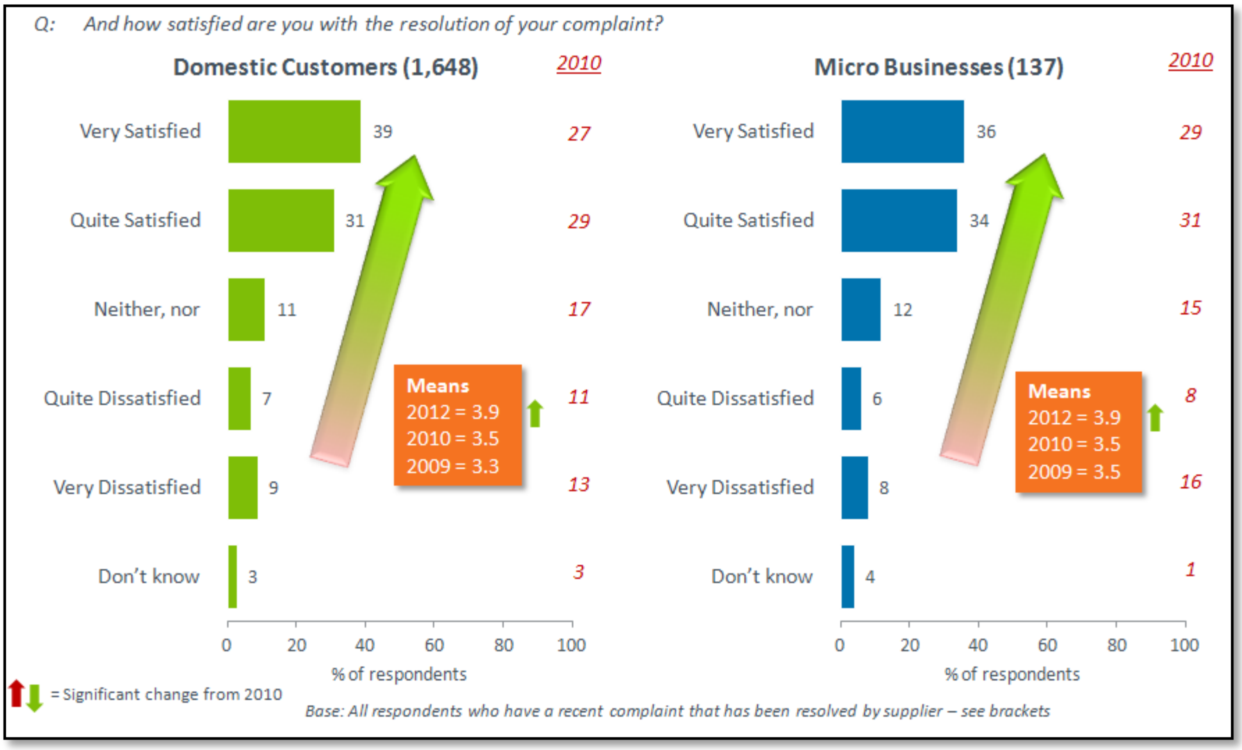

Chart 19 – Overall Satisfaction with Complaints Resolution

As can be seen on the following chart, all suppliers have seen significant improvements in mean scores (out of 5) compared with 2010. Scottish Power, SSE and Centrica are highest performing with a mean score of 3.9, following by npower, E.ON and EDF with a mean score of 3.8. Looking deeper at the data, Domestic customers of EDF are least satisfied with the resolution of their complaint, followed by E.ON and npower.

E.ON and npower also have the highest levels of 'very' dissatisfied customers (13% and 12% respectively), followed by SSE with one in ten (10%) being 'very' dissatisfied.

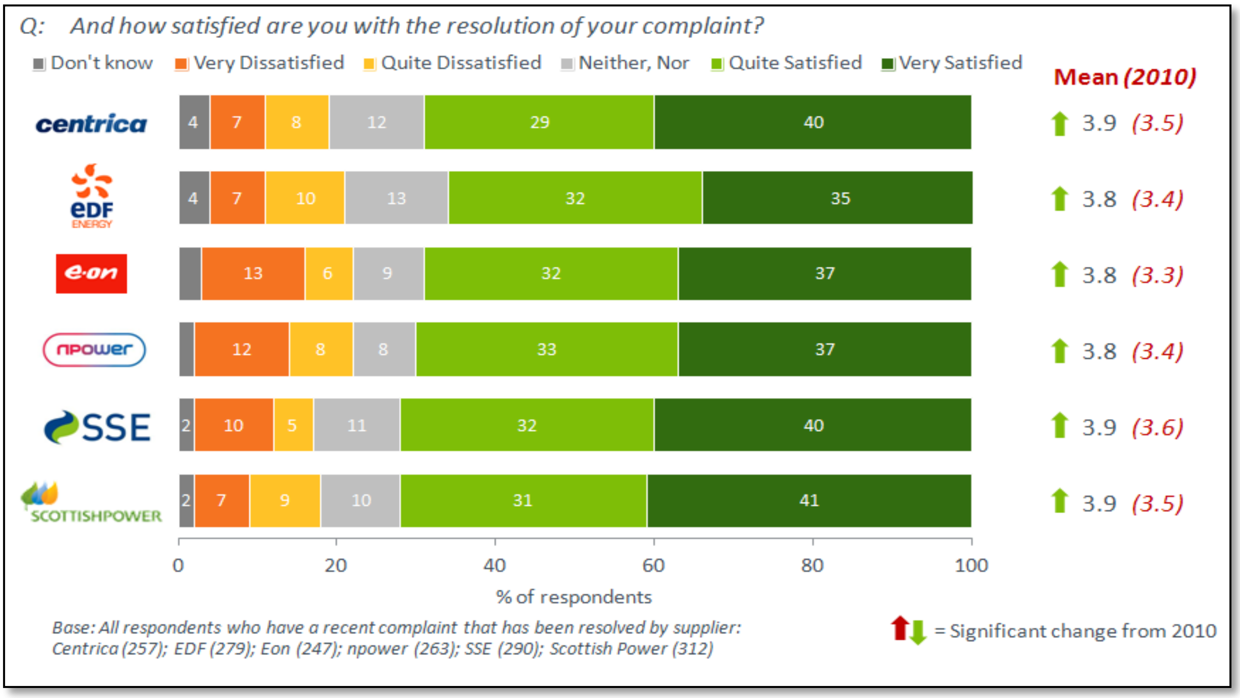

Chart 20 – Overall Satisfaction with Complaints Resolution by Supplier

C.9.1 Resolution of Complaints – Customer Expectations

Customers whose complaint had been resolved by their supplier were asked whether they had had an expectation of a possible outcome to their complaint when they initially contacted their supplier. Of those Domestic customers having their complaint resolved, over two thirds (36%) stated that although they made a complaint, they did not expect anything to happen as a result and expected no outcome or confirmation of the resolution.[5] This is a significant increase on previous years and compares with 19% expecting nothing from the 2010 research. Of these respondents, over two-thirds (70%) actually received no confirmation or outcome to their complaint from their supplier. Of those expecting nothing it is E.ON (78%) and EDF (76%) customers who are more likely to actually receive nothing.

Two fifths (40%) of Domestic customers expected simply to have their problem/complaint rectified when making their complaint. Of these customers, just over half (55%) had their problem rectified by the supplier – with the exception of E.ON customers (where two thirds received as expected) this did not differ too much among the suppliers.

A quarter (26%) expected to receive an apology letter or email after having registered their complaint. Of these customers, as low as a quarter (24%) actually received such a response – again, it was E.ON customers where a difference occurred, with just one in seven (15%) receiving an apology letter or email as expected.

[5] Due to the research taking place after the event, customer recollection of what they expected might be influenced by what was actually received from their supply in relation to the complaint resolution.

Around one in six customers expected to receive compensation or apology payment (17%) or an apology telephone call (16%) after having made a complaint to their supplier. Of those expecting a payment, just over two fifths (44%) actually received compensation and a quarter received a telephone apology as expected. EDF (31%) is least likely, and Scottish Power (63%) is most likely to offer a compensation or apology payment. There is little difference across suppliers with regards customers receiving an apology telephone call as expected.

As seen in the previous research, Micro Business customers are more likely than Domestic to expect an 'action' to occur after having registered their complaint. A quarter (25%) expected nothing to happen and of these customers, four fifths (79%) received nothing. Nearly three-fifths (57%) of Micro Business customers expected their problem/complaint to be rectified by the supplier, with a similar number (58%) receiving a resolution.

The chart below shows the proportion of Micro Business customers receiving as expected from their supplier following the resolution of their complaint:

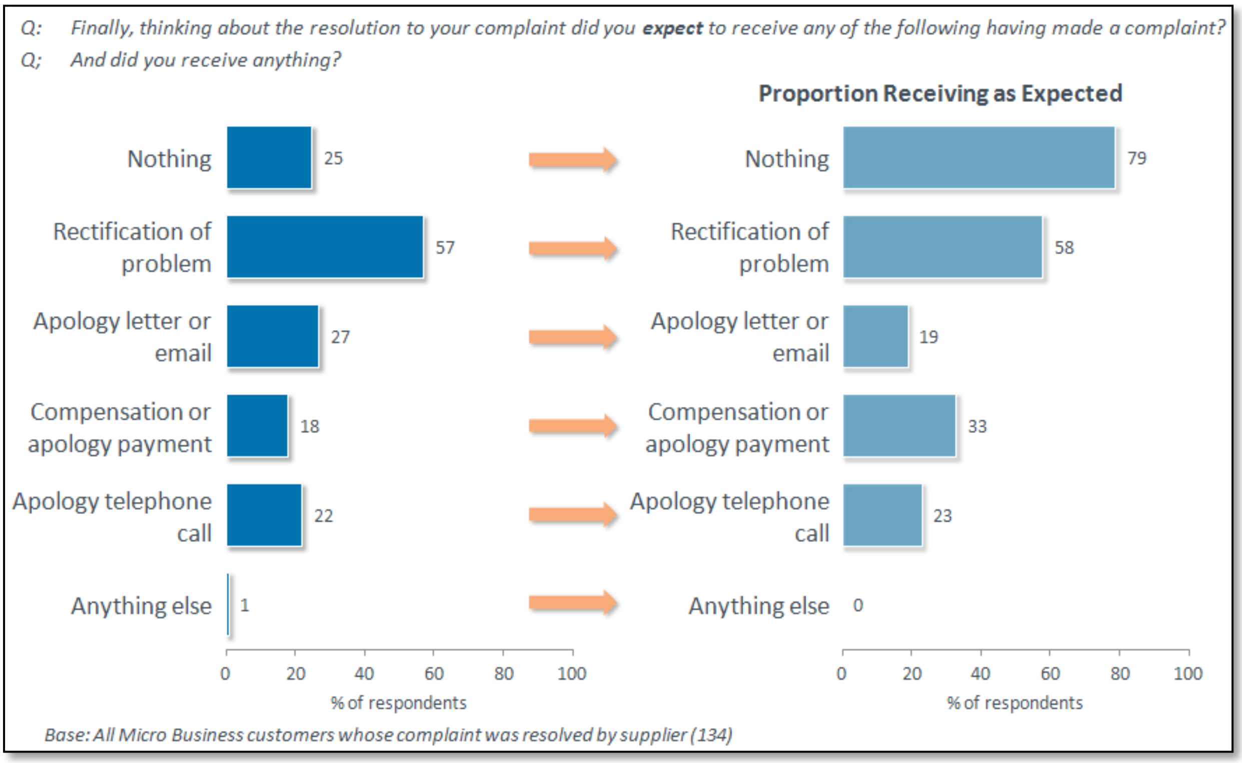

Chart 21 – Expectation and Receiving of Complaint Confirmation

Finally, as with the research in 2010 and 2009, Domestic customers are more satisfied than Micro Business that the outcome they received accurately reflected the nature and seriousness of their complaint. Nearly three quarters (71%) of Domestic customers and three fifths (60%) of Micro Business customers are satisfied whilst around one in six are dissatisfied (16% of Domestic 'very/quite' dissatisfied and 17% of Micro Business 'very/quite' dissatisfied) as is shown on chart 22 below:

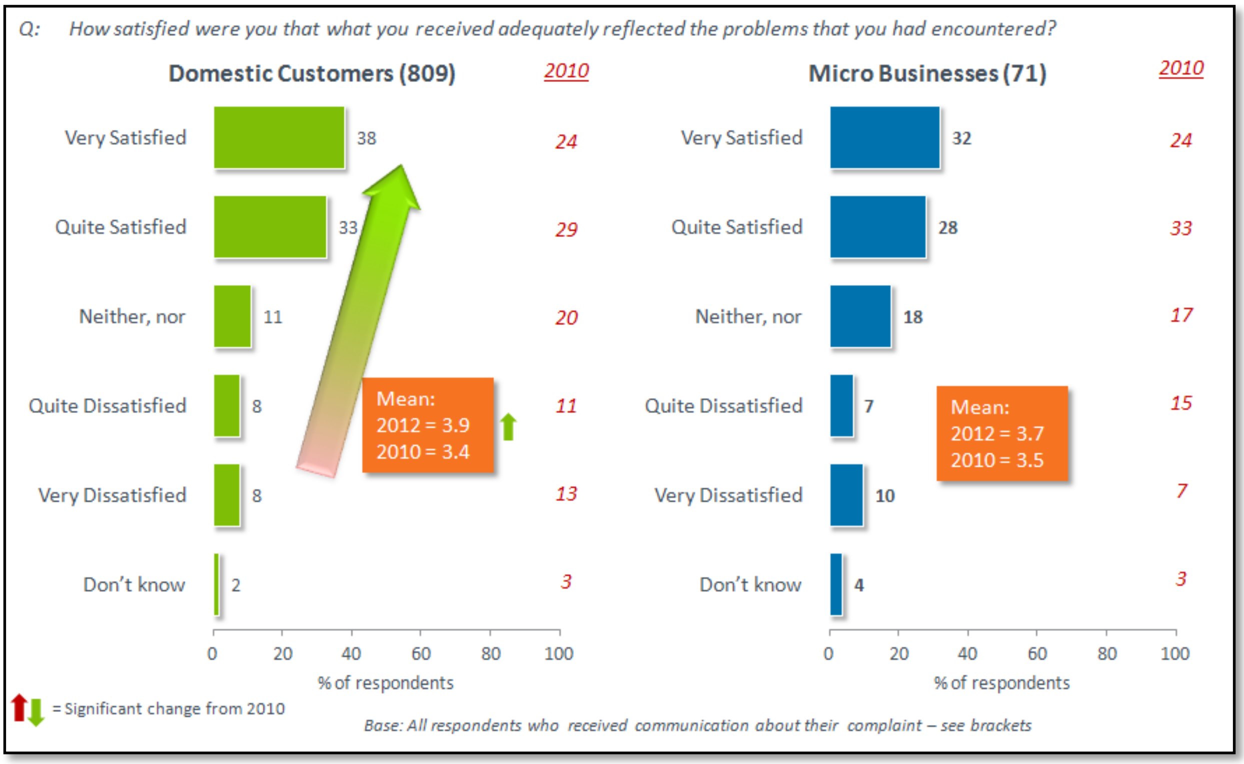

Chart 22 – Overall Satisfaction with resolution adequately reflecting problems encountered

C10. Complaints Handling Process – Customer Service

C.10.1 Aspects of Customer Service Explored in this Research

In this section of the report we examine the key drivers of satisfaction for customers when dealing with their energy supplier. This is the first time that these customer service elements have been tested so we are unable to provide direct comparisons with previous years.

Elements of the customer complaints experience being tested within the research in 2012 are:

- Ease of registering your complaint
- Ease of finding the correct person to speak to/ contact
- Their attitude towards dealing with your complaint
- Their professionalism in dealing with your complaint
- Their understanding of your complaint or problem
- Taking a proactive approach to resolving your complaint
- The language used was simple and easy to understand – not too technical
- The feeling that someone had taken ownership of your complaint
- Their ability to make decisions there and then to help resolve your complaint
- Clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings in resolving your complaint
- Calling you back if promised or agreed
- Being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint if necessary
- The speed in resolving your complaint

C.10.2 Satisfaction with Aspects of Customer Service – Domestic Customers

The area where Domestic customers are more satisfied than any other is the use of ***'language that is simple and easy to understand and not too technical'***. Over two thirds (68%) are satisfied with their supplier in this respect – a quarter are 'quite' satisfied, whilst more than two fifths (45%) being 'very' satisfied. Both these figures are significantly higher than any other of the customer service elements and satisfaction across the suppliers is consistent, with no suppliers outperforming the others. Unsurprisingly dissatisfaction with this element is lowest, with just one in ten (11%) being 'very' dissatisfied and even less (7%) are 'quite' dissatisfied in this respect.

Other areas where there are comparatively high levels of satisfaction are '***attitude in dealing with the complaint'*** and '***professionalism in dealing with the complaint'*** (both of which have similar levels of satisfaction). Half of customers (50% and 49% respectively) are satisfied, with three in ten (30%) being 'very' satisfied with both, and two in five (20% for '***attitude'*** and 19% for '***professionalism'***) of customers claiming to be 'quite' satisfied. However, more than one in five (22%) are 'very' dissatisfied, and one in ten (12%) customers are 'quite' dissatisfied.

'Speed in resolving the complaint' has the highest proportion of dissatisfied customers, with two in five (39%) claiming to be 'very' dissatisfied and a further one in ten (9%) being 'quite' dissatisfied. Combined, almost half (48%) of customers are dissatisfied with the length of time taken by suppliers to resolve the complaint. This is far higher than the proportion claiming to be satisfied, a quarter (24%) are 'very' satisfied and just one in eight (13%) are 'quite' satisfied.

More than a third (35%) of customers are dissatisfied with being '***called back when promised or agreed'***, with more than a quarter (28%) being 'very' dissatisfied. There are similar levels of satisfaction (36%) seen, with nearly a quarter (23%) being 'very' satisfied.

Finally, '***being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint further'*** has the lowest levels of satisfaction, less than one in five (19%) are 'very' satisfied whilst just 13% are 'quite' satisfied. There are more customers, a third (34%), who are 'very' dissatisfied in this respect than there are satisfied. In addition, there are one in ten (10%) customers who are 'quite' dissatisfied.

The overall pattern of results for Domestic customers can be seen in the following chart:

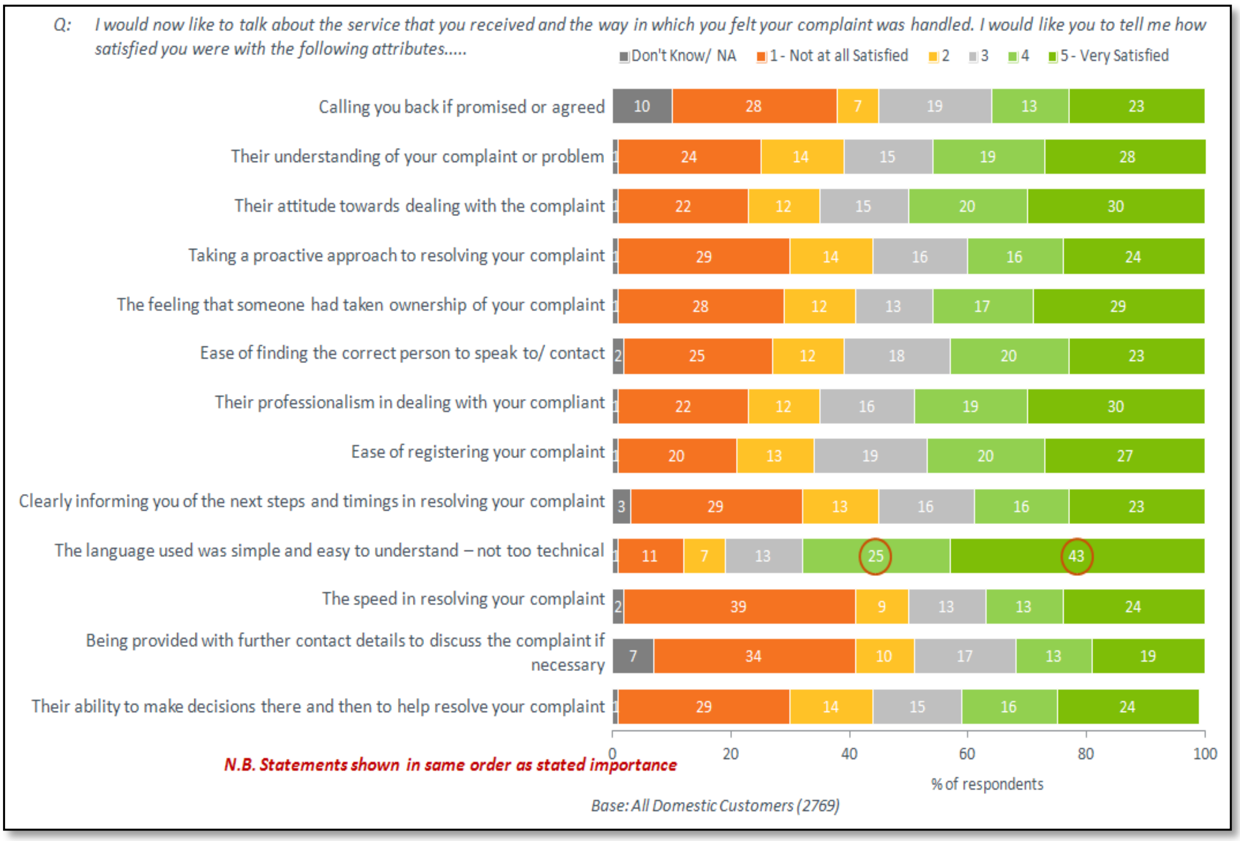

Chart 23 – Customer Complaints Handling Process – Domestic Customer Satisfaction

C.10.3 Customer Service - Domestic Customer Satisfaction by Supplier

There are no significant differences across the elements between the suppliers within the research. There does however, appear to be some consistency that Scottish Power, SSE and Centrica are marginally ahead of the other suppliers for most of the customer service elements.

Scottish Power and SSE are performing better than all other supplier on the following aspects: '***their attitude towards dealing with the complaint'***; '***their understanding of the complaint'*** and '***their ability to make decisions there and then to help resolve the complaint'***.

Although not significantly, EDF and E.ON are performing behind other suppliers on '***calling customers back if promised or agreed'*** and '***providing further contact information to customers should they need it'***, and, to a lesser extent, in '***clearly informing customers of the next steps and timings'*** in relation to resolving the complaint.

The performance of each supplier against each of the individual attributes is highlighted in the following chart:

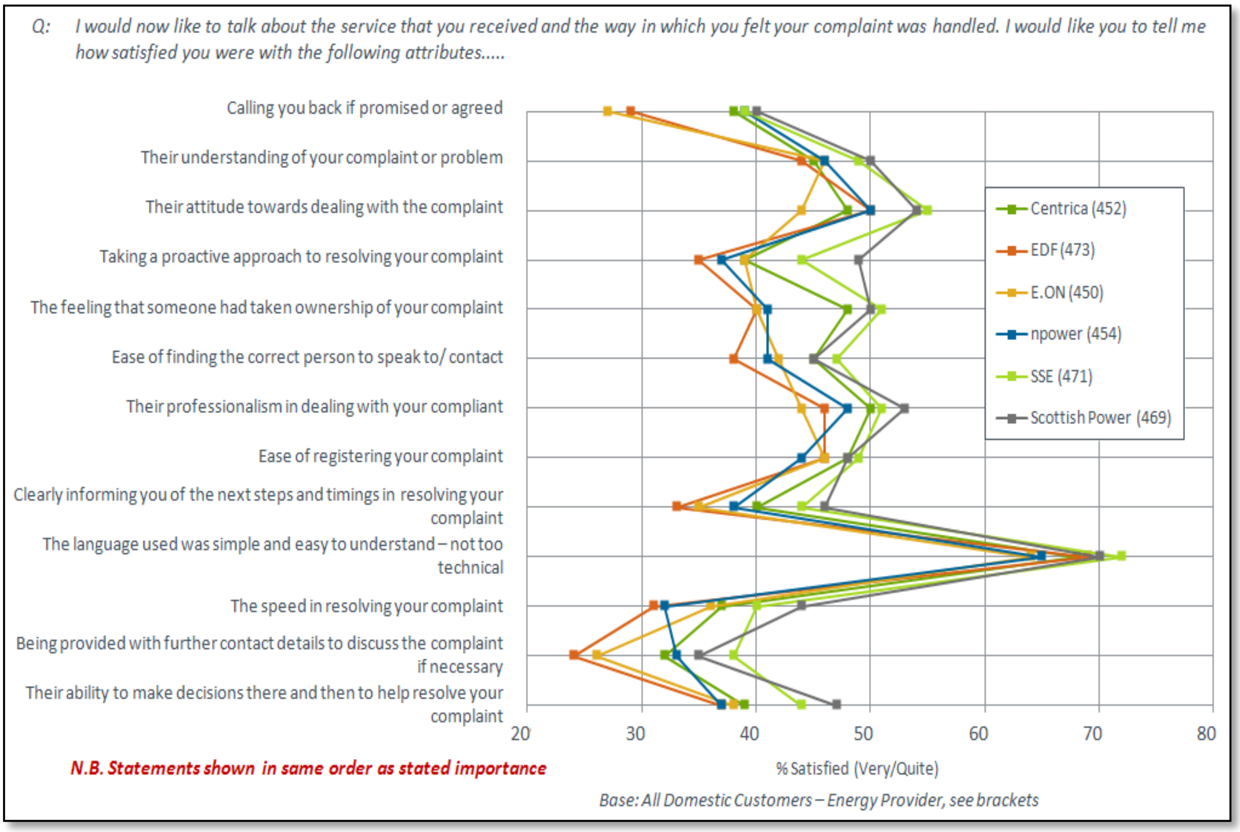

Chart 24 – Customer Complaints Handling Process – Domestic Customer Satisfaction by Supplier

C.10.4 Customer Service - Domestic Customer Satisfaction by Contact Method

Generally, satisfaction is highest across all elements when contact is made by telephone. Satisfaction is significantly higher for '***their attitude towards dealing with the complaint', 'ease of finding the correct person to speak to/ contact', 'professionalism in dealing with the complaint', 'the speed in resolving the complaint*** and ***their ability to make decisions there and then'.***

Against telephone complaints, email is marginally ahead for '***ease of registering the complaint'*** and '***being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint'***. However, a perceived weakness of email contact is the '***ease of finding the correct person to speak to'*** – an area where email contact is behind both telephone and letter contact.

Overall, contact by letter is deemed the weaker of the three contact methods, with the exception of '***ease of finding the correct person to speak to'*** (ahead of email only), letter contact has the lowest satisfaction levels for all the customer service elements.

How the customer service elements fared depending on contact method is detailed in the following chart:

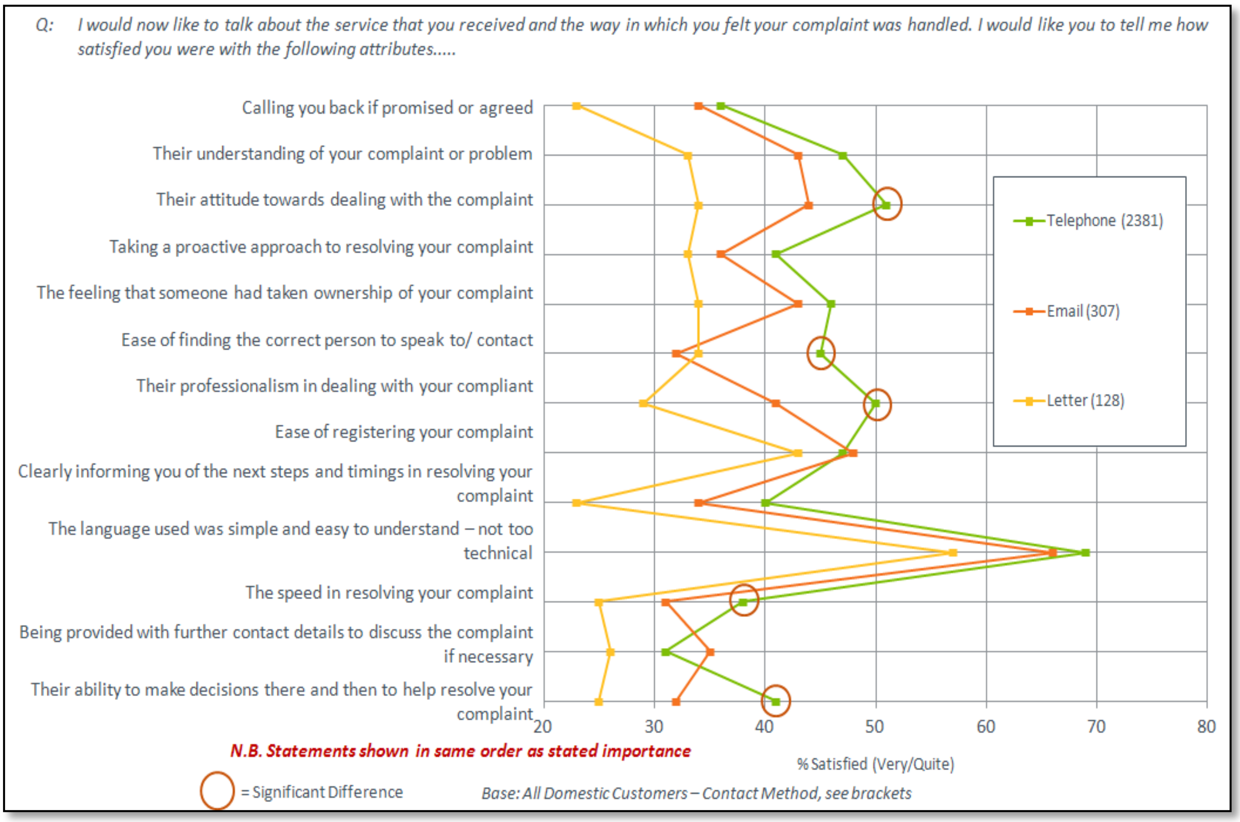

Chart 25 – Customer Complaints Handling Process – Domestic Customer Satisfaction by Contact Method

C.10.5 Customer Service - Domestic Customer Satisfaction by Nature of Complaint

Within the nature of complaint, Pricing issues show significantly higher satisfaction levels across a range of service elements particularly '***taking a proactive approach to resolving the complaint', 'ease of finding the right 'person to speak to/ contact', 'ease of registering the complaint'*** and '***the speed in resolving the complaint'***.

Debt and Sales contacts tend to have lower satisfaction levels across the various customer service elements than most other issues. There are particularly low levels of satisfaction for Debt contacts in '***being provided with further contact details', 'speed in resolving the complaint'*** and '***taking a proactive approach to resolving the complaint'***.

For Sales contact, the areas with lowest satisfaction are the '***speed in resolving the complaint'***, '***calling customers back if promised or agreed'*** and '***clearly informing customer s of the next steps and timings'***.

Chart 26 below details the satisfaction with service elements depending on the nature of complaint:

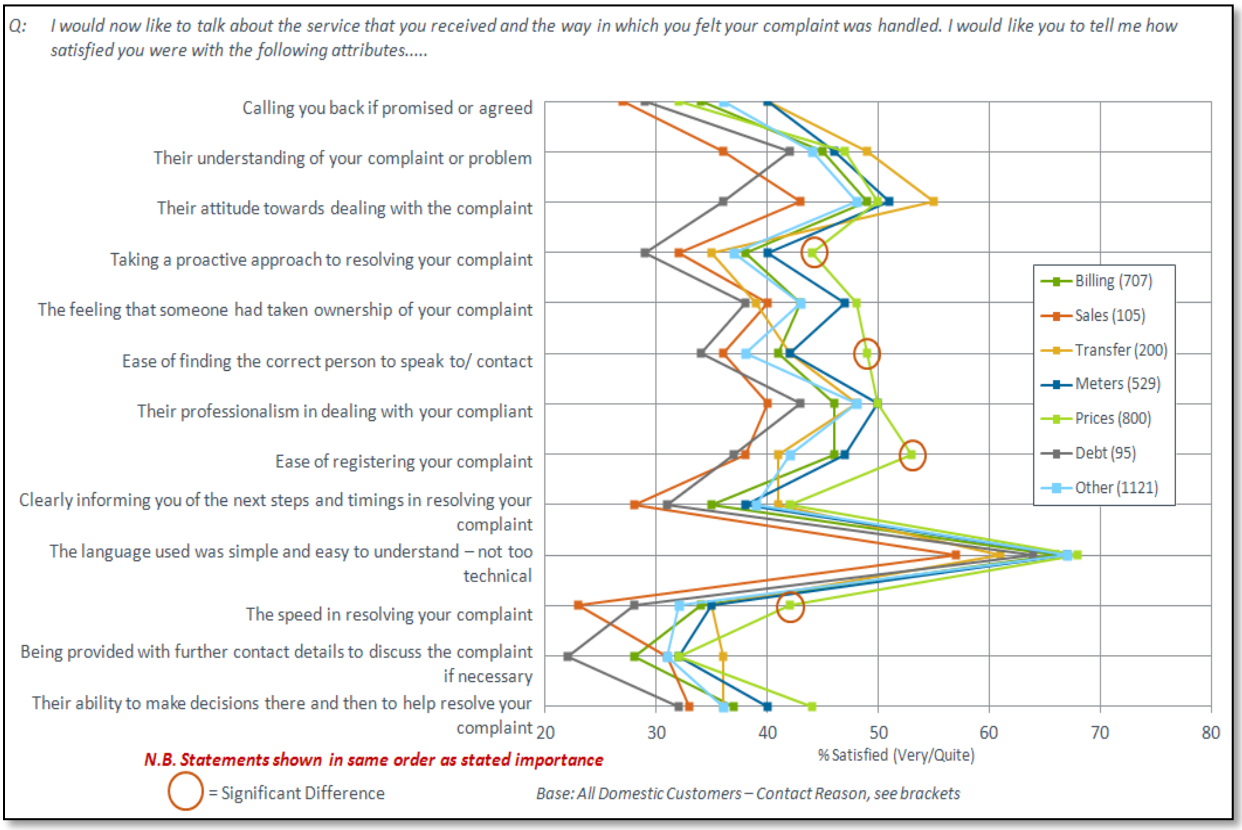

Chart 26 – Customer Complaints Handling Process – Domestic Customer Satisfaction by Nature of Complaint

C.10.6 Customer Service – Micro Business Customer Satisfaction

Across all aspects of the complaints handling process Micro Business customers are less satisfied than Domestic customers.

Dissatisfaction levels are higher than satisfaction levels for all of the customer service elements, with the exception of the '***language used being simple and easy to understand'***. As with Domestic customers, Micro Business customers are most satisfied with this element. Two thirds of all Micro Business are satisfied, with two in five (38%) customers being 'very' satisfied and a further quarter (27%) are 'quite' satisfied.

Amongst Micro Business customers, dissatisfaction is highest for '***speed in resolving the complaint'*** (41% 'very' dissatisfied and 14% 'quite' dissatisfied). Followed by the '***ability to make decisions there and then'*** (38% 'very' dissatisfied and 15% 'quite' dissatisfied) and being '***provided with further contact details'*** if required (37% 'very' dissatisfied and 11% 'quite' dissatisfied).

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the customer service elements for Micro Business customers is illustrated in the chart below:

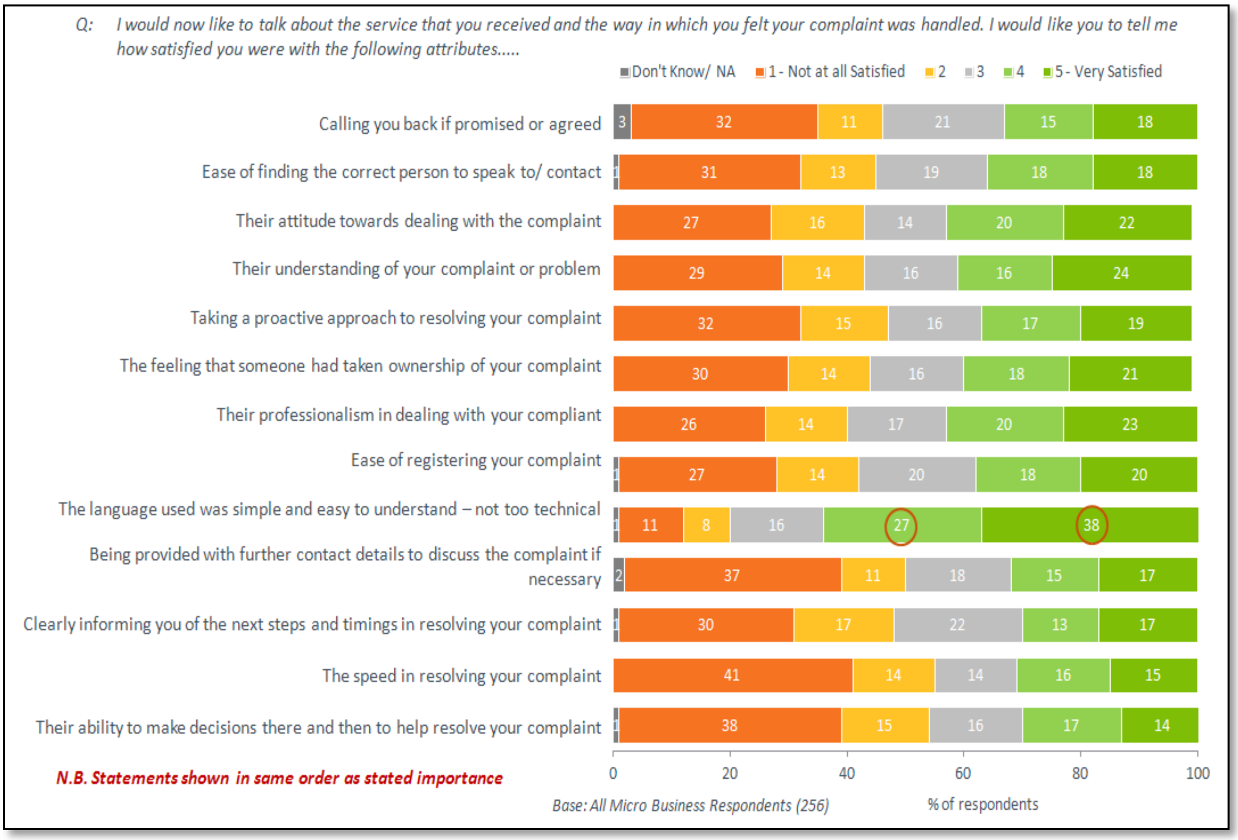

Chart 27 – Customer Complaints Handling Process – Micro Business Customer Satisfaction

C.10.7 Customer Service – Micro Business Customers Satisfaction by Supplier

The '***language used being simple and easy to understand'*** remains the top performing aspect of the complaints handling process for all suppliers. Scottish Power is ahead of the other suppliers, but due to base sizes this is not deemed significant.

Across many of the elements it seems Scottish Power, E.ON and npower are performing better than the other suppliers, particularly for '***calling back if promised or agreed'***, '***taking a proactive approach to resolving the complaint'***, '***professionalism in dealing with the complaint'*** and the '***speed in resolving the complaint'***.

Base sizes are low for EDF, though there are indications that performance is weak for the following aspects '***clearly informing customer of the next steps and timings'***, '***calling customers back if promised or agreed'*** and '***taking a proactive approach to resolving the complaint'***.

The performance of each supplier on each of the individual attributes for Micro Business customers is highlighted in chart 28:

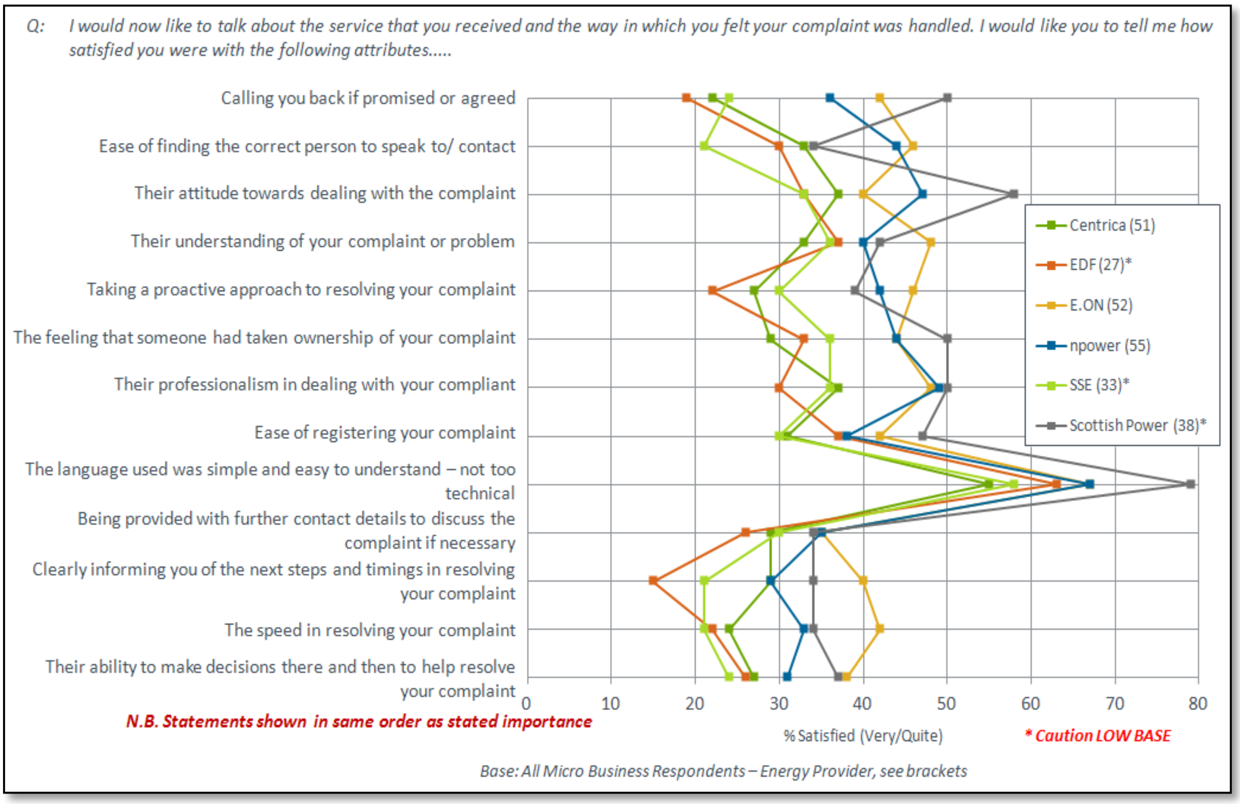

Chart 28 – Customer Complaints Handling Process – Micro Business Customer Satisfaction by Supplier

C.10.8 Customer Service – Micro Business Customers Satisfaction by Contact Method

Consistent with Domestic customers, telephone is also the contact method yielding greatest satisfaction across the service elements. Telephone contact is significantly outperforming both email and letter for '***calling back if promised or agreed'***, feeling that someone is '***taking ownership of the complaint'***, '***professionalism shown in dealing with the complaint'***, '***speed in resolving the complaint*** and '***ability to make decisions there and then'*** to help resolve the complaint.

Satisfaction is generally lower amongst customer making contact by letter, and email contact is weakest for '***feeling that someone has taken ownership of the complaint'***, '***being provided with further contact details'*** if required and '***clearly informing customers of the next steps and timings'***.

The satisfaction levels with customer service elements depending on contact method are detailed in the following chart:

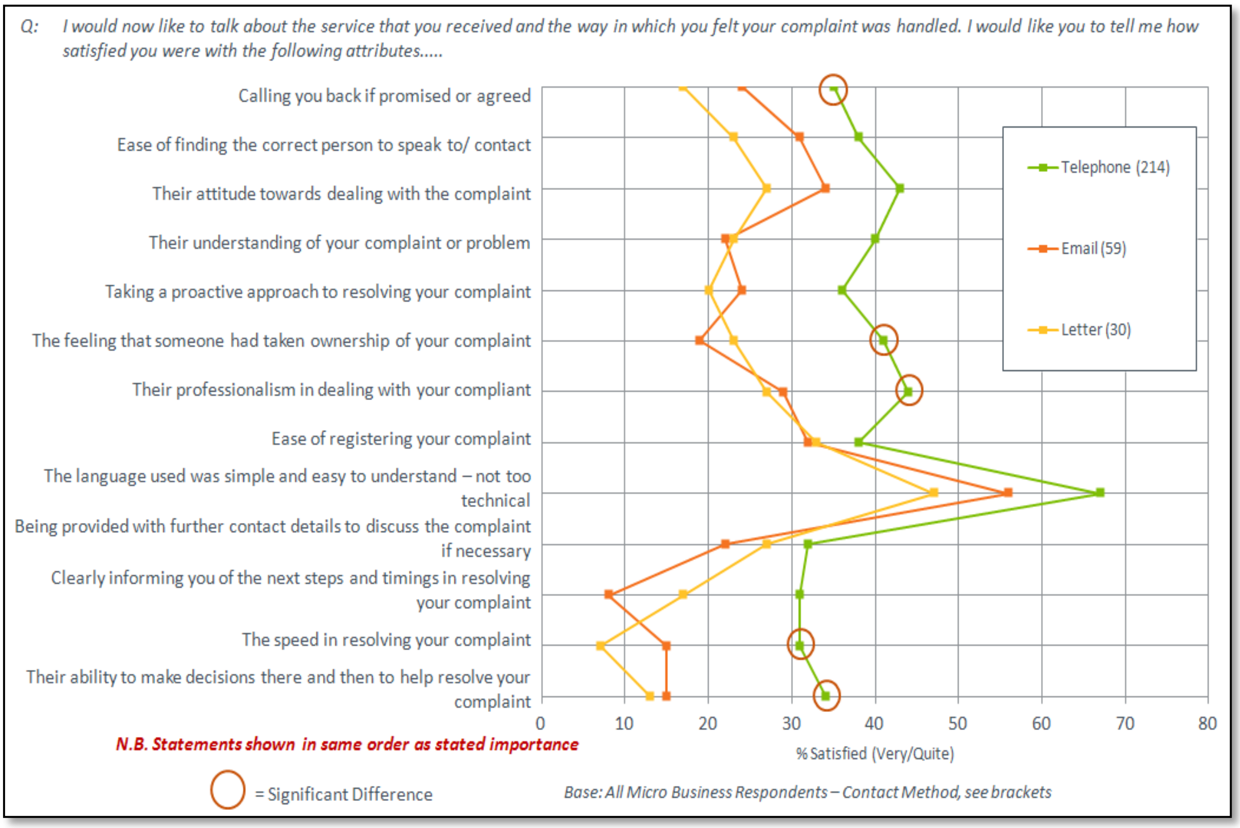

Chart 29 – Customer Complaints Handling Process – Micro Business Customer Satisfaction by Contact Method

C.10.9 Customer Service – Micro Business Customer Satisfaction by Nature of Complaint

Base sizes for nature of complaint are low so it is difficult to draw comparisons between the various issues across the customer service elements. However, there are indications that satisfaction is higher amongst Micro Business customers contacting suppliers for Transfer issues, though performance is weak for the '***speed in resolving the complaint'***. Generally, satisfaction across the elements is weak for Billing issues, particularly '***clearly informing customers of the next steps and timings'*** as well as the '***ability to make decisions there and then'***.

C.10.10 Customer Service Elements – Stated Importance

Stated Importance is defined by what the customer thinks is important to them. It is essentially a self-reported measure of importance and describes the basic 'desirability' of each attribute. The question about importance takes the form of a rating question, and so each customer was asked on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very important and 5 very unimportant about each element. Early in the survey each customer was asked how important each element was to them when making a complaint to any company, or for any reason. It is important to ask this question early in the survey and unrelated to the complaint in question within the research to achieve an un-influenced view from the customer.

Within the research it was found that all aspects of the complaints handling process are important to customers. However there is some differentiation between which elements are more important than others. It should not be assumed that those rated least important within the list should be ignored and provisions for improvement not made by suppliers.

C.10.11 Customer Service Elements – Stated Importance Domestic Customers

Amongst Domestic customers the most important aspect, in the eyes of the customer, of the complaints process was found to be '***calling you back if promised or agreed';*** this was found to be 'very' important for 82% of customers. Closely behind this were '***understanding of the complaint or problem'*** and '***attitude towards dealing with the complaint'***, both were rated as 'very' important for four fifths (80%) of customers.

'Taking a proactive approach to resolving complaints' and '***feeling that someone had taken ownership of the complaint'*** were ranked 4th and 5th in order of importance, with more than three quarters (77%) rating them both as 'very' important.

The following chart details the most important factors of the customer complaints process among Domestic customers:

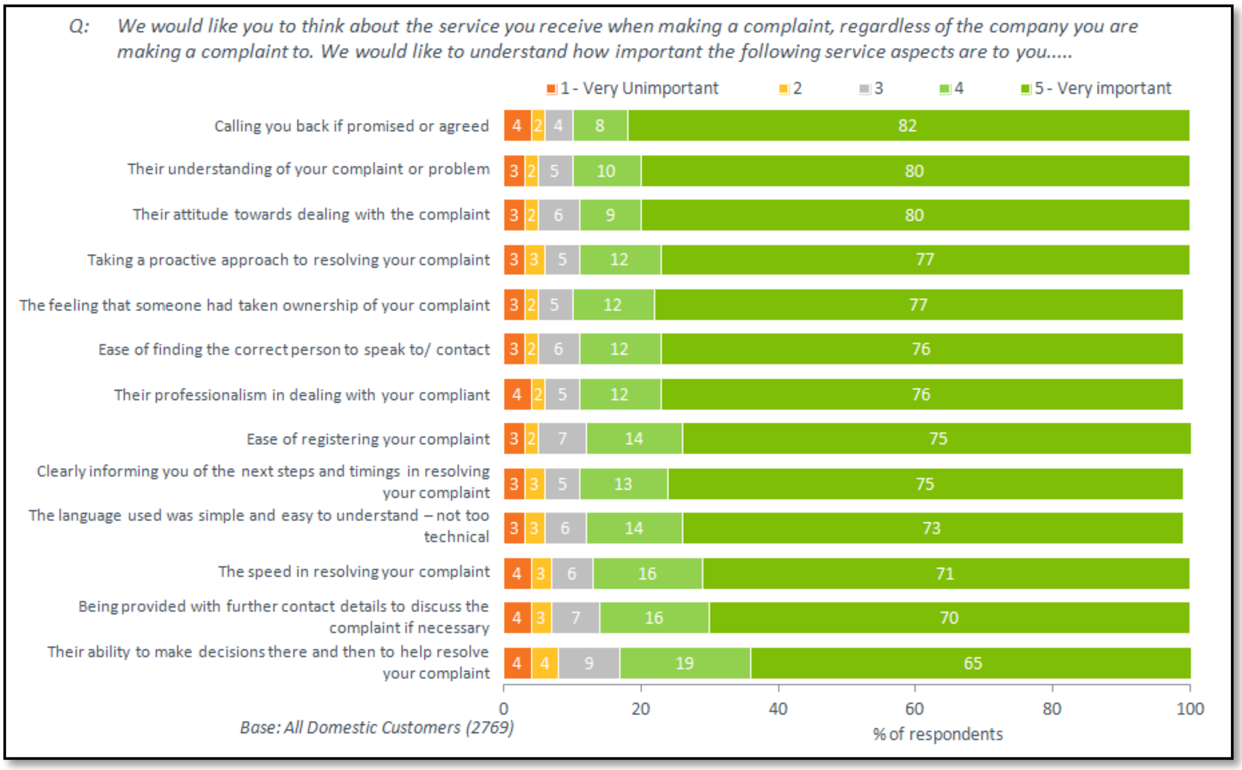

Chart 30 – Stated Importance – Domestic Customers

C.10.12 Customer Service Elements – Stated Importance Micro Business Customers

The elements deemed most important to Micro Business customers are not too dissimilar to those identified by Domestic customers. '***Calling you back if promised or agreed'*** (77% 'very' important) is again the most importance element of the complaints process. Second most important factor for Micro Business customers, and more important than seen for Domestic customers, is '***ease of finding the correct person to speak to / contact'*** (75%).

Chart 31 below details the most important factors of the customer complaints process among Micro Business customers:

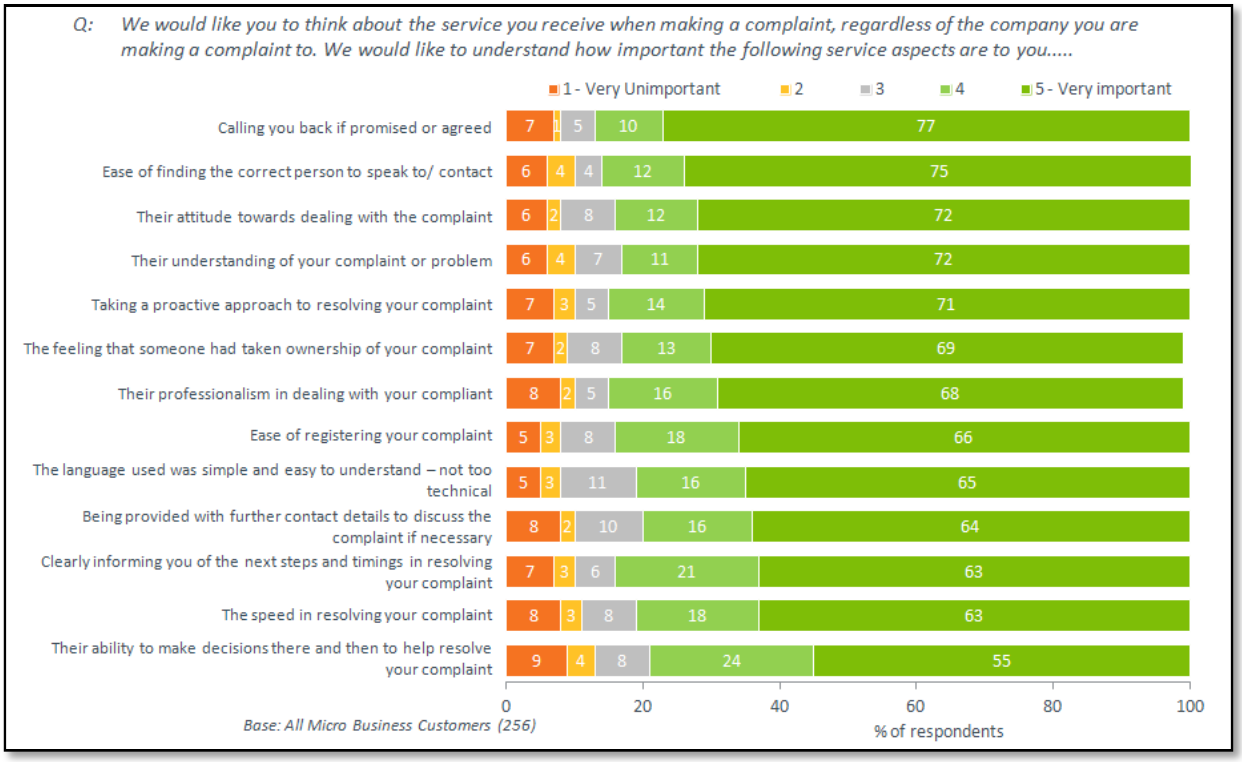

Chart 31 – Stated Importance – Micro Business Customers

C.10.13 Customer Service – Derived vs. Stated Importance

The purpose of 'Derived Importance' is to really understand what is driving satisfaction with the complaints process, as quite often there is differentiation between what customers 'say' is important to them and what is 'actually' important to them (i.e. in terms of poor or strong performance in a particular area influencing their overall level of satisfaction with the experience). Furthermore, customers are not always able to fully define, recall or articulate what is / is not important to them.

'Derived Importance' is calculated for each element of the complaints handling process by correlating its perceived performance[6] against the overall satisfaction[7] measure.

When the 'Derived Importance' figures for each element are calculated, this is then plotted on a quad chart alongside the 'Stated Importance' data (see above) to determine the 'real' drivers of satisfaction.

Within the analysis there are four possible classifications for each element of the complaints process. Those driving overall satisfaction the most will be classified as 'Conscious Drivers' – these are elements which are high in desirability in the eyes of the customer, and are also unconsciously driving overall satisfaction.

[6] Known as 'Independent' or 'Predictor' variables
[7] Known as the 'Dependent' variable)

‘Latent Motivators’ are also highly important in driving customer satisfaction as these are elements which customers do not feel are as important, but are in fact highly correlated to overall satisfaction.

The diagram below explains the four Quadrants of Derived vs. Stated Importance:

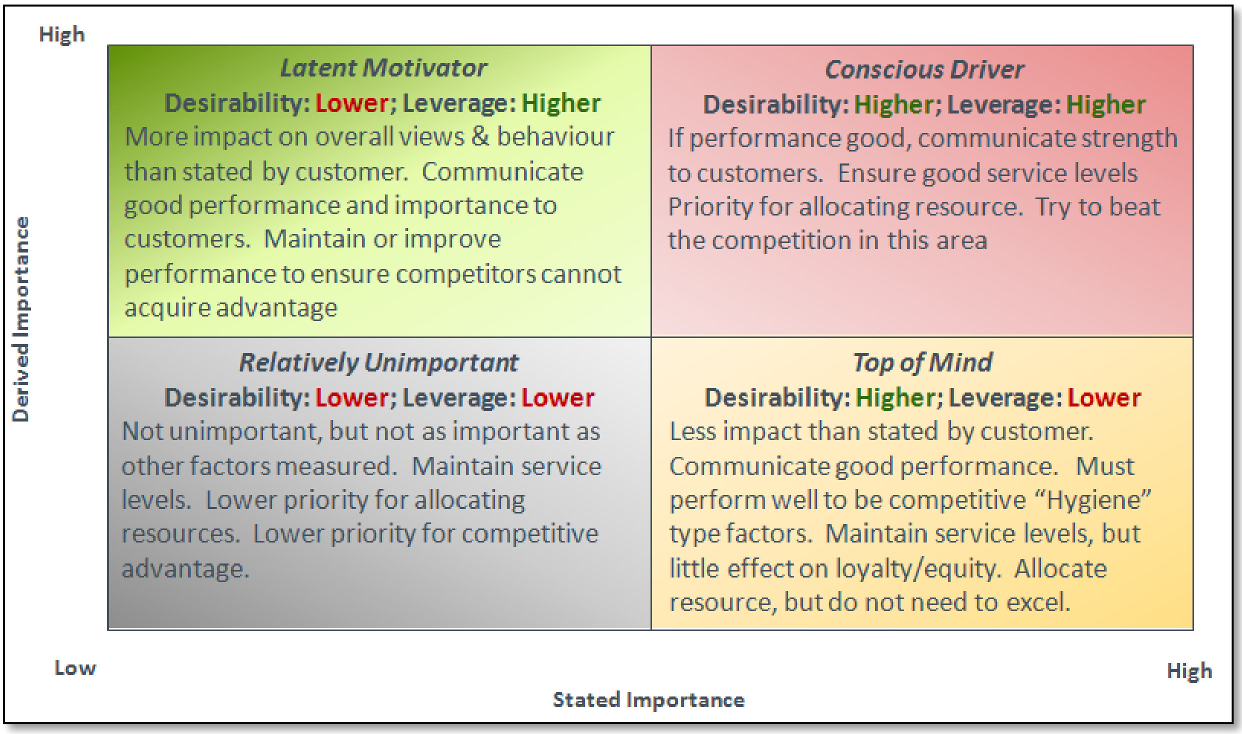

Diagram 1 – Derived vs. Stated Importance Quad Diagram

The key area identified as a ‘Conscious Driver’ amongst Domestic customers is ‘***calling back when promised or agreed’***. This element is both high in stated importance and derived importance, and is therefore a key area for improvement, which if addressed, is likely to have a high impact on customer satisfaction with the complaints process.

Other ‘Conscious Drivers’ with almost equal importance are ‘***professionalism in dealing with complaints***, ***attitude towards dealing with complaints’*** and the ‘***feeling that someone has taken ownership of the complaint’***.

Amongst Domestic customers there have been no ‘Latent Motivators’ identified.

Detailed within chart 32 are the positions of each of the customer complaint service elements associated with Domestic customer:

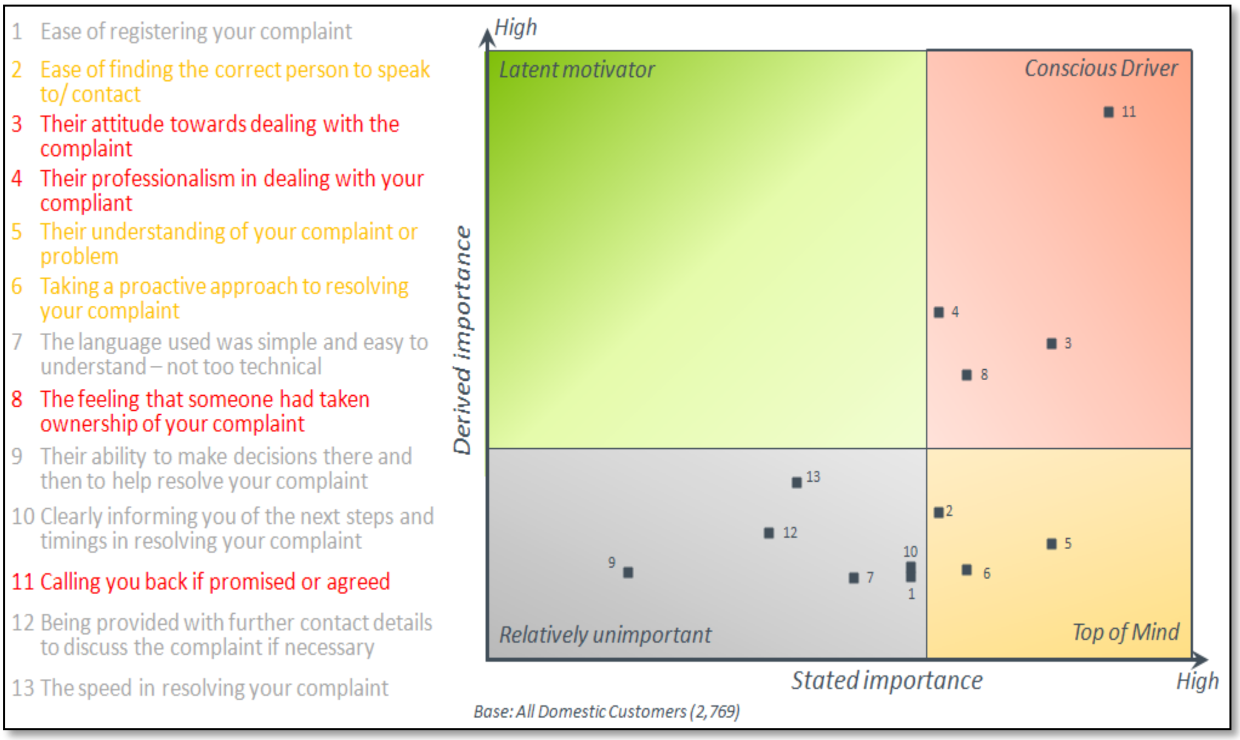

Chart 32 – Leverage vs. Desirability – Domestic Customers

As with Domestic customers, the key element influencing overall satisfaction with Micro Business customer is ‘***calling back when promised or agreed’***. The other ‘Conscious Drivers’ for Micro Business customers are also similar to those for Domestic Customers – identified as the ‘***attitude towards dealing with complaints’*** and the ‘***feeling that someone has taken ownership of the complaint’***.

Once difference is that ‘***professionalism in dealing with complaints’*** is a ‘Latent Motivator’ for Micro Business customers, suggesting it is less important to the customer, however, it remains as having high derived importance and should therefore not be ignored, or deemed less important in driving customer satisfaction.

Chart 33 details the position of each of the customer complaint service elements relevant to Micro Business customers:

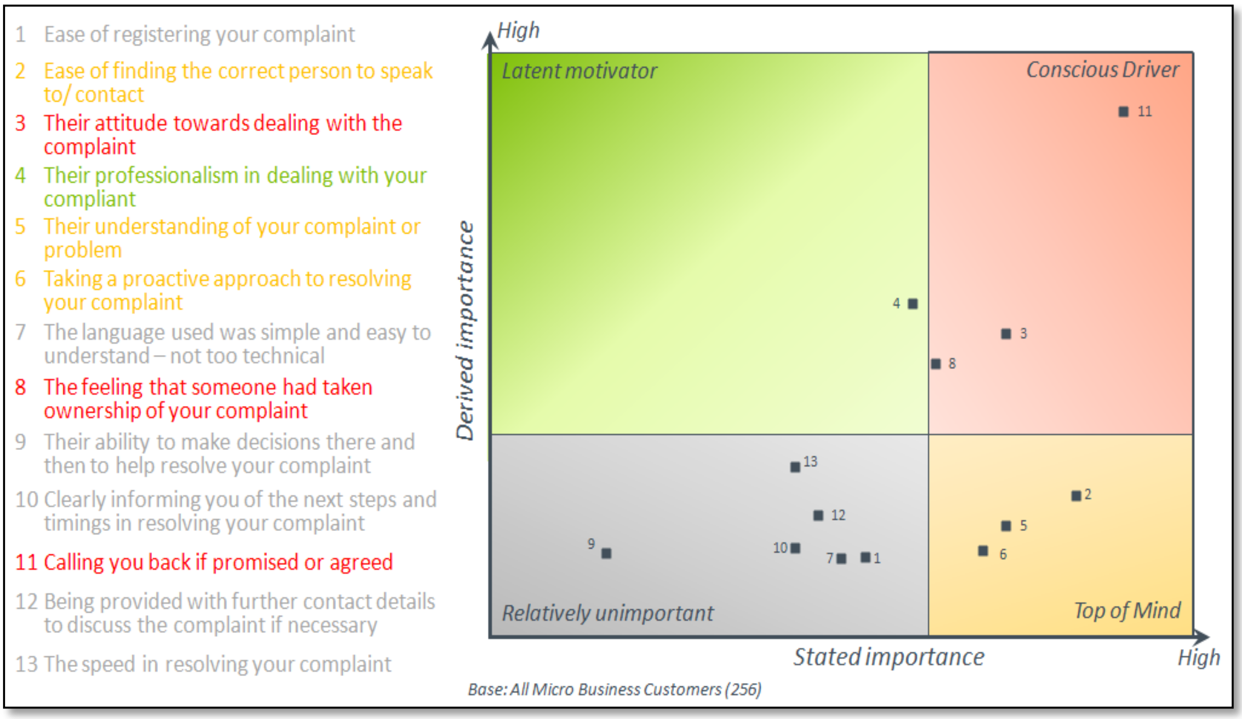

Chart 33 – Leverage vs. Desirability – Micro Business Customers

C.10.14 Customer Service – Priority Action Areas

The next stage, once drivers of satisfaction have been identified, is to overlay the performance data for each of the service elements alongside the derived importance analysis in order to identify priority actions for improving overall satisfaction with the complaints process.

Again, each element is classified in to one of four categories within the strategic quadrant:

- ***Critical Improvement Areas*** – key areas where improvements need to made. These are highly correlated with improving Overall Satisfaction, yet performance on these areas are relatively weak
- ***Secondary Improvements*** – although these elements have not been identified as being highly correlated with Overall Satisfaction, they do still have some influence and they have been identified as areas of weakness with regards performance in the customer complaints process
- ***Maintain*** – these elements should not be ignored. These are often considered to be hygiene factors, and performance on these areas need to be maintained as they are high in the minds of the customer
- ***Relative Strengths*** – areas which are identified as high drivers of Overall Satisfaction, but where performance is relatively positive compared to other elements

There is one 'critical improvement area' that has been identified for Domestic customers – '***calling back when promised or agreed'***. This has been identified as the element that can have the greatest impact on overall satisfaction with the complaints process.

'Secondary improvements' which should be addressed in order to influence overall satisfaction are:

- ***Ease of finding the correct person to speak to***
- ***Taking a proactive approach to resolving the complain***
- ***Ability to make decisions there and then***
- ***Clearly informing of the next steps***
- ***Being provided with further contact details***
- ***The speed in resolving the complaint.***

Although currently categorised as a 'relative strength', suppliers need to be wary about '***making customers feel that someone has taken ownership of the complaint'*** as should performance decline slightly then it could potentially fall back in to the 'critical improvement area'.

Chart 34 details the status of each element within the priority action grid:

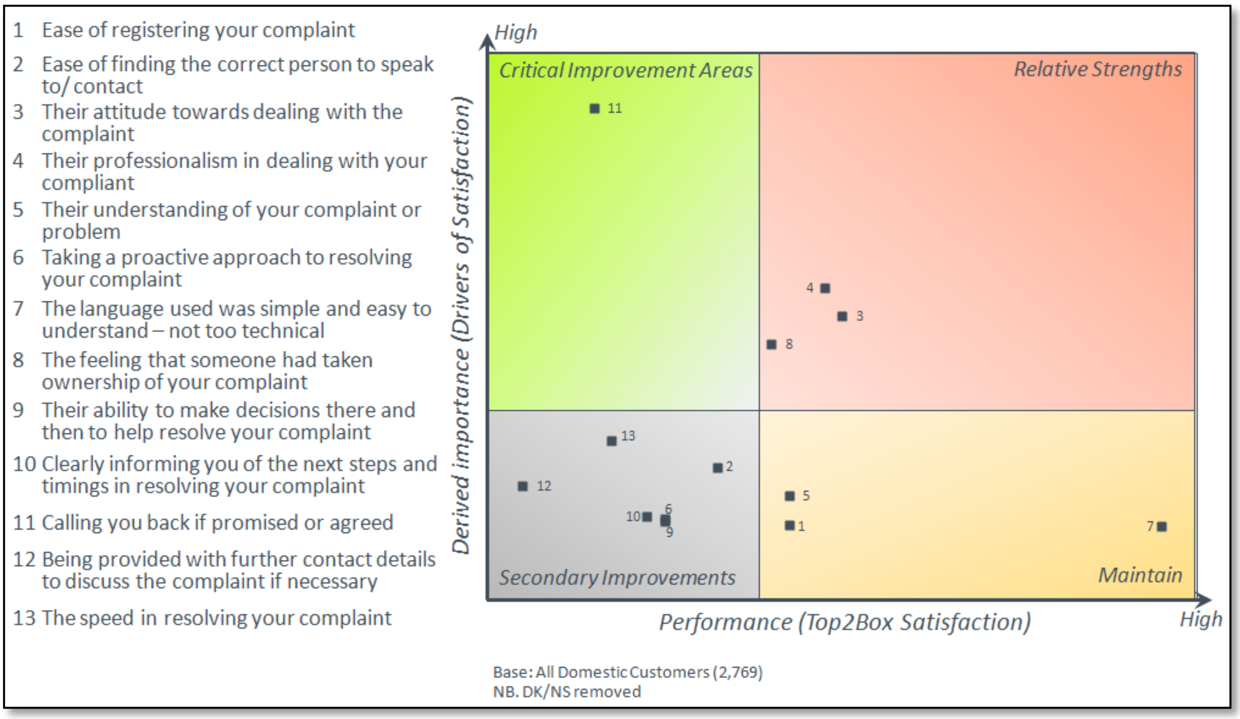

Chart 34 – Priority Action Areas – Domestic Customers

As with Domestic customers, the 'critical improvement area' identified as having the greatest influence on overall satisfaction for Micro Business customers is '***calling customers back when promised or agreed'***.

The 'secondary improvement areas' for Micro Business customers***,*** are consistent with those for Domestic customers set out in the list above, and also include '***ease of registering the complaint'***.

Suppliers should be wary of ensuring performance does not drop for '***making customers feel that someone has taken ownership of the complaint'*** as this is a borderline area for improvement and could potentially become a 'critical improvement area' in the future.

Detailed in the chart below are the priority areas identified for Micro Business customers:

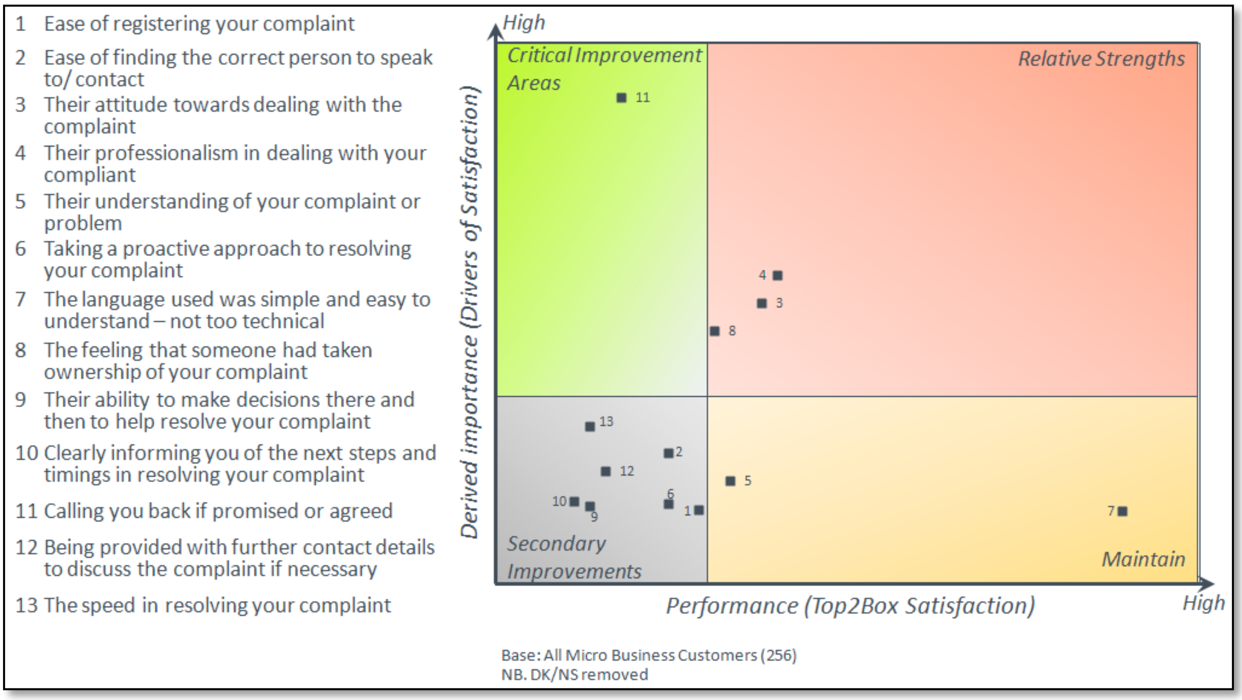

Chart 35 – Priority Action Areas – Micro Business Customers

D. Summary

Although there have been improvements in overall satisfaction since 2010, dissatisfaction levels for both customer types remain higher than satisfaction levels.

Nevertheless, overall satisfaction with the complaints handling process has increased year on year. There have been further, and significant, improvements since 2010 for both Domestic and Micro Business customers.

For Domestic customers there are significant improvements in overall satisfaction for all suppliers since 2010. Consistent with 2010 is Scottish Power and SSE boasting highest levels of satisfaction, and are the only suppliers to have more customers satisfied than dissatisfied. EDF and npower still have the largest proportion of Domestic customers dissatisfied with the overall complaints process.

Micro Business customers remain marginally less satisfied than Domestic customers, though there has been a significant decline since 2010 in the proportion of Micro Business customers being 'very' dissatisfied.

According to customers 'assistance and helpful attitude of staff', the 'complaint being dealt with or resolved promptly' and 'finding a resolution to the problem' at all have the greatest influence on satisfaction. Whilst dissatisfaction comes from 'longevity of complaint' and 'it not actually being resolved', plus 'poor communication' and 'unhelpful staff'.

Customers who had their complaint resolved are again more positive about the resolution that they had received than with the process overall. In this respect there has again been a significant improvement from 2010 for all suppliers. Further similarities to overall satisfaction are that Scottish Power and SSE boast the higher proportions of satisfied customers than other suppliers. Consistent with the findings in 2010 are EDF and E.ON having the least satisfied customers.

Satisfaction with the outcome adequately reflecting the problems encountered has also improved for both Domestic and Micro Business customers, significantly so for Domestic customers.

However, there remains a high proportion of both Domestic and Micro Business customers receiving 'nothing' from their energy supplier in terms of confirmation that the complaint had been resolved.

Expectations from customers are not particularly high or demanding of energy suppliers, but in most cases these expectations are not being met in terms of communications relating to the resolution of their complaint.

Within the specific aspects of the customer complaints process there is one element which stands out as having strong satisfaction levels; the language used being simple and easy to understand, suggesting there is an appreciation from customers that suppliers are making attempts to use communications that are not too technical.

Other areas where Domestic customers are more satisfied than dissatisfied include attitude, professionalism, ownership, and understanding and ease of registering the complaint.

The remaining aspects of the process see higher dissatisfaction levels than satisfaction amongst Domestic customers. Of note are speed of dealing with the complaint and being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint further if necessary.

Dissatisfaction for Micro Business is much higher than seen for Domestic customers, with proportions of satisfied customers being below dissatisfied customers for all but the one stand out element of non-technical language being used.

Identified as a 'critical improvement area' for increasing overall satisfaction is 'calling customers back when agreed or promised'.

'Secondary Improvement' areas for increasing satisfaction levels have been identified as:

- Finding the right person to speak to
- Taking a proactive approach to resolving your complaint
- Ability to make decisions there and then to resolve the complaint
- Being provided with further contact details
- Speed in resolving complaints

Targeting areas having the greatest impact on improving overall satisfaction is crucial for energy suppliers in delivering a service both expected and required of customers, however, there are also elements of the experience which need to be 'Maintained'. Failure to do so could negatively affect overall satisfaction performance. These are highlighted as:

- Understanding of the complaint or problem
- Language used being simple and easy to understand

Dissatisfaction remains high for those customers where the complaint is not resolved during the first contact with suppliers. Higher dissatisfaction levels for requiring more than one contact to resolve the complaint is seen for EDF customers than any other Domestic customer. Across both customer types the lack of explanation as to why further contact is required is likely to be increasing dissatisfaction.

There remains a discrepancy between what energy suppliers consider to be a resolved complaint, and what customers perceive as being resolved, with 41% of Domestic customers and 44% of Micro Business customers not agreeing their complaint has been resolved.

For those Domestic and Micro Business customers where complaints remain unresolved there is a feeling communications are in a period of 'limbo' whilst they are still waiting to hear from their supplier. In some instances customers have 'given up' pursuing any further resolution or contact in relation to their complaint.

E. Appendix

E1. Quantitative Questionnaire

Ofgem – 2012 Customer Satisfaction with Complaints Research

Respondent Name: ____________________

Job Title: ____________________

Company: ____________________

Address: ____________________

____

Postcode: ____________________

Telephone: ____________________

Email: ____________________

Classification Information

S1. Supplier (from sample)

Centrica (British Gas)	☐	01	N = 500
EDF Energy	☐	02	N = 500
E.ON UK	☐	03	N = 500
RWE npower	☐	04	N = 500
SSE	☐	05	N = 500
Scottish Power	☐	06	N = 500

S2. Customer Type (from sample)

Consumer	☐	01	N = 2700
Micro Business	☐	02	N = 300

S3. Quota (from sample)

Centrica Consumer	☐	01	N = 450
Centrica Micro Bus.	☐	02	N = 50
EDF Consumer	☐	03	N = 450
EDF Micro Bus.	☐	04	N = 50
E.ON Consumer	☐	05	N = 450
E.ON Micro Bus.	☐	06	N = 50
RWE Consumer	☐	07	N = 450
RWE Micro Bus.	☐	08	N = 50
SSE Consumer	☐	09	N = 450
SSE Micro Bus.	☐	10	N = 50
Scottish Power Consumer	☐	11	N = 450
Scottish Power Micro Bus.	☐	12	N = 50

S4. Complaint Status (from sample)

Resolved	☐	01
Unresolved	☐	02

S5. Date of Complaint (from sample)

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

S6. Date of Resolution (from sample)

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

S7. Method of Complaint (from sample)

Telephone	☐ 01
Letter	☐ 02
Internet	☐ 03
Email	☐ 04
Fax	☐ 05
Customer	☐ 06
In Person	☐ 07
Ombudsman	☐ 08
SMS	☐ 09
Textphone	☐ 10
Written	☐ 11
Verbal	☐ 12
Other	☐ 13

Introduction & Screening

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS AND MICROBUSINESSES WITH A NAMED CONTACT

S8. Good morning/afternoon. Could I please speak to [INSERT NAME FROM SAMPLE]?

Good morning/afternoon. My name is ……… and I am calling from Harris Interactive, a market research consultancy based in Manchester. We are currently carrying out a project on behalf of the energy regulator Ofgem into energy suppliers' handling of recent customer complaints.

I believe that you made a complaint to your energy supplier in December, is that correct?

Yes	☐ 01	**CONTINUE TO S11 IF MICRO BUSINESS AND S12 IF CONSUMER**
Yes – on behalf of someone else	☐ 02	
No	☐ 03	**SEEK REFERRAL & REPEAT IF NECESSARY OR THANK & CLOSE**

BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESSES WITH NO NAMED CONTACT

S9. Good morning/afternoon. My name is ……… and I am calling from Harris Interactive, a market research consultancy based in Manchester. We are currently carrying out a project on behalf of the energy regulator Ofgem into energy suppliers' handling of recent customer complaints.

I believe that someone from your business made a complaint to your energy supplier in December is that correct?

Yes	☐ 01	**SEEK REFERRAL**
No	☐ 02	**THANK & CLOSE**
Not a business	☐ 03	**CHECK DOMESTIC COMPLAINT AT S10**

INTERVIEWER: IF YES (S9 CODE 1), ASK TO SPEAK TO COMPLAINANT AND REPEAT AS MICROBUSINESS WITH NAMED CONTACT FROM S8

BASE: ALL SAYING NOT A BUSINESS (S9 CODE 3)

S10. Was a complaint made relating to a domestic energy supplier?

Yes	☐	01	**SEEK REFERRAL**
Yes – on behalf of someone else	☐	02	
No	☐	03	**THANK & CLOSE**

INTERVIEWER: IF YES (S10 CODE 1 OR 2), ASK TO SPEAK TO COMPLAINANT AND REPEAT AS CONSUMER RESPONDENT FROM S8

BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS

S11. And can I confirm, was your complaint related to the energy supplied to your business or to your home?

Business	☐	01	**CONTINUE TO S12**
Home	☐	02	**RE-CODE AS CONSUMER AND CONTINUE TO S12**

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

S12. Ofgem would like to understand a little more about your experience of making a complaint and how satisfied you were with both the process and the way in which your complaint was handled. We would greatly appreciate your help.

Could you please spare between 10 and 15 minutes to answer some questions?

(INTERVIEWER: REASSURE THE RESPONDENT THAT THE INTERVIEW IS CONFIDENTIAL, AND THAT WE ARE NOT SELLING ANYTHING)

Yes	☐	01	**CONTINUE**
Yes – but not now	☐	02	**MAKE APPOINTMENT**
No – need to speak to someone else	☐	03	**SEEK REFERRAL**
Refusal – satisfied with complaint handling	☐	04	**THANK & CLOSE**
Refusal – opted out of research	☐	05	
Refusal – no reason given	☐	06	
Refusal – no time	☐	07	
Refusal – not interested	☐	08	
Refusal – other reason	☐	09	

Classification & Nature of Complaint

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q1 Thank you. To begin with, can I confirm that you made a complaint to your energy supplier in December 2011?

INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT UNSURE OR UNABLE TO RECALL COMPLAINT, PROMPT WITH SUPPLIER NAME, METHOD AND DATE OF COMPLAINT FROM SAMPLE

Yes	☐	01	**CONTINUE**
No	☐	02	**THANK & CLOSE**
Don't know	☐	03	

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q2 And with which supplier did you make a complaint?

British Gas	☐	01	**BRITISH GAS**
Scottish Gas	☐	02	
EDF Energy	☐	03	**EDF**
E.ON	☐	04	**E.ON**
npower	☐	05	**NPOWER**
Utility Warehouse	☐	06	
Telecom Plus	☐	07	
Gas Plus Supply	☐	08	
Electricity Plus Supply	☐	09	
Scottish & Southern Electric (SSE)	☐	10	**SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN**
Southern Electric	☐	11	
Scottish Hydro	☐	12	
Atlantic	☐	13	
Swalec	☐	14	
Scottish Power	☐	15	**SCOTTISH POWER**
SP Manweb	☐	16	
Other (please specify)	☐	17	

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q3 And was this complaint related to your gas, to your electricity or to both?

SINGLE CODE

Gas	☐	01	CONTINUE
Electricity	☐	02	
Both	☐	03	
Something else (please specify)	☐	04	
Don't know / can't remember	☐	05	THANK & CLOSE

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q4 What was your recent complaint to [INSERT SUPLIER FROM Q2] about?

DO NOT READ OUT BUT CODE ACCORDINGLY. MULTICODE

Billing – accuracy of bill	☐	01	CONTINUE
Billing – estimated bill	☐	02	
Billing – frequency	☐	03	
Billing – refunds	☐	04	
Sales – behaviour of sales staff	☐	05	
Sales – mis-information provided	☐	06	
Sales – agreed to receive information only	☐	07	
Transfer – problems switching to supplier	☐	08	
Transfer – problems switching from supplier	☐	09	
Meters – accuracy of meter	☐	10	
Meters – position of meter	☐	11	
Meters – meter readings	☐	12	
Prices – notification of increases	☐	13	
Prices – amount of increase	☐	14	
Prices - direct debits	☐	15	
Debt – debt recovery	☐	16	
Debt – debt payment schemes	☐	17	
Debt – disconnection	☐	18	
Prepayment meters e.g. setting, faults, use	☐	19	
Customer service – general	☐	20	
Internet / website problems	☐	21	
Other **(please specify)**	☐	22	
Don't know / can't remember	☐	23	THANK & CLOSE

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q5 And, using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means that it was not very serious and 5 means that it was very serious, could you tell me how serious you felt your complaint was?

1 – Not very serious	☐ 01
2	☐ 02
3 – Neither serious, nor unserious	☐ 03
4	☐ 04
5 – Very serious	☐ 05
Don't know / Refused	☐ 06

Contacting the Supplier

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q6 I would like to begin by talking about the contact that you had with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] when making your complaint. How many times have you had contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] regarding your complaint?

Once only	☐	01
Twice	☐	02
Three times	☐	03
Four times	☐	04
More than four (please specify)	☐☐☐	05
Don't know	☐	06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO HAD MORE THAN ONE CONTACT (Q6 CODEs 2 – 5)

Q7 And approximately how many times did [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] contact you and how many times did you have to contact them to resolve your complaint?

Supplier contacted	☐☐☐	01
Respondent contacted	☐☐☐	02
Don't know	☐	03

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO CONTACTED SUPPLIER (Q6 CODE 1 OR Q7 CODE 2)

Q8a In which of the following ways did you contact [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] when making your complaint?

READ OUT

RANDOMISE

MULTICODE

Telephone	☐ 01
Email	☐ 02
Letter	☐ 03
Fax	☐ 04
Website	☐ 05
Other (please specify)	☐ 07
Don't know	☐ 08

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS CONTACTED BY SUPPLIER (Q7 CODE 1)

Q8b In which of the following ways did [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] contact you when handling your complaint?

READ OUT

RANDOMISE

MULTICODE

Telephone	☐ 01
Email	☐ 02
Letter	☐ 03
Fax	☐ 04
Website	☐ 05
Other (please specify)	☐ 07
Don't know	☐ 08

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q10 How did you find the contact information that you used to make your complaint?

DO NOT READ OUT BUT PROMPT IF NECESSARY

MULTICODE

On a bill or account statement	01
Supplier website	02
Other website	03
Other form of communication from supplier	04
Referred from other department within supplier e.g. accounts, meter reading	05
Consumer Focus	06
Consumer Direct	07
Copy of suppliers' Complaints Handling procedure	08
Energy Ombudsman	09
Citizens Advice Bureau	10
Age UK	11
Friends/Family	12
Other (please specify)	13
Don't know	14

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS REFERRED FROM OTHER DEPARTMENT (Q10 CODE 5)

Q11 You say that you were referred from a different part of [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], how satisfied were you with the way that your referral was handled?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	01
Quite satisfied	02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	03
Quite dissatisfied	04
Very dissatisfied	05
Don't know	06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS DISSATISFIED WITH REFERRAL (Q11 CODES 4 OR 5)

Q12 Why do you say that?

PROBE FULLY

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q13 How easy did you find it to get hold of the correct contact details to make your complaint?

READ OUT

Very easy	☐	01
Quite easy	☐	02
Neither easy, nor difficult	☐	03
Not very easy	☐	04
Not at all easy	☐	05
Don't know	☐	06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO FOUND IT VERY EASY OR DIFFICULT (Q13 CODES 1, 4 OR 5)

Q14 Why do you say that?

PROBE FULLY

Resolving the Complaint

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q14b We would like you to think about the service you receive when making a complaint, regardless of the company you are making a complaint to. We would like to understand how important some service aspects are to you, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very important and 5 very unimportant

READ OUT

Ease of registering your complaint	☐	01
Ease of finding the correct person to speak to/ contact	☐	02
Their attitude towards dealing with your complaint	☐	03
Their professionalism in dealing with your complaint	☐	04
Their understanding of your complaint or problem	☐	05
Taking a proactive approach to resolving your complaint	☐	06
The language used was simple and easy to understand – not too technical	☐	07
The feeling that someone had taken ownership of your complaint	☐	08
Their ability to make decisions there and then to help resolve your complaint	☐	09
Clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings in resolving your complaint	☐	10
Calling you back if promised or agreed	☐	11
Being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint if necessary	☐	12
The speed in resolving your complaint	☐	13

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q15 Thinking about the complaint that you made to [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], has your complaint been resolved by [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], by the Ombudsman or is it still ongoing?

READ OUT

Resolved by supplier	☐	01
Resolved by Ombudsman	☐	02
Not resolved	☐	03
Don’t know	☐	04

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q16 You told me that you had contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] more than once.

Were you given an explanation as to why your complaint was not resolved following your first contact?

Yes	01
No	02

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q17a How satisfied were you that you had to have more than one contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] before your complaint could be resolved?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	01
Quite satisfied	02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	03
Quite dissatisfied	04
Very dissatisfied	05
Don't know	06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT OR STILL NOT RESOLVED (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2 OR 3)

Q17b During the complaints process, if your complaint was not resolved by [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] by the end of the day after you had made the complaint, did they....?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

Direct you to their Complaints Handling procedure on their website	01
Offer to provide you with a copy of their Complaints Handling procedure free of charge	02
Neither of these	03

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q18a And were you given any of the following information to re-contact [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] whilst your complaint was being resolved?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

Telephone number	☐	01
Reference number	☐	02
Named contact	☐	03
Contact hours	☐	04
Email address	☐	05
None of these	☐	06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q19 And when you had to make further contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], did they have any of the following details about you and your complaint?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

Correct contact details	☐	01
A record of your complaint	☐	02
Full details about the complaint	☐	03
None of these	☐	04

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED BY SUPPLIER (Q6 CODES 1 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1)

Q20 Following your final contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], did you receive any confirmation, at the time or after, either by telephone or in writing, that your complaint had been resolved?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

Yes – telephone	☐ 01
Yes – letter	☐ 02
Yes – email	☐ 03
None of these	☐ 04

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED BY SUPPLIER (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1)

Q21 Were you expecting to receive any of the following forms of confirmation?

MULTICODE

Telephone call	☐ 01
Letter	☐ 02
Email	☐ 03
Nothing expected	☐ 04
Don't know	☐ 05

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED BY SUPPLIER (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1)

Q22 Were you given a timescale in which your complaint would be resolved?

DO NOT READ OUT BUT PROMPT IF NECESSARY

No timescale given	☐	01
Within 1 day	☐	02
Within 2 days	☐	03
Between 3 and 7 days (within a week)	☐	04
8 – 14 days (within a fortnight)	☐	05
14 – 28 days (within a month)	☐	06
Longer than 28 days	☐	07
Don't know	☐	08

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED BY SUPPLIER (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1)

Q22a And how satisfied were you with this?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	☐	01
Quite satisfied	☐	02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	☐	03
Quite dissatisfied	☐	04
Very dissatisfied	☐	05
Don't know	☐	06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS GIVEN A TIMESCALE (Q22 CODES 2 – 7)

Q23 And did [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] keep to this timescale?

Yes	☐	01
No	☐	02
Don't know	☐	03

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS GIVEN A TIMESCALE (Q22 CODES 2 – 7)

Q23b How satisfied were you with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] regarding the speed of resolution to your complaint?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	☐	01
Quite satisfied	☐	02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	☐	03
Quite dissatisfied	☐	04
Very dissatisfied	☐	05
Don't know	☐	06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q24a Whilst making your complaint to [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], at anytime did you have to escalate your concern to a senior member of staff or a manager?

Yes	☐	01
No	☐	02
Don't know	☐	03

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO ESCALATED THEIR CONCERN TO SENIOR MEMBER OF STAFF (Q24a CODE 1)

Q24b Did escalating your concern have a positive impact on the way in which your complaint was handled?

Yes	☐	01
No	☐	02
Don't know	☐	03

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHERE COMPLAINT NOT RESOLVED BY SUPPLIER (Q15 CODE 2 OR 3)

Q25 You say that your complaint was not resolved by [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], have any of the following taken place?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

[SUPPLIER FROM Q2] made you aware of Consumer Direct	☐	01
[SUPPLIER FROM Q2] made you aware of additional sources of information and advice - (please specify)	☐	02
[SUPPLIER FROM Q2] made you aware of the Energy Ombudsman	☐	03
You contacted another organisation (please specify)	☐	06
Anything else (please specify)	☐	12
No further action taken place	☐	13
Don't know	☐	14

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHERE COMPLAINT NOT RESOLVED BY SUPPLIER (Q15 CODE3)

Q25b Were you aware of the Energy Ombudsman prior to you making the complaint to [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2]?

Yes	☐	01
No	☐	02

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHERE COMPLAINT NOT RESOLVED BY SUPPLIER (Q15 CODE 3)

Q25c Did [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] provide you with a letter informing you about the Energy Ombudsman?

Yes	☐	01
No	☐	02

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WITH FURTHER ACTION FROM SUPPLIER (Q25 CODES 1 – 3)

Q26 How satisfied are you with the actions that [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] have taken?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	☐ 01
Quite satisfied	☐ 02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	☐ 03
Quite dissatisfied	☐ 04
Very dissatisfied	☐ 05
Don't know	☐ 06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO ARE VERY SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED (Q26 CODES 1, 4 OR 5)

Q27 Why do you say that?

PROBE FULLY

____

____

____

____

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHERE COMPLAINT NOT RESOLVED (Q15 CODE 2 OR 3)

Q28a What is happening with your complaint now?

PROBE FULLY

____

____

____

____

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHERE COMPLAINT NOT RESOLVED AND SUPPLIER THINKS RESOLVED (Q15 CODE 2 OR 3 AND S4 CODE 1)

Q28b We understand that [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] believes your complaint has been resolved. Have you received any communication from [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] to say that your complaint has been resolved?

Yes (**PROBE FULLY ON COMMUNICATION RECEIVED**)	☐ 01
No communication received	☐ 02
No – I do not believe my complaint is resolved	☐ 04
Don't Know	☐ 03

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO DO NOT THINK THEIR COMPLAINT IS RESOLVED (Q28b CODE 4)

Q28c Our understanding is your complaint with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] has been resolved. Please tell us why you do not feel your complaint has been resolved?

PROBE FULLY

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q29 I would now like to talk about the service that you received from [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] and the way in which you felt your complaint was handled.

For each statement that I read out, I would like you to tell me how satisfied you were with the service that you received using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means that you were not at all satisfied and 5 means you were very satisfied.

READ OUT

Ease of registering your complaint	☐ 01
Ease of finding the correct person to speak to/ contact	☐ 02
Their attitude towards dealing with your complaint	☐ 03
Their professionalism in dealing with your complaint	☐ 04
Their understanding of your complaint or problem	☐ 05
Taking a proactive approach to resolving your complaint	☐ 06
The language used was simple and easy to understand – not too technical	☐ 07
The feeling that someone had taken ownership of your complaint	☐ 08
Their ability to make decisions there and then to help resolve your complaint	☐ 09
Clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings in resolving your complaint	☐ 10
Calling you back if promised or agreed	☐ 11
Being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint if necessary	☐ 12
The speed in resolving your complaint	☐ 13

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLAINED IN WRITING (Q9 CODES 2 – 5)

Q30 Thinking about when you made your complaint to [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], did you receive confirmation, by letter, email or telephone that your complaint had been received and would be addressed?

MULTICODE

Yes – letter	☐	01
Yes – email	☐	02
Yes – telephone	☐	03
None of these	☐	04
Don't know	☐	05

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLAINED IN WRITING AND REQUIRED FURTHER CONTACT (Q9 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q6 CODES 2 – 5)

Q31 And did you receive an update on the progress or status of your complaint whilst waiting for it to be resolved?

Yes	☐	01
No	☐	02
Don't know	☐	03

Overall Satisfaction

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q34 Taking into account everything that we have talked about so far regarding the complaints process, how satisfied were you overall with the way in which your complaint was handled by [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2]?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	☐ 01
Quite satisfied	☐ 02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	☐ 03
Quite dissatisfied	☐ 04
Very dissatisfied	☐ 05
Don't know	☐ 06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS VERY SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED (Q34 CODES 1, 4 OR 5)

Q35 Why do you say that? IF DISSATISFIED **(Q34 CODES 4 OR 5) THEN ALSO ASK:** What could [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] have done differently to have made you satisfied with the service?

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT HAS BEEN RESOLVED (Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q36 And how satisfied were you with the resolution to your complaint?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	☐ 01
Quite satisfied	☐ 02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	☐ 03
Quite dissatisfied	☐ 04
Very dissatisfied	☐ 05
Don't know	☐ 06

Resolution

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT HAS BEEN RESOLVED (Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q37 Finally, thinking about the resolution to your complaint, did you **expect** to receive any of the following having made a complaint?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

Nothing expected	☐	01
Rectification of problem	☐	02
Apology letter or email	☐	03
Apology telephone call	☐	04
Compensation or apology payment	☐	05
Anything else (please specify)	☐	06
Don't know	☐	07

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT HAS BEEN RESOLVED (Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q38 And did you receive anything?

Nothing received	☐	01
Rectification of problem	☐	02
Apology letter or email	☐	03
Apology telephone call	☐	04
Compensation or apology payment	☐	05
Anything else (please specify)	☐	06
Don't know	☐	07

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO RECEVIED SOMETHING (Q38 CODES 2 – 5)

Q39 How satisfied were you that what you received adequately reflected the problems that you had encountered?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	☐	01
Quite satisfied	☐	02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	☐	03
Quite dissatisfied	☐	04
Very dissatisfied	☐	05
Don't know	☐	06

Recent Complaints

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q40 Before we finish, can you tell me if you have made a complaint, excluding the one we have talked about today, to any of the following types of company or organisation in the last 12 months?

READ OUT

Energy supplier	☐ 01
Water company	☐ 02
Telephone provider	☐ 03
Internet service provider	☐ 04
Bank or Building Society	☐ 05
Transport company e.g. trains or buses	☐ 06
Local council	☐ 07
Anyone else (please specify)	☐ 08
Don't know/ None of these	☐ 09

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS HAVING MADE A COMPLAINT TO NON-ENERGY COMPANIES (Q40 CODES 2 TO 8)

Q40b You have indicated you have made a complaint recently to companies not associated with your energy supply, please can you let me know how the experience of these complaints compare to your recent complaint with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2]?

1 Complaints experience with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] was much worse
2 Complaints experience with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] was about the same
3 Complaints experience with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] was much better

Water company [IF Q40=02]	☐ 02
Telephone provider [IF Q40=03]	☐ 03
Internet service provider [IF Q40=04]	☐ 04
Bank or Building Society [IF Q40=05]	☐ 05
Transport company e.g. trains or buses [IF Q40=06]	☐ 06
Local council [IF Q40=07]	☐ 07

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS HAVING BETTER SERVICE THAN ENERGY COMPANY (Q40b CODES 02-07 AND CODE 1)

Q40c Why was the service you received from [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] WORSE than your complaints experience with other companies?

____

____

____

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS HAVING WORSE SERVICE THAN ENERGY COMPANY (Q40b CODES 02-07 AND CODE 3)

Q40d Why was the service you received from [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] BETTER than your complaints experience with other companies?

____

____

____

Classification

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q42 Gender

INTERVIEWER RECORD – DO NOT READ OUT

Male	01
Female	02

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q43 And finally for classification purposes only, could you tell me which of the following age bands you fall into?

READ OUT

18 - 24	01
25 - 35	02
36 - 45	03
46 - 55	04
56 - 65	05
66+	06
Decline to answer	07

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q44 Which of the following best describes your current working status?

READ OUT

Working - full time (30+hrs)	01
Working - part time (8 - 29hrs)	02
Unemployed seeking work	03
Unemployed not seeking work	04
Retired	05
Decline to answer	06

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q44b Which of the following best describes the area where you live?

READ OUT

Urban	☐ 01
Suburban	☐ 02
Rural	☐ 03
Decline to answer	☐ 04

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q45 What is your marital status?

READ OUT

Married/living with partner	☐ 01
Single	☐ 02
Separated/Divorced/ Widowed	☐ 03
Decline to answer	☐ 04

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q45b On a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 is very confident and 4 is not at all confident, how confident are you about reading and writing?

READ OUT

Very confident	☐ 01
Somewhat confident	☐ 02
Not very Confident	☐ 03
Not at all confident	☐ 04
Decline to answer	☐ 05

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q45c Again, a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 is very confident and 4 is not at all confident, how confident do you feel about working with numbers?

READ OUT

Very confident	☐ 01
Somewhat confident	☐ 02
Not very Confident	☐ 03
Not at all confident	☐ 04
Decline to answer	☐ 05

BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 2)

Q46 And finally, for classification purposes and so that we can analyse our results by different type of business, could you please tell me your primary business activity?

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BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 2)

Q47 And your job title within the business?

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BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 2)

Q48 What is your companies' approximate annual turnover?

Less than £25,000	☐ 01
£25,000 to £50,000	☐ 02
£50,001 to £250,000	☐ 03
£250,001 to £500,000	☐ 04
£500,001 to £1 million	☐ 05
£1 million to £2 million	☐ 06
More than £2 million	☐ 07
Decline to answer	☐ 08

BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 2)

Q49 And how many full time employees do you have?

Number of employees	☐☐☐
Don't know	☐ 01

Thank you for your help. Can I just remind you that this interview is part of a market research survey being carried out by Harris Interactive. If you want to verify that we are a bona fide agency, I can give you the Freephone number of the Market Research Society to ring.

GIVE NUMBER IF REQUIRED (0500 396 999).

E2. Nature of Complaint Results

E.2.1 Domestic Customers – By Suppliers

	Domestic	Centrica	EDF	E.ON	npower	SSE	Scottish Power
Base	*2769*	*452*	*473*	*450*	*454*	*471*	*469*
BILLING (NET)	25%	24%	33%	23%	26%	30%	18%
Billing - accuracy of bill	14%	14%	16%	12%	14%	15%	11%
Billing - estimated bill	4%	3%	6%	4%	6%	6%	3%
Billing - frequency	4%	2%	9%	4%	4%	4%	2%
Billing - refunds	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	5%	2%
Billing - wrongly being billed	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	3%	1%
Billing - bills/correspondence going to wrong address	1%	1%	1%		1%		
Billing - sending bills/letters belonging to a different person					1%		
SALES (NET)	4%	3%	1%	7%	5%	2%	5%
Sales - mis-information provided	3%	3%	1%	6%	5%	2%	4%
Sales - behaviour of sales staff	1%			1%	1%	1%	1%
TRANSFER (NET)	7%	7%	10%	6%	7%	5%	8%
Transfer - problems switching to supplier	4%	4%	7%	4%	4%	3%	5%
Transfer - problems switching from supplier	3%	4%	4%	2%	4%	2%	3%
METERS (NET)	20%	22%	19%	16%	18%	23%	16%
Meters - meter readings	12%	11%	13%	10%	11%	14%	12%
Meters - accuracy of meter	4%	5%	4%	3%	4%	4%	2%
Meter - change of meter	2%	3%	1%	2%	3%	1%	1%
Faulty meter/not working properly	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	3%	1%
Meters - position of meter	1%	2%		1%	1%	1%	1%
Meter - installation of a meter	1%		1%			1%	
PRICES (NET)	28%	23%	25%	38%	28%	28%	32%
Prices - amount of increase	15%	11%	11%	26%	13%	15%	15%
Prices - direct debits	11%	9%	14%	13%	11%	10%	13%
Prices - notification of increases	2%	1%	2%	2%	3%	4%	3%
Prices - being in credit & still wanting to raise payments/direct debit etc.	1%	1%		1%	2%	1%	3%
Prices - they decreased payments/I wanted to increase the payments etc.	1%	1%			1%		
Prices - discounts/offers/low income schemes/government grants etc.	1%			1%	2%	2%	2%
Prices - pricing/payments/schemes etc.	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%
DEBT (NET)	3%	3%	7%	2%	4%	3%	1%
Debt - debt recovery	2%	2%	4%	1%	3%	1%	
Debt - debt payment schemes	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Debt - disconnection			1%				
OTHER (NET)	40%	42%	37%	31%	47%	40%	46%
Prepayment meters e.g. setting, faults, use	9%	10%	8%	7%	12%	9%	6%
Customer service - general	8%	8%	11%	8%	6%	6%	12%
Wrong/conflicting information/inconsistency	3%	5%	2%	2%	4%	2%	3%
Wrong tariff/overcharge of tariff (charges)	3%	3%	2%	2%	5%	3%	5%
Gas card/prepayment card problems/electricity key	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%
Account problems (admin, set up)	2%	3%	4%	1%	3%	2%	2%
Took too long to sort out	2%	3%	2%	1%	3%	1%	4%
Problems caused by changing address/business/premises/ name	2%	3%	2%	1%	4%	3%	1%
Engineer/meter reader didn't turn up/late	2%	3%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Internet / website problems	2%	2%	3%		1%	1%	3%
Service cut off/no supply	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	3%	1%
They don't stick to their promises (adhere to contract terms)	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%	2%
Boiler problems	2%	2%		1%		1%	7%
Change of supplier	2%	1%	3%	1%	4%	3%	3%
Poor communication/no contact	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Extra charges - cancellation fees/for new meter/sending people out etc.	1%	1%		1%	2%	1%	1%
Contract cancelled	1%	1%					1%
Unsatisfactory administration	1%	1%	1%	1%			1%
Cost - too high	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Dual fuel problems	1%	1%	1%		1%		1%
No/poor explanations	1%	1%	1%		1%	1%	
Poor staff attitude (any)	1%	1%					
I had to chase them/I had to keep ringing	1%	1%			1%	1%	1%
Previous tenant owing money	1%			1%	1%	1%	

Transfer without consent	1%		1%	1%		2%	
Final account	1%		1%	1%	2%		
Electric/gas usage	1%			1%	2%	1%	
Homecare agreement							1%
They took too much money out of my account					1%	1%	
Not being charged for electric or gas							1%
Solar panel/micro generation problems (not being paid etc.)							1%
Contract - problems, didn't want it or sign for it			1%		1%		1%
Confusing bill/explanation of bill needed			1%				1%
Nasty letters/nuisance calls/rudeness/threats			1%		1%		
Contract incorrect/on wrong contract							1%

E.2.2 Micro Business Customers – By Suppliers

	Micro Business	Centrica	EDF	E.ON	npower	SSE	Scottish Power
Base	*256*	*51*	*27*	*52*	*55*	*33*	*38*
BILLING (NET)	35%	33%	41%	31%	44%	27%	34%
Billing - accuracy of bill	25%	25%	26%	19%	27%	18%	32%
Billing - estimated bill	4%	2%	7%	6%	2%	6%	3%
Billing - wrongly being billed	4%	4%	4%	8%	5%		
Billing - frequency	2%		4%		5%		3%
Billing - refunds	2%	2%	4%	2%	4%		3%
Billing - bills/correspondence going to wrong address	1%				2%	3%	
SALES (NET)	2%			4%	5%		
Sales - mis-information provided	2%			4%	4%		
Sales - behaviour of sales staff					2%		
TRANSFER (NET)	8%	6%	11%	8%	7%	9%	11%
Transfer - problems switching to supplier	5%	6%	7%	6%	4%	3%	5%
Transfer - problems switching from supplier	3%		4%	2%	4%	6%	5%
METERS (NET)	24%	20%	26%	25%	22%	30%	26%
Meters - meter readings	15%	10%	15%	17%	13%	24%	16%
Meters - accuracy of meter	6%	8%	4%	4%	9%	6%	5%
Faulty meter/not working properly	2%		4%	2%		3%	3%
Meters - position of meter	1%			2%			3%
Meter - change of meter	1%	2%	4%	2%			
Meter - installation of a meter					2%		
PRICES (NET)	17%	24%	4%	23%	11%	15%	18%
Prices - direct debits	7%	6%	4%	12%	5%	6%	8%
Prices - amount of increase	6%	10%		8%	5%	6%	5%
Prices - notification of increases	2%	2%			4%	6%	
Prices - standing charges	1%	4%					
Prices - discounts/offers/low income schemes/government grants etc.	1%						5%
Prices - pricing/payments/schemes etc.	1%	2%		4%			
DEBT (NET)	4%	4%	7%	4%	4%	6%	
Debt - disconnection	2%		4%	2%	4%	3%	
Debt - debt payment schemes	1%		4%			3%	
Debt - debt recovery	1%	4%		2%			
OTHER (NET)	33%	33%	44%	25%	24%	36%	47%
Customer service - general	6%	6%	4%	2%	7%	3%	16%
Wrong tariff/overcharge of tariff (charges)	6%	6%	4%	2%	4%	12%	13%
Account problems (admin, set up)	3%	6%	4%	2%		6%	3%
Contract - problems, didn't want it or sign for it	3%	4%	4%	2%	4%	3%	
Wrong/conflicting information/inconsistency	2%		11%	2%		3%	3%
Previous tenant owing money	2%		11%	2%			
Poor communication/no contact	2%	4%	4%			6%	
Change of supplier	2%	2%		4%	5%		
Extra charges - cancellation fees/for new meter/sending people out etc.	2%	2%		4%	2%	6%	
Service cut off/no supply	2%	2%	7%	2%	2%		3%
Problems caused by changing address/business/premises/ name	2%	2%	7%	2%			
Prepayment meters e.g. setting, faults, use	1%					3%	5%
Transfer without consent	1%			2%	2%	3%	
Poor staff attitude (any)	1%					3%	3%
I had to chase them/I had to keep ringing	1%		4%			3%	
Switch from domestic to business account	1%	2%				3%	
Contract incorrect/on wrong contract	1%	2%	4%				
Internet / website problems							3%
Unsatisfactory administration					2%		
Nasty letters/nuisance calls/rudeness/threats						3%	
Reminder policy/demand			4%				
Confusing bill/explanation of bill needed			4%				
Cost - too high			4%				
They don't stick to their promises (adhere to contract terms etc.)			4%				
Boiler problems		2%					
Contract cancelled						3%	
They took too much money out of my account						3%	
Fees and bank charges as a result of initial problem						3%	