

**Evidence gathering session on
rollout issues
19 April 2010**

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GROUP 1 FEEDBACK

The attendees were split into two groups and were asked to explore how the options for local coordination which have been suggested. The main feedback covered:

- Buildings containing multiple meter points (such as flats and apartments) need a technical solution. There was a suggestion of a separate working group (dual fuel) to solve issues. Most felt this needed to be worked on immediately.
- Coordination of a single visit did not seem viable. There is a need to ensure that supplier competition is not compromised (must not be interdependencies...e.g. gas meter not dependent on communications in the electricity meter box).
- Parties should know what will happen on the installation visit. (Critical path, what suppliers need to know, what Meter Operators need to know). Ideally players should be offering energy advice. Broadly the visit should cover three main areas:
 - Meter installed
 - Meter observed working correctly
 - Literature handed over and knowledge exchange to consumer
- There should be a 2 way information flow between players so suppliers know what local authorities want to support and what suppliers' plans are.
- There should be a softer obligation for both suppliers and local authorities to work together. There could be a need to have a central point for coordination although this needs to be flexible enough to accommodate things like eco towns.
- Suppliers may need help from Local authorities to communicate with communities.

GROUP 2 FEEDBACK

The attendees were split into two groups and were asked to explore the suggested options for local coordination. The main feedback covered:

- Some parties felt that suppliers were in the best position to roll out meters, but want there to be more coordination around other areas such as consumer communication etc.
- There were concerns around unsafe appliances or technical issues that could mean a smart meter was not fitted and supply cut off to a premise. This occurs to some extent today, but higher levels of installations are likely increase the frequency during rollout. There needs to be thought around the codes of practice in such instances and a clear guide on who will be responsible for funding corrective actions (customer, supplier, local authority).
- There was general agreement that the processes involved need to be kept simple because of the large numbers involved. A simple process will be easier to understand and will create fewer issues.
- Suppliers felt that there should be a minimum of rules and regulations put in place for rollout. Suppliers would then be free to work in the most successful areas for take-up. This could be, for example, in areas where local campaigns are being run.
- There were concerns over the risk of suppliers transferring costs to other trusted third parties (e.g. citizen's advice bureau). Whilst in some cases this could be the most efficient solution, funding implications need to be understood.
- Suppliers felt that it would be too difficult to coordinate with other suppliers when dealing with house visits. It was felt that suppliers in some circumstances (e.g. in flats) should be made to coordinate. Flats contain a large number of meters and rollout of smart meters in flats would be aided by a coordinated effort both by the suppliers and flats management companies.
- There was concern that the smart metering programme will not link in with other Government programmes already in place such as CERT and CESP. Suppliers have separate teams for each programme and feel that each is separated by the way they are audited. Smart metering will have to be coordinated with other programmes to realise its full potential.
- Guidelines on customers who refuse smart meters need to be decided in advance. The group felt that incentives were a better motivator than making the rollout mandatory to customers.
- Clarity on the role of local groups and how they will be funded for smart metering rollout.
- The role of the meter installer needs to be confirmed as soon as possible. Whether they are going to be involved in the education of customers or whether they are going to discuss ways of being more energy efficient (insulation etc).
- The codes of practice need to be a robust document to make sure that suppliers know what is expected and other parties feel protected.
- Guidance on vulnerable customers or those with special needs is necessary.

- Some suppliers are starting the rollout early so some thought needs to be given to experiences and the possibility of benefitting from that learning going forward.