

DCC SSSG 1: Scope & Services Workstream

DRAFT Minutes of 2 nd Pre-Payment workshop sponsored under SG1	From:	Ofgem	14 December 2010
	Date and time of Meeting:	8 December 2010, 13:30	
	Location:	Ofgem	

1. Present

Dora Guzeleva (Chair)	OFGEM
Andrew Pearson	British Gas
Dave Crookes	EDF Energy
Jon Spence	Elexon
Jeff Studholme	AMO
Alex Travell	Eon-UK
Jill Ashby	Gemserv/MRA
Alex Hurcombe	RWE Npower
Stephen McLaughlin	Scottish Power
Alastair Manson	ERA
Prashant Sharma	Utilita
Andy Evason	OFGEM
Colin Sawyer	OFGEM
Liz Chester / Maxine Frerk (part only)	OFGEM

2. Agenda Item 1: Introduction and workshop objectives

- 2.1. It was explained that there had been considerable discussion previously of the ease or difficulty of achieving a working and interoperable solution for Pre-Payment Mode (PPM) operation of smart meters. The aim of the workshop was to work through a number of possible approaches to PPM both before and after DCC go live, including:
- Identifying the key requirements to be addressed in the smart metering specification;
 - Identifying the key responsibilities of the DCC in relation to 'smart PPM';
 - Identifying options for supporting PPM during the period between the issue of the technical specification and DCC go-live.
- 2.2. To facilitate the discussion, Ofgem had prepared a presentation (available on the Ofgem web site at <http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/Pages/MoreInformation.aspx?docid=123&refer=E-SERVE/SM/STAKEHOLDER/DCG>) which was used as the basis of the remainder of the meeting.

3. Objectives of prepayment arrangements under smart metering

- 3.1. The objectives on slide 4 of the presentation were discussed. No changes were identified.

4. Requirements of 'smart PPM' after DCC Go Live

- 4.1. During the discussion of slides 6 to 9 the following observations were made:
- On slide 6, the DCC box should include a bullet point for DCC to support the transfer of PPM related messages between the meter and the supplier as required.

- b. There was a discussion of whether the DCC should maintain records of whether a meter was in PPM or credit mode, but no consensus was reached.
- c. Energy supplies commented that suppliers should be responsible for configuring the meter and that the DCC should not need to validate such messages.
- d. On Change of Supplier (CoS), it was suggested that the the Losing Supplier should set the meter balance to zero and sort out any credit or debt with the consumer. The Gaining Supplier would then configure it appropriately for the tariff expected by the consumer.
- e. Messages relating to PPM top-ups should be given a high priority by the DCC, because the consumer would be waiting at the payment point for a response.
- f. There was a discussion of what would happen if a consumer attempted to make a payment with a card containing a combination of meter number (MPAN/MPRN) and supplier which failed DCC's access control validation (i.e. a supplier that was not responsible for supplying energy to the consumer). The error should be detected by the supplier or the DCC:
 - i. One approach proposed was that the consumer should get a message back explaining the error and providing a contact number for the call centre operated by the registered supplier. If the consumer called the correct supplier they could obtain a temporary top-up and be directed to the correct pay point / agent.
 - ii. An alternative option would be for the supplier receiving the payment incorrectly to request that the DCC passed the 'payment' to the meter and passed the money to the Gaining Supplier. This was seen as problematic because it would weaken the access control to the meter (since generally only the registered supplier should be able to operate the meter) and because of the need to pass payments between suppliers. A concern was also expressed that if a consumer could effectively pay using the wrong agent, that they could carry on doing this, causing extra work for suppliers.
- g. There was a discussion of whether the generation of the 'UTRN' or equivalent should be undertaken by the DCC or by suppliers and passed through to the meter by the DCC. The general view seemed to be that it would be simpler for UTRN generation to be undertaken by the DCC as this would remove the need to pass and information required to generate the UTRN from supplier to supplier on CoS.
- h. Once the process of changing supplier has been started, it should be possible for the consumer to make a payment to the Gaining Supplier before the actual point of transfer of control of the meter.
- i. There was a discussion of what the 'safe and reasonably practical' test would mean with smart meters. Points discussed included:
 - i. If the meter was not in an accessible location, a wired interface device (located in an accessible place) might need to be provided if a PPM tariff was to be provided. This may require the meter technical specification to include the requirement for a port on the meter to allow remoting of the meter controls.
 - ii. The safe and reasonable test depends on the meter location and on the details of the consumer (i.e. whether they are a vulnerable customer, whether they have dialysis equipment at the premise, etc.) and the features of the product sold to the customer. The supplier would be responsible for checking the capabilities of the consumer before allowing the transfer to the a PPM tariff, this is business as usual.

- iii. There might be some PPM payment options (such as an automatic payment from a debit or credit card when the credit falls below a certain level, in the same way as for an Oyster card) which are relatively safe because they did not need the consumer to access the meter. But even in this case, there might be issues if, for example, the automatic card payment fails.
- iv. It is likely that standard IHDs will receive information only. Also they will only be guaranteed for 12 months and may not display all the information needed by prepayment customers (e.g. debt recovery balances). This might mean that a more complex 'PPM IHD' may be needed and the minimum specifications for a 'PPM IHD' needs to be included in the Technical Specification.
- v. Work needs to be undertaken to decide what information is displayed on the meter and/or IHD for a meter in PPM.
- j. It was commented that re-connection of the energy supply required someone at the premise – for example to turn off any cookers, fires, etc before re-connection of supply. This implies that the IHD could not be used for to activate the reconnection because the IHD might be outside the premise. This could mean that any meter in an inappropriate or inaccessible position would need a wired remote interface irrespective of what functionality the IHD may have.

5. Requirements of 'smart PPM' in the period between Tech Spec Publication and DCC Go Live

- 5.1. During the discussion of the slides 10 to 13 two options for Interim Interoperability were discussed. These were labelled as A and B and corresponded to options 5 and 6 as identified by DCG Subgroup 2. These options were identified for discussion since options 1 to 4 as developed by Subgroup 2 had similar characteristics to the DCC and the points discussed on slides 6 to 9 would therefore apply to them.
- 5.2. The points raised in discussion of slides 10 to 13 are as follows:
 - a. With Option A (where the Installing Supplier provides metering services to the Gaining Supplier) it is likely that the Installing Supplier would need to generate the UTRN for the Gaining Supplier to keep the meter in PPM. This means that a 'real time' interface needs to be developed by each energy supplier that is capable of handling requests to generate a UTRN from each of the other major suppliers and to return the required information without delaying the consumer. This might be costly and technically challenging, since most suppliers systems expect standard data flows and non real-time processing. Similar real time interfaces might be required for energisation/de-energisation and other services. One supplier representative questioned whether it would be possible to build and test this capability in the time available.
 - b. With Option B each energy supplier would need to build and operate its own head ends and associated back-office processes for PPM. Some suppliers may not have planned to offer PPM during the Interim Period, so that requiring them to do so may result in additional costs. It was commented that option B might be easier if a standard head-end was possible (because of the reduction in cost and complexity compared to multiple head ends) and also that suppliers might use agents to provide some of the required capabilities.
 - c. It was commented that with either Option A or B it would be important to define a consistent set of checks to be undertaken by any supplier prior to accepting a payment to avoid misdirected payments.