

**Energy suppliers are legally obligated to actively investigate the theft of energy. Your energy supplier recognises the importance of identifying where customers may be facing challenging circumstances whilst undertaking their investigations however energy theft is dangerous and a criminal activity.**

## **Theft Charter**

### **Background**

Your energy supplier recognises that some customers face challenging circumstances which require an appropriate level of support. Customers must themselves understand that anybody meter tampering is committing a criminal offence. They also put their home and their family at risk.

The Theft Charter is a cross-industry commitment to ensure a consistent approach is taken whilst undertaking energy theft investigations. Where a customer is found to be vulnerable the appropriate actions will be taken to ensure the welfare of the individual(s) is recognised whilst continuing to investigate a potential criminal offence.

### **Supplier Obligations**

Energy suppliers are legally obligated to undertake a number of measures to proactively identify and investigate meter tampering. Where it is found that meter tampering has occurred an energy supplier is entitled to recover the associated costs and depending on the severity of the tamper possibly undertake court action.

Your energy supplier will seek to identify who has committed the meter tamper and determine the appropriate level of enforcement. Depending on the extent and severity of the offence they may also consider action in the criminal courts.

An energy supplier must also ensure that the premise where the tamper has occurred is made safe.

### **Reasonable Supplier Actions**

In checking for meter tampering, energy suppliers can undertake the following reasonable actions:

- Gain access to a premise to inspect the metering equipment; a visual check is essential to confirm tampering activity and assess whether the premise and equipment is safe.
- If access is refused, a supplier can apply for a Court Warrant which gives the legal right to force entry to a premise.
- Recover all costs associated with the tamper investigation and the value of energy assessed to have been stolen.
- Install alternative metering equipment e.g. a pre-payment meter.
- Monitor on-going energy consumption and maintain appropriate records to help determine whether there are any further attempts to use energy illegally.
- Disconnect the supply where co-operation is not achieved and/or premises upon inspection are found to be unsafe.
- Undertake action in the civil courts to recover all of their costs and the value of stolen and unbilled energy where a customer decides not to pay.
- Pursue action in the criminal courts either via private prosecution or via the Police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

or Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) in Scotland.

## Charter Principles

By supporting the Charter energy suppliers agree to ensure the following activities:

- Integration of the Charter with wider cross-organisation policies and procedures including dealing with customer vulnerability.
- An appropriate programme of vulnerability awareness training is undertaken with all relevant staff.
- Activities are clearly explained to customers (where present) whilst the meter tamper investigation is ongoing.
- Provision of a clearly written summary of the findings and next steps.
- Awareness of the Charter and compliance with its principles by all organisations that may visit a premise during a meter tamper investigation.
- Confirm if an alternative named contact needs to be made aware of investigation and possible next steps where a vulnerable customer is identified.
- Clearly record on-site observations including any cases of suspected customer vulnerability. Discuss spreading payments over a longer period of time or installing alternative metering equipment to recover the costs in manageable amounts in instances where meter tampering is confirmed.

## Implementation Measures

Implementation of the Charter is based on the following implementation measures:

- **Obligation** – on individual suppliers to promote the Charter on their websites as part of a wider Vulnerable Customer Policy.
- **Continuous improvement** – regular review of the Charter to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
- **Code of Practice** – is supported by an industry Code of Practice which reflects the principles set out in the Charter.
- **Annual independent checks** - to ensure suppliers are continuing to follow the Charter's principles.
- **Engagement** – industry will continue to work with Ofgem, Energy UK, Citizens Advice, charities and other relevant bodies and organisations to offer vulnerable customers the most suitable solutions.



**Vulnerability  
Aware**