

# Heat Network Industry Council statement: Monitoring

Heat Networks  
Industry Council



## Context

In response to the exceptional circumstances caused by the coronavirus pandemic, members of the Heat Network Industry Council agreed and published in early May a statement setting out how companies will go above and beyond to support customers during this difficult time.

This is a voluntary agreement and the organisations who have signed up to this agreement do so for the heat networks where they have the authority to do so.

In all cases, the statement encourages heat network companies to work with customers and be responsive to their individual circumstances.

This qualitative statement is accompanied by a confidential quantitative submission by all companies on a quarterly basis. A summary of this quantitative submission is published in aggregate by Heat Trust.



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## Identifying and prioritising customers at risk

### What the statement says

We will seek to identify and prioritise customers who may need additional support and consider the needs of customers taking into account that:

- Priority Service Register customers may need extra advice and support.

### 1. What we are doing: Engaging customers who may need to be added to the Priority Service Register [tick all that apply]

- Staff are trained to identify those who may need to be added and proactively engage new and existing customers to check on any changed circumstances
- Field staff are trained and are responding if they identify someone who may need to be added

**Further information:** The staff have been informed and training provided to encourage them to ask customers in a polite and discreet manner about their current situation listening out for 'Direct', 'Subtle' or 'Non-verbal' triggers such as: customer starts crying on the phone, "I can't afford to pay my bills" "My son does that for me", "I'm in a wheel chair", apologising over and over again, or if the customer persistently coughs or sniffs, or talks in a mono tone displaying signs of possible depression, all the while appraising if the customer should be registered as vulnerable or in need of additional support.

### 2. What we are doing: Providing additional advice and support to customers on the Priority Service Register [tick all that apply]

- Providing communication support, including for information on coronavirus, such as providing information in different languages and ensuring all information is accessible
- Providing additional support for those in vulnerable circumstances such as working with customers to nominate a bill payer, providing additional safety measures for calls to the house and signposting to impartial advice.

**Further information:** Information is available and accessible in a variety of formats, medias and languages should the need arise and available to all in the event of a direct request.

Within our service delivery, we commit to work with all customer groups and demographics to ensure suitable support is in place to assist our customers, including the nomination of a bill payer or the implementation of a doorstep password.



### What the statement says

We will seek to identify and prioritise customers who may need additional support and consider the needs of customers taking into account that:

- Prepayment meter customers, both smart and legacy, will need specific support.

### 3. What we are doing: Providing specific support to prepayment customers [tick all that apply]

Ensuring that customers on analogue prepayment meters have alternative means to top up if they cannot go to a local top-up point

Providing access to additional emergency credit if needed

**Further information:** We operate emergency and friendly credit, ensuring our pre-payment customers do not self-isolate due to an inability for what ever reason to top up their credit. We also operate, on-line top up, automated telephone top up and over the phone top up facilities for our prepayment customers.

We will support customers who are impacted financially as a direct or indirect result of coronavirus

### What the statement says

We will support customers who are impacted financially as a direct or indirect result of coronavirus. Based on individual circumstances, this could include:

- Considering reassessing or reducing debt repayment and bill payments for domestic customers in financial distress

### 4. What we are doing: Ensuring processes are in place to respond to customers' changing financial circumstances [tick all that apply]

All repayment plans include an affordability assessment

Regularly engaging with customers to respond to changing circumstances

Providing a range of repayment plans or tailoring default repayment plans to customers' individual circumstances

**Further information:** All repayment plans are set whilst considering the customers ability and affordability for payment. They are regularly reviewed and altered in conjunction with the customer to reflect any change in circumstances that may affect the customers ability to continue to repay.



### What the statement says

We will support customers who are impacted financially as a direct or indirect result of coronavirus. Based on individual circumstances, this could include:

- Considering referring customers who are struggling to pay to third party debt advisers such as StepChange and Citizens Advice.

### 5. What we are doing: Referring customers to third party advisers if needed [tick all that apply]

- Proactively making referrals to organisations such as StepChange and Citizens Advice

**Further information:** we will refer the customers to organisations, support and guidance on the phone and on website

We will support prepayment meter customers directly or indirectly impacted by coronavirus to stay on supply

### What the statement says

We will support prepayment meter customers directly or indirectly impacted by coronavirus to stay on supply. We will promote online and/or telephone smart prepayment top-up channels, where available. Where this is not available, based on individual circumstances, this could include:

- Enabling customers to nominate a trusted third party to be able to pick up discretionary credit sent to a shop on their behalf

### 6. What we are doing: Enabling customers to nominate a trusted third party if needed [tick all that apply]

- Proactively ensuring customers can nominate a trusted third party to pick up credit

**Further information:**

### What the statement says

We will support prepayment meter customers directly or indirectly impacted by coronavirus to stay on supply. We will promote online and/or telephone smart prepayment top-up channels, where available. Where this is not available, based on individual circumstances, this could include:

- Having particular regard for the regulatory requirements and the potential impact of coronavirus, when applying the 'safe and reasonable' test when considering switching a customer from credit to prepay



**7. What we are doing: Having regard to how the 'safe and reasonable test' should be considered within the context of coronavirus [tick all that apply]**

Reflecting the impact of coronavirus on our assessment of, for example, customers' ability to understand and operate prepayment meters and visit top-up points where needed, whether customers require a continuous supply for health reasons and whether customers have continuous access to the prepayment meter

**Further information:** we offer possibility to top up online and via phone with helpdesk or our new automatic phone line for top up and payments

## Providing information

### What the statement says

We will make available information, advice and guidance to customers on what help is available, including that the energy usage of self-isolating customers may go up as a result of being at home more, and sign posting to sources of support.

This will include several different communication channels such as a supplier's website, a contact phone number for customers etc; recognising that not all customers will have internet access.

**8. What we are doing: Using different communication channels for information, advice and guidance [tick all that apply]**

Paper-based; including, for example, on people's bills and letters

Providing a contact phone number for customers

Providing online support and guidance

**Further information:** information on the bills about phone numbers to call, for online support or helpdesk support, via phone and webb. Helpdesk open 5 hours on Saturdays for support on phone and online

