



UK Government

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# Communicating the rollout of smart-contingent contracts (and associated policy changes) to non-domestic customers

Energy supplier toolkit

Produced by Verian as part of a research project



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# Introduction

## Background to the toolkit

The government's response to its consultation on the Non-Domestic Smart Meter Rollout Post-2025<sup>1</sup> has confirmed that:

- From **1<sup>st</sup> September 2027**, if energy suppliers enter into new fixed term energy contracts with non-domestic customers, they must ensure the contract includes a term which provides that the customer has, or agrees to have, smart or advanced meters installed in their designated premises.
- From **1<sup>st</sup> January 2027**, suppliers must start to communicate the upcoming policy changes so that non-domestic consumers understand what is expected, why and when.
- Energy suppliers must be fully compliant with a legally binding consumer protection code **by 1<sup>st</sup> September 2027**.

The government has introduced this policy package to support the rollout of smart-contingent contracts (fixed term non-domestic energy contracts, which are significantly cheaper than alternatives, that require the installation of a smart meter) in a way that protects non-domestic consumers from the risks of market-led implementation whilst driving the levels of smart meter coverage needed for the Clean Power 2030 Mission.

This toolkit (published alongside the government's response to its consultation) provides guidance to energy suppliers on how the policy package can be effectively communicated to non-domestic customers. It includes guidance on recommended content, ordering, language, and presentation.

## How this toolkit was created

DESNZ commissioned Verian, an independent research agency, to conduct qualitative research (focus groups and interviews) with 43 small and medium sized businesses and public sector organisations. All organisations did not have smart meters installed in any or some of their business premises at the time of research (December 2025 – January 2026).

Draft communications reflected the policy proposals as consulted upon by the government between October 2025 and January 2026.<sup>2</sup>

Communication testing sought to explore how different communication elements influence consumers' understanding and response to the roll-out of smart-contingent contracts. In particular, different policy framings, design features (including language, length and tone), and views on who this information should come from were explored.

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<sup>1</sup> [Non-domestic smart meter rollout post-2025 - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Non-domestic smart meter rollout post-2025 - GOV.UK](#)

Participant feedback was analysed to assess which aspects of the draft communications worked well and which elements could be improved, and how. This toolkit provides recommendations for communications based on this insight. The findings deliberately focus on broad principles for communication, which are relevant for communicating the final policy design (including any amendments since consultation) as outlined in the government response.

While this qualitative research was carried out with a sample designed to capture the diversity of views across organisations, the recommendations set out here are indicative in nature and may require further testing. Energy suppliers may wish to tailor these recommendations to their own approaches or combine them with their own insight.

More detail on the messages tested, research methodology, sample and its findings can be found in the published research findings report<sup>3</sup> and a full sample breakdown can be found in the accompanying technical annex<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://gov.uk/government/publications/communicating-the-rollout-of-smart-contingent-contracts-to-non-domestic-customers>

<sup>4</sup> <https://gov.uk/government/publications/communicating-the-rollout-of-smart-contingent-contracts-to-non-domestic-customers>

## How to use this toolkit

This toolkit consists of three sections which contain guidance of different levels, going from broad to detailed:

- [Section 1](#) outlines some key principles which can be applied to communications regarding the rollout of smart-contingent contracts and associated policy changes (e.g. to help deliver the supplier awareness raising requirement)
- [Section 2](#) provides guidance on how to apply these principles in customer communications – including recommended content, ordering, language, and presentation
- [Section 3](#) provides an example template of a letter that applies these principles in practice. Suppliers may wish to use this template directly or amend as relevant for their customer base.

# 1. Key principles of communication

There are four broad principles which our evidence suggests can be applied to effectively communicate the policy changes to smart-contingent contracts. These are:

- **Frame the rollout as beneficial to organisations and as part of a wider national upgrade:** providing benefits to organisations and reinforcing that smart meters are part of a broader modernisation of national infrastructure provides an intuitive, meaningful rationale for the rollout of smart-contingent contracts and accompanying policy changes
- **Address customers' needs around cost and convenience:** for example, by reassuring them that meter exchange(s) will be offered at a time convenient to them and at no additional cost
- **Build trust:** signpost the government's oversight of the policy changes and be transparent by referencing the wider benefits of smart meters to suppliers and to Britain's energy system
- **Make further information easy to find:** signpost to where organisations can find more information on the policy, such as nuances for businesses that use intermediaries or roles and responsibilities regarding installation

The rest of this section contains further detail on these principles. The next section 'How to apply these principles' provides insight from the consumer research as rationale behind these suggestions.

## Frame the rollout as beneficial to organisations and as part of a wider national upgrade

Businesses and public sector organisations are more likely to respond positively when the rationale for the policy is framed around the benefits that smart meters can bring to their organisation, as this rationale is intuitive and easy to understand.

They are also more likely to respond positively when the roll out of smart meters is positioned as a routine, national infrastructure upgrade. Organisations included in the research felt this was a positive framing that implied progress and improvement.

Both framings contributed to positive responses, suggesting they can be used together to strengthen the overall messaging.

## Address customers' needs around cost and convenience

Businesses and public sector organisations that took part in the research were more likely to consider accepting a smart meter when they were informed about the financial benefits of fixed term contracts and reassured about costs and inconvenience relating to the smart meter installation. This included:

- Informing customers that fixed term contracts are generally cheaper than alternatives
- Informing customers that their meter exchange will be offered at no additional cost
- Informing customers that you will work with them to agree an appointment at a time that is convenient for them

## Build trust by signposting the government's oversight of policy changes

Businesses and public sector organisations are more likely to respond positively to the policy changes when they understand that they are being introduced by Government. This signals that the coordination of the rollout of smart-contingent contracts is a central decision, rather than one from their supplier.

Alongside this, communications should make it clear that suppliers are responsible for delivering the policy changes. Explicitly signalling energy suppliers' responsibility for arranging smart meter installations helps to build trust.

When explaining the benefits of smart meters, communications should also reference the wider benefits of smart meters (e.g. to suppliers and to Britain's energy system). Organisations included in the research saw this as transparent (as it was not trying to hide that other parties benefit too) and felt it helped to build the case for smart meters more widely, creating the potential for this to help establish trust in the message.

## Make further information easy to find

Communications about the policy are likely to land more effectively when the core communication is streamlined to important information only, with further detail provided in supplementary information. For example, qualifying information on non-domestic customer rights and expectations, third party support in cases of disputes and nuances for specific business or organisation types should sit outside the main communication. A clear link to supplementary information (from you as the supplier and from government) within the main communication could also be provided.

A summary table of recommended supplementary information which could be signposted is included at the end of this toolkit.

## 2. How to apply these principles in the main communication

Organisations that participated in the research deemed the information below to be most important for inclusion in the main communication, in this order:

1. What the policy change is
2. Why government is coordinating the rollout of smart-contingent contracts
3. What happens if customers sign a smart-contingent contract and then cannot have a smart meter installed
4. What customers need to do and how suppliers will make it easy for them

Further detail on what to include in each section and how to position this information is outlined below. This guidance draws on the key principles outlined in the first section.

### What the policy change is

The research suggested that the policy change should be introduced explicitly in the opening section of the communication.

#### More effective

| Approach                                                                                                                                                                     | Evidence for this approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Including text clearly outlining what is changing, the date of the change, and the government's role                                                                         | Organisations that participated in the research wanted what was happening to be made clear at the beginning of the communication, without any distracting detail. They wanted it to be clear who is introducing and overseeing the policy change and when the policy would come into effect to help them plan. |
| Including what the alternative is for customers that don't want a fixed term contract / smart meter (i.e. that they will need to choose a different type of energy contract) | Organisations that participated in the research indicated that including the alternative would help make the policy change clearer and would help them understand their options.                                                                                                                               |

| Approach                                                                                   | Evidence for this approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Stating the price differential between the fixed term contracts you offer and alternatives | Organisations that participated in the research were presented with information that fixed term contracts are on average 40% cheaper than alternatives. This was felt to be informative and has the potential to increase motivation to adopt a smart-contingent contract. |

## Less effective

| Approach                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Evidence against this approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Including qualifying information in the opening statement (e.g. how this applies to different meter types or those who use third party intermediaries – a full list can be found in the last section of the toolkit) | Organisations that participated in the research found that additional detail in the opening paragraph distracted from landing the key change, making it harder to understand what was changing. Even businesses for whom additional detail would be useful felt that this could sit in supplementary information. |
| Using the term ‘advanced meters’ in the opening statement                                                                                                                                                            | Organisations that participated in the research did not understand the term ‘advanced meter’ and felt that this term, alongside a definition, should sit in supplementary information. Consider whether use of the term ‘advanced meter’ is needed in the opening statement.                                      |

## Why government is co-ordinating the rollout of smart-contingent contracts

The research suggested that customers wanted to understand why the rollout of smart-contingent contracts and accompanying policy changes are happening. As stated in the ‘key principles’ section above, customers are likely to respond well when the rationale is framed around benefits to their business, wider benefits, and as part of a routine, national infrastructure upgrade.

### More effective

| Approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Evidence for this approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Referring to the smart meter rollout as “modernising Great Britain’s infrastructure”                                                                                                                                                                                              | Organisations that participated in the research responded well to this phrasing which felt positive, implied progress and improvement and reinforced that this was a change that was happening nationally.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Providing information on how businesses benefit from smart meters (e.g. receiving free and regular information on energy use which can help manage energy consumption, provide information for business budgeting and help save on bills; only being billed based on energy used) | <p>In the research, framing the rationale around benefits was well-received as it spoke to tangible outcomes for businesses. Organisations wanted to understand why smart meters are a good idea before being told that they will need to agree to have a smart meter within their contract. Referring to the benefits of the smart meter rollout was therefore effective at building acceptance and understanding of the policy changes.</p> <p>Those who were rejecting of smart meters prior to the research still expected information on benefits to be included in communications, even though they were not as motivated by them as those who were accepting / indifferent.</p> |

| Approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Evidence for this approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Providing information on how Britain's energy system benefits from smart meters (e.g. being able to better manage supply and demand; increased resilience; less dependence from fossil fuels from other countries) and how suppliers benefit from smart meters (e.g. fewer billing errors) | <p>Organisations that participated in the research felt that the inclusion of wider benefits was transparent (i.e. not trying to hide that other parties benefit too) and it is inferred that this could work to build trust in the motivations behind the policy.</p> <p>Organisations also responded well to hearing about potential benefits to Britain's energy system that might have knock-on positive impacts for their own business (e.g. through higher resilience and reliability of energy supply). Some liked this as they linked lower dependence on fossil fuels to increased national energy security and stable bill prices.</p> |

### Less effective

| Approach                                                                                                                                                                  | Evidence against this approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Exercise caution when using social norms (e.g. that two-thirds of businesses already have a smart meter) with customers with less positive attitudes towards smart meters | <p>There was a mixed reaction among organisations that participated in the research in response to the phrase "smart meters are now the norm, and two-thirds of businesses have already upgraded". Groups who were accepting of or indifferent to smart meters found it reassuring and motivating – but those who were rejecting of smart meters felt this didn't ring true in their experience, making them distrustful of the communication as a whole. If a statistic is used then a source should be cited.</p> |

## What happens if you sign a smart-contingent contract and then can't install a smart meter

The research suggested that organisations should be informed what will happen if they can't install (or decide they do not want) a smart meter after signing a new fixed-term contract, and what course of action you will take if this is the case.

### More effective

| Approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Evidence for this approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Being clear and direct in any communications about any consequences of the customer signing a smart-contingent contract but later choosing not to proceed with the smart meter installation (e.g. with a dedicated sub-heading) | Organisations that participated in the research wanted the consequences to be set out clearly in any communication. Alongside what is happening and why, this was considered important information to include.                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Informing customers that access to their fixed term contract rate will not be impacted if found to be unable to install a smart meter for reasons beyond their control                                                          | This was a key question for many of the organisations that participated in the research. Including this explanation was important to reassure them that smart-contingent contracts will be applied fairly.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Informing customers that extenuating circumstances will be considered when deciding if they will face consequences for not having a smart meter installed, and signposting to where they can find information about this        | Organisations that participated in the research were keen to know that extenuating circumstances would be considered. Organisations did not expect details of what kinds of circumstances would be accounted for in the main communication, as this would take too much space, but felt that supplementary information on extenuating circumstances should sit elsewhere and be signposted in the main communication. |

## Less effective

| Less effective                                                                                                                                                                           | Evidence against this approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Introducing language related to breaches of contract without explaining what the consequences of not installing a smart meter after signing a smart-contingent contract would be.</p> | <p>Organisations found the use of the phrase ‘contract breaches’ confusing without context or clear explanation. As per above, the mitigation to this was to clearly explain any consequences of not having a smart meter installed after signing a smart-contingent contract clearly and directly in the main communication.</p> |

## What customers need to do and how suppliers will make it easy for them

The research suggested that organisations expect information on what, if any, actions they will need to take themselves, and what they can expect from their supplier around installation.

### More effective

| Approach                                                                                                                                                                                | Evidence for this approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Informing customers that meter exchange(s) will be offered at no additional cost.                                                                                                       | Most organisations that participated in the research expected that their installation appointments and smart meter(s) would be provided by their supplier at no additional cost, but some were uncertain. Reassurance on this was welcomed by those who were uncertain and did not detract anything for those who expected this to be the case.                                              |
| Informing customers that you will work with them to agree an installation time/plan that suits them.                                                                                    | Participants welcomed reassurance that their supplier will try and find a convenient time for their meter exchange, to alleviate concern about business disruption and loss of revenue if needing to pause operation during core hours (although some degree of disruption was seen as inevitable).                                                                                          |
| Informing customers that they don't need to do anything until you contact them (this should not be until towards the end of the letter, to mitigate the risk that people stop reading). | Organisations that participated in the research all appreciated knowing that their supplier would contact them proactively to remind them of the need to switch to smart meters and to schedule the installation appointment, reducing the burden on them to remember what they need to do. They also appreciated reassurance that they do not need to take any immediate action themselves. |

## Less effective

| Approach                                                                          | Evidence against this approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Using phrases such as “you don’t need to do anything” early on in communications. | Businesses appreciated being told they did not need to do anything proactively, but felt that if this is placed at the start of the letter they would be less likely to read the rest of the content (and therefore not understand the change). |

## 3. Example communication template

### Background

The template below is an example communication that suppliers could use or adapt to drive awareness of the policy among their customers.

The government's response to its consultation on the Non-Domestic Smart Meter Rollout Post-2025 notes the following, which may be relevant for suppliers when considering how to apply this template:

- The government expects energy suppliers to implement the policy (including the awareness raising requirement) in ways that are compatible with other legislation, such as the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (PECR).
- Neutrally and factually communicating that agreeing to a smart meter is a condition of contract is generally going to be a 'service message'<sup>5</sup> and therefore unlikely to count as direct marketing. However, a communication that also encourages the customer to renew their contract or advertises a particular service would likely fall into the definition of direct marketing.
- Suppliers may wish to add additional information into the below, such as their own price differential between fixed term contracts and alternatives, or information about their own default data offer. However, in doing so they will need to ensure they remain compliant with PECR.
- The government expects the majority (though not all) non-domestic customers within scope of the policy to be "corporate subscribers" as per PECR definitions. PECR does not apply to electronic communications to corporate subscribers.
- However, where energy suppliers are communicating with customers via other means, or those that are not corporate subscribers, they may need to adapt communications to be neutral in tone.

### Template

Dear [named contact],

From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2027, businesses that want a new fixed term energy contract will need to agree to have smart meters installed. This is part of government changes to establish common rules around contracts and make these fair and consistent for consumers [**use link to Gov Consumer Guide<sup>6</sup>**].

Fixed term contracts are generally less expensive than alternatives. If you do not want a smart meter you will need to choose a contract which is not fixed term when your current one expires.

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<sup>5</sup> [Identify direct marketing | ICO](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Non-domestic smart meter rollout post-2025 - GOV.UK](#)

## Why is this happening?

The rollout of smart meters to businesses is an important part of modernising Great Britain's infrastructure.

Benefits of smart meters to your business include:

- Free and regular information on your energy use, which can help you more easily manage your organisation's energy use and help save on bills
- Receiving accurate bills based on the energy your business uses, rather than estimated bills.

As well as benefiting you, smart meters also benefit energy suppliers and Great Britain's energy system:

- Automated data from smart meters reduces the number of billing errors suppliers are faced with.
- Smart meters help Britain's energy system to balance energy supply and demand more efficiently and integrate home-grown renewable energy. This leads to fewer outages, a more resilient energy grid and less dependence on fossil fuels from other countries.

## What if you can't have a smart meter installed after signing the contract?

If you can't install a smart meter for a reason outside of your control, such as a technical reason or a third party (e.g. your landlord) preventing installation, we will take steps to ensure you keep access to a fixed term contract.

For more detail on your organisation's rights and expectations when entering a smart-contingent contract, see government guidance **[use link to Gov Consumer Guide<sup>7</sup>]**.

If you agree to have a smart meter installed when entering into a new fixed-term contract but then do not agree to have an installation appointment scheduled, our contract terms and conditions state that **[suppliers to adapt as appropriate]**.

## What you need to do

We will contact you **[specify time if known]** before your contract ends to remind you that you will need to switch to smart meters if you want a new fixed term contract. You don't need to do anything until your contract comes up for renewal.

If you are happy to proceed with a new fixed term contract, we will we will contact you within three months of the start of your new contract to get your installation appointment scheduled. We will arrange the installation(s) at a time that works for you to minimise any inconvenience and install the smart meter(s) at no additional cost to your business.

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<sup>7</sup> [Non-domestic smart meter rollout post-2025 - GOV.UK](#)

### **Further information**

You can find more information here: **[insert link to supplier supplementary information]**.

Thank you for playing a part in making this transition smooth and efficient.

## Recommended supplementary information

As outlined earlier in the toolkit, participants expected supplementary information on the policy to be signposted from the main communication but not necessarily included within it.

There was an expectation that information relating to consumer protection would come from government and that information relating to participants' own specific circumstances (e.g. practical considerations for installations) would be better placed to come from energy suppliers, as they would be able to adapt this information as relevant.

The table below uses this insight from the research to suggest which stakeholders' customers would benefit from receiving such supplementary information from. We note that these may complement communications from other stakeholders, e.g. Smart Energy GB.

| Stakeholder organisations may expect supplementary messaging from | Recommended supplementary information                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Suppliers                                                         | <p>Information on how the change affects organisations who use third-party intermediaries</p> <p>Information on how the changes interact with different types of smart meter</p> <p>Practical information about installations (e.g., how long installations take, appointment options, likelihood of power needing to be switched off)</p> |
| Government                                                        | <p>Potential routes of appeal and consumer protection information</p> <p>Statistics on how many businesses have already had smart meters installed</p>                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Both suppliers and government                                     | <p>Further information on extenuating circumstances and how these will be decided</p> <p>Information for landlords and tenants</p> <p>More detail about the benefits of smart meters to organisations</p>                                                                                                                                  |

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This publication is available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/communicating-the-rollout-of-smart-contingent-contracts-to-non-domestic-customers>

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