Smart Meter FAQs for Housing Associations
Smart Meters

Smart Energy GB is the voice of the smart meter rollout. It’s their task to help everyone in Great Britain understand smart meters, the national rollout and how to use their new meters to get gas and electricity under control.

CHC will be working alongside you to prepare your tenants, as every home will be offered a smart meter by their energy supplier at no additional cost by 2020. Smart meters show people how much gas and electricity they are using in pounds and pence. Because smart meters show exactly how much people are using in near real time, tenants can see when they are using the most energy and which appliances are most responsible.

The next phase of the campaign is targeted at people over 65, who are offline, as Smart Energy GB’s research has shown that they are much less likely to engage with the campaign. This document provides a list of frequently asked questions to help you provide support to your tenants around the rollout.
Who’s Who?

Smart Energy GB

Smart Energy GB are independent of the Government, are not an energy supplier and they don’t fit smart meters. They’re here to make sure everyone in Great Britain understands smart meters, the rollout and how to use their meters to get their gas and electricity under control.

OFGEM

Ofgem monitors energy suppliers’ compliance with the requirements set out in the code and can take enforcement action if necessary (they consider any compliance issues in line with their organisation wide Enforcement Guidelines and priorities). They receive monitoring data from a number of sources, including Citizen’s Advice.

If you have concerns about a suppliers’ behaviour, please direct these to Citizen’s Advice.

Data Communications Company (DCC)

The Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) formerly known as DECC granted Smart DCC Ltd a licence in September 2013 to establish and manage the data and communications network to connect smart meters to the business systems of energy suppliers, network operators and other authorised service users of the network.

Smart DCC Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of Capita plc. contact@SmartDCC.co.uk

Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

The department brings together responsibilities for business, industrial strategy, science, innovation, energy, and climate change.

They are responsible for ensuring that the country has secure energy supplies that are reliable, affordable and clean & ensuring the UK remains at the leading edge of science, research and innovation

Community Housing Cymru

We are the membership body for housing associations in Wales. We have been working with Smart Energy GB to promote the roll out of smart meters across Wales.

chtymru.org.uk
General Information

What is SMICoP?

The SMICoP (Smart Meter Installation Code of Practice) sets out the minimum standards suppliers are required to follow in relation to customer facing aspects of smart meter installations, and include specific requirements relating to vulnerable consumers.

Where can social landlords seek advice on how to protect their most vulnerable customers with regards to smart meter roll out?

The Smart Metering Installation Code of Practice (SMICoP) is designed to make sure that the customer receives a high standard of service throughout the installation process, and knows how to use, and benefit from, the smart metering equipment to improve the energy efficiency of their home. This includes guidelines for installers on interacting with vulnerable customers. You should contact individual suppliers for specific details of their provisions for vulnerable tenants.

Any suspected breach of SMICoP should be reported to Citizens Advice.

Are there any tips on how housing providers can negotiate with energy suppliers in order to get smart meters installed during a void scheme?

The majority of energy suppliers will be keen to work with housing associations to install smart meters. Please contact individual suppliers for more details on the service they can offer.

Can social housing providers get access to a list of where smart meters have been installed in their stock? If so, who should they contact to get this list?

A generic overview document of properties with smart meters doesn’t exist so the housing association will need to contact individual suppliers for more information.

Are translations of supporting smart meter documents made available to customers who don’t have English as a first language?

This will be the responsibility of the individual energy companies, please contact them directly for more information.
When a tenant has a smart meter which has become ‘dumb’ (e.g. due to switching suppliers) can it be returned to smart mode remotely or will a visit be needed?

A new meter should not be needed, but the details of this are under review. It is likely that a software upgrade to SMETS1 meters will be sent through remotely.

Will there be any change to the way prepay meters are handed on to new tenants?

No changes to the process are currently expected however, housing officers may need to become familiar with individual smart meters when taking PPM tenants through the process of topping up, for example.

If a new tenant moves in will a smart meter installer visit to explain how to use the smart meter and In Home Display to them?

You will need to contact the individual energy supplier to check this.

If a new tenant arrives, is it possible that the previous tenant’s energy consumption data might be available to them or the housing association?

Normally, a change of tenant will bring about a termination of the account and the transfer of the new tenant’s account details across, so no data will be available.

Could the housing association take on the responsibility for a vulnerable tenant’s smart meter?

With consent, a third party is able to act on behalf of an energy customer. Having a smart meter installed should not result in any change in arrangements to support the most vulnerable tenants directly. In theory, top-ups could be arranged remotely using customer’s unique number.

If you know someone who could benefit from a smart meter but who needs help with getting one, here are some of the things you can do:

- Ask for a smart meter on their behalf - You can register the person’s interest with their energy supplier and help them book the appointment to have their smart meter fitted. However, you will need to make sure the account holder is with you when you call.
• Help them prepare for the installation - When the installer comes to the home of the person you are helping; they will need to have access to the traditional meters. You can help by moving any obstacles or clearing out cupboards. It would be helpful if you are also there on the day of the installation when the installer will demonstrate how to use the in-home display screen.

Are there any more smart meter training sessions being delivered for housing associations?

There are likely to be additional smart meter training sessions for housing associations in 2017 but they will be focused on those who specifically work with the over 65s who are digitally excluded. For more information please contact National Energy Action or visit http://www.nea.org.uk/smartenergygb/free-smart-meter-champion-training/

Why are you focussing on over 65s who are digitally excluded?

Audience research has shown that people over 65 who are offline, are much less likely to engage with the campaign and understand the benefits that a smart meter could offer them. We want to help you reach your tenants who fall into this group.

Smart Energy GB have produced a range of resources for you to use that can be downloaded and in some cases ordered at www.smartenergyGB.org/materials. These materials include the key messages and benefits in a format designed for this audience.

In Home Display Unit

Are user guides available for new tenants for using the IHD or taking meter readings?

Some installers may leave printed guides with the IHD. Others should provide information about where guides can be found. There is no obligation for suppliers to provide an induction to a new tenant who’s not been present at installation.

Unexpected charges may appear on the IHD. Are they easy to explain and if so, can we explain some of them in advance?

Tenants may see a small charge added every day - likely to be standing charge for their connection to the energy supply. Pennies accumulated in the night (when no power or heating being used) could be background devices, e.g. fridge/freezer, mains clocks.

If concerned, customers should contact their supplier; if this is not satisfactory and they still feel they are incurring extra charges, contact Citizens Advice

How much electricity does a typical IHD use when powered through the mains? IHDs will vary between suppliers however are estimated to use <£1 usage per year, if not permanently in use.
Installation

Who will the smart meter engineers work for (are they likely to be directly employed by a fuel supplier or will energy suppliers use an external contractor)?

This is likely to vary depending on your supplier. Please contact your supplier directly for confirmation.

Will smart meter engineers be trained to spot asbestos? Will engineers advise residents to ring their landlord if they suspect asbestos may be present?

Every engineer fitting a smart meter should be trained in how to spot asbestos during the course of the installation process. They are required to inform the tenant of anything they find. Please contact the specific energy supplier directly for confirmation.

Any suspected breach of SMCoP should be reported to Citizens Advice.

Before the day, your energy supplier will:

• contact you and arrange a time and date that suits you
• ask you questions like where your current meter lives, and what type of property you live in. It's important to answer these as accurately as you can

You’ll need to:

• be at home to let the installer in
• make sure the installer can get to your current meter – so, if it’s in the cupboard under the stairs, make sure it can be accessed easily
• ensure any pets are kept out of the way

If it’s going to be difficult to provide to clear access to your energy meters, let the energy supplier know when booking the installation.

Can renewables (e.g. solar panels) be effectively installed where a smart meter is already in place? Will generators definitely have adequate smart meter technology by end of 2020?

Renewables can be fitted after smart meter installation but they may not provide full real-time information about net usage, generated power etc. These issues should be solved before end of 2020.

Please contact your supplier directly for more information.
Are there any fire risks associated with smart meters?

Energy suppliers are responsible for ensuring that installations are carried out to the highest safety standards. Suppliers must ensure that all installers installing gas meters are trained and are also on the Gas Safe Register, which ensures that they are qualified to work with gas. This is set out in SMICOP, the industry code of practice for smart meter installations. All installers undergo extensive, accredited training to NVQ level 2 equivalent, to ensure that the highest safety levels are maintained. If you have any concerns please contact your energy supplier.

Billing

Some tenants have had new smart meters installed and then seen large increases in bills shortly afterwards. Are suppliers obliged to keep customers on the same tariff?

Advice to customers and staff is to make a comparison of suppliers before agreeing to installation of smart meter. Large bills could be because at the point of installation an accurate reading was taken. This can result in a big bill if the estimates have previously been much lower than the actual usage. Moving forward tenant bill will be accurate and not estimated. Regular meter reading submissions prior to smart meter installation are strongly advised.

If you have any other queries please contact Lesley-smith@chcymru.org.uk