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MP241 'Interoperability Checker Update'

Modification Report

Version 0.2

28 June 2023



About this document

This document is a draft Modification Report. It currently sets out the background, issue, and progression timetable for this modification, along with any relevant discussions, views, and conclusions. This document will be updated as this modification progresses.

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This document also has one annex:

- **Annex A** contains the business requirements for the solution.

Contact

If you have any questions on this modification, please contact:

Mohammedanwar Sumro

020 3934 4506

mohammedanwar.sumro@gemserv.com

1. Summary

This proposal has been raised by Robin Seaby from the Data Communications Company (DCC).

Interoperability Checker Service is a tool on Citizens Advice website that enables consumers to check whether their Smart Meter should be operating in Smart Mode. It uses information provided by Supplier's to provide generalised results to the consumer.

The current generalised results in the Interoperability Checker are based on Device Models and Supplier Interoperability Data. This data can change and leads to inconsistency and can lead to consumer confusion. Citizens Advice has received consistent feedback from consumers based on these generalised results and would like to explore changes to improve the consumers' user experience and provide additional information on Smart Meter availability.

The modification aims to enhance personalisation by leveraging actual transaction data. Additionally, it aims to utilise DCC's location-based data to provide consumers with additional information while they wait for Smart Meter installations.

2. Issue

What are the current arrangements?

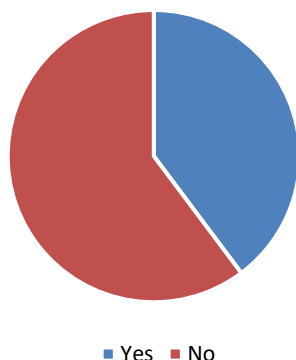
The Interoperability Checker Service is a tool available on the Citizens Advice website that advises consumers on whether their Smart Meter is operating in Smart Mode. The tool also informs consumers about which Suppliers they could switch to whilst retaining or regaining Smart functionality on their Smart Metering System (SMS). The data used to populate the Interoperability Checker is based on the Responsible Supplier's indication of which Smart Metering Equipment Technical Specification (SMETS) Device Models it is capable of operating. The Interoperability Checker Service was designed to assist SMETS1 consumers to identify whether their meters would lose functionality if they moved Supplier, as well as helping them to see whether the smart functionality was currently being used.

The Smart Energy Code (SEC) Section H16 'Provision of Data by Suppliers to the DCC' requires the DCC to collaborate with Citizens Advice to provide the tool.

What is the issue?

Currently, the Interoperability Checker's results may not reflect a consumer's actual experience with their Smart Meter. This inconsistency has resulted in misunderstanding among some consumers. To gain further feedback on the issue, Citizens Advice ran a survey from 17 November 2022 until 10 March 2023, which received 88 responses. One question that was asked was "Was the tool helpful to you?" 35 respondents answered "Yes" and 53 answered "No".

Citizen Advice Bureau consumer feedback



The Interoperability Checker Service has issues with providing accurate information to consumers about their Smart Meter's capabilities and the likelihood of having one installed. The current generalised results are based on Device Model rather than personalised information. This has contributed to misperception and inconsistency in results which can be frustrating for consumers.

Comments from consumers who completed the survey included:

- *"The pages (for both meters) say my meter is working but my account says that no meter readings since 24/10/22."*
- *"It said it cannot get readings, but my supplier does get them. I know my meter is SMETS1 and want to see if it's been upgraded"*
- *"It says my meter SHOULD be working in Smart mode not IS WORKING so I suspect the tool just checked that a Smart meter was installed, not that it was actually signalling readings back to my supplier. Waste of time."*

When asked what could make the tool more useful, suggestions from consumers included:

- *"Absolute Confirmation that the meters are sending data."*
- *"Yes. How do I know it is functioning correctly. That would help."*
- *"An answer from the tool that discusses the possibilities why there is no reply from the meter."*

What is the impact this is having?

The lack of a source of personalised information for consumers waiting for a Smart Meter installation also leads to queries being raised to the DCC. There is a need to improve the Interoperability Checker's user experience and provide additional information on the likelihood of having a Smart Meter installed.

Impact on consumers

Consumers are impacted negatively due to the Interoperability Checker's results not reflecting a consumer's actual experience with their Smart Meter. The use of Device Models instead of personalised transaction data and reliance on outdated Supplier Interoperability Data can cause confusion and inconsistencies for consumers. This lack of accurate information can lead to frustration and potentially prevents consumers from making informed decisions about their energy usage. Furthermore, the absence of a reliable source of personalised information for consumers awaiting Smart Meter installations is resulting in a number of enquiries to the DCC, creating further inconvenience and delays. It is understood that this is likely generating call traffic to Suppliers as well.

3. Assessment of the proposal

Areas for assessment

Would updating Supplier Interoperability Data be better for user experience?

The Interoperability Checker tool needs to be improved to make it easier to use and be more reliable. This can be done by using information about how different Devices work together, as well as checking to see if a Smart Meter is working properly by looking at its transactions. The Proposer believes that this will allow users to get tailored results based on their specific information. The Proposer also notes this will save time and frustration and help users make informed decisions about their energy usage. These suggestions will be assessed along with any other options during the Refinement Process.

Would leveraging the DCC's location-based data to provide personalised information to consumers be better for user experience?

Some consumers provided feedback to Citizens Advice that it would be useful for people without a Smart Meter to receive information about whether it is possible to have a Smart Meter in their area. Consumers have noted that there can be anecdotal evidence of being unable to obtain a Smart Meter in their area and would like to be able to check this. The DCC could provide additional information to consumers by using their location-based data. In turn, this should reduce the number of queries from consumers to their Supplier or the DCC. This will reduce the burden on Parties' customer service teams and ensure that consumers are able to access the information they need quickly and easily. Overall, the aim is to improve the customer experience and provide added value to consumers.

Sub-Committee input

SECAS will engage with the Chairs from the Operations Group (OPSG), the Technical Architecture and Business Architecture Sub-Committee (TABASC), the Security Sub-Committee (SSC) and the Smart Metering Key Infrastructure Policy Management Authority (SMKI PMA) to confirm what input is required from these forums. SECAS believes the following Sub-Committees will need to provide the following input to this modification:

Sub-Committee input	
Sub-Committee	Input sought
OPSG	OPSG to advise on operational requirements needed to improve the Interoperability Checker's user experience
SMKI PMA	No input required
SSC	Seek input on whether any necessary adjustments or assessments should be taken into consideration before progressing
TABASC	To review if there are any potential risks or challenges that could arise during implementation

4. Appendix 1: Progression timetable

Timetable	
Event/Action	Date
Draft Proposal raised	5 May 2023
Presented to CSC for initial comment	16 May 2023
CSC converts Draft Proposal to Modification Proposal	16 May 2023
Business Requirements developed with Proposer	16 May 2023 – 4 July 2023
<i>Modification discussed with Working Group</i>	<i>5 Jul 2023</i>
<i>Modification discussed with OPSG</i>	<i>6 Jul 2023</i>
<i>Preliminary Assessment requested</i>	<i>10 Jul 2023</i>
<i>Preliminary Assessment returned</i>	<i>7 Aug 2023</i>
<i>Update provided to CSC</i>	<i>15 Aug 2023</i>
<i>Modification discussed with Working Group</i>	<i>6 Sep 2023</i>
<i>Refinement Consultation</i>	<i>13 Sep 2023 – 4 Oct 2023</i>
<i>Update provided to CSC</i>	<i>19 Sep 2023</i>
<i>Modification discussed with Working Group</i>	<i>1 Nov 2023</i>
<i>Impact Assessment costs approved by Change Board</i>	<i>22 Nov 2023</i>
<i>Impact Assessment requested</i>	<i>27 Nov 2023</i>
<i>Impact Assessment returned</i>	<i>23 Jan 2024</i>
<i>Modification discussed with Working Group</i>	<i>7 Feb 2024</i>
<i>Modification Report approved by CSC</i>	<i>20 Feb 2024</i>
<i>Modification Report Consultation</i>	<i>26 Feb 2024 – 11 Mar 2024</i>
<i>Change Board Vote</i>	<i>27 Mar 2024</i>

Italics denote planned events that could be subject to change

5. Appendix 2: Glossary

This table lists all the acronyms used in this document and the full term they are an abbreviation for.

Glossary	
Acronym	Full term
CSC	Change Sub-Committee
DCC	Data Communications Company
OPSG	Operations Group
SEC	Smart Energy Code
SECAS	The Smart Energy Code Administrator and Secretariat
SMETS	Smart Metering Equipment Technical Specification
SMKI PMA	Smart Metering Key Infrastructure Policy Management Authority
SMSS	Smart Metering System
SSC	Security Sub-Committee
TABASC	Technical Architecture and Business Architecture Sub-Committee