

Domestic Vulnerable Customer Policy

SSE & Me

Purpose

This policy outlines our commitment to supporting domestic customers on any of our networks who may be in vulnerable circumstances. We aim to ensure that all customers receive a fair, respectful, and accessible service, with particular attention to those who may be more susceptible to harm or disadvantage.



Definition of Vulnerability

Vulnerability extends beyond age, income, or disability; it encompasses a wider range of situations in which a customer may face increased risks of harm or disadvantage.

As defined by Heat Trust:



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A domestic heat customer whose personal circumstances and characteristics combine with aspects of the market to create situations where they are significantly less able than a typical customer to protect or represent their interests in the energy market, and/or more likely to suffer detriment.

This definition highlights that vulnerability is often situational, dynamic, and can affect anyone at any time. It might be short-term, such as someone recovering from surgery, or long-term, such as a customer with a permanent disability or chronic illness.

The guidance also aligns with Ofgem:

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Vulnerability is about the interaction between the individual and the market — it's not just about having a condition or being on a low income.



Key Factors That May Contribute to Vulnerability Include:

- **Health and disability** – physical, sensory, or mental health conditions
- **Age-related factors** – very young or older customers
- **Financial circumstances** – such as debt, long term unemployment, or fuel poverty
- **Situational events** – like bereavement, or job loss
- **Barriers to communication** – language, illiteracy, or digital exclusion

Our Commitments

We are committed to:

- Identifying vulnerable customers through proactive engagement and staff awareness.
- Providing tailored support, including flexible billing, accessible communication, and emergency assistance.
- Maintaining service continuity, especially during cold weather.
- Collaborating with local authorities, housing providers, and support organisations.
- Reviewing our approach regularly to ensure it remains effective and inclusive.




Priority Services Register

for all our customers

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is our way of identifying and supporting customers who may need additional help due to personal circumstances, health conditions, or communication needs.

By joining our PSR, customers receive tailored support that goes beyond our standard service. This helps ensure that vulnerable households are protected, informed, and treated with care, especially in situations where their wellbeing could be impacted by their energy supply or account management.

As part of the PSR, we:

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- Offer advance notice of planned supply outages for customers who rely on medical equipment or telecare systems.
 - Provide alternative communication formats, including braille, large print, or audio, for customers with visual impairments.
 - Use translation services and plain language for those who do not speak English as a first language.
 - Flag important information on accounts (e.g. serious medical needs, young children in the home, mental ill health) so all teams interacting with the customer are aware and can respond appropriately.
 - Adapt how we make contact (e.g. “knock and wait” for physical impairments or avoiding lone visits if needed).
 - Tailor payment plans and offer financial advice for those experiencing short- or long-term affordability issues.
 - Work closely with third parties, including carers, support workers, or relatives, where authorised, to ensure the customer gets the help they need.
 - Signpost to specialist services or external support organisations where appropriate.
 - Meter reading support: If a Domestic Consumer is unable to read their supply meter and there is no other person they could reasonably nominate to do so on their behalf, we will arrange for the meter to be read at appropriate intervals and ensure the reading is provided to the customer.
 - Prepayment meter support: We undertake to ensure that the functionality of any Prepayment Meter is safe and reasonably practicable in all the circumstances of the case. Where necessary, adjustments to the location of the meter will be carried out without additional charge.
 - Knock and wait scheme: For customers who may take longer to answer the door—such as those with mobility issues or hearing impairments—we operate a “knock and wait” scheme. Our staff will knock, then wait a reasonable amount of time before leaving, to ensure the customer has sufficient time to respond.
 - Staff identification: All SSE staff and contractors visiting customer premises will carry an official identification card. This card will include clear instructions on the reverse side explaining how to verify the individual’s identity for your safety and peace of mind.




We take our responsibility seriously and understand that vulnerability can be visible or hidden, permanent or temporary. Our goal is to ensure that every customer on the PSR receives the care, attention, and respect they deserve.



Membership in the Heat Trust

We are proud members of the Heat Trust, an independent, non-profit customer protection scheme for heat network users.



This means our customers benefit from:

- Independent complaint resolution
- Clear service standards
- Transparent billing practices
- Additional protections for vulnerable customers

For more information about the Heat Trust or to check if your heat network is registered, you can contact them directly:



Heat Trust

10 Dean Farrar Street
London SW1H 0DX

www.heattrust.org

Email: info@heattrust.org



HEAT TRUST

Registered
Participant



Complaints Procedure

At SSE, we are committed to delivering excellent customer service. If something goes wrong, we want to make it right. Our complaints process is designed to be clear, fair, and responsive:

First Point of Contact

Contact our customer service team:

0345 078 3215

community.energy@sse.com

SSE Heat Networks,
EU Customer Service,
PO Box 261, Havant, PO9 9FE

Our advisors will aim to resolve your issue during the call. If needed, your complaint will be escalated to a manager. Written complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days. Complex issues may take longer to resolve.

Escalation

If your complaint remains unresolved, you may escalate it to our Head of Customer Service for an independent internal review:

HeadofCS@sse.com

SSE Heat Networks,
EU Customer Service,
PO Box 261, Havant, PO9 9FE

We aim to respond within 5 working days.

Energy Ombudsman

If your complaint is not resolved within 8 weeks or you are dissatisfied with our final response, you may contact the Energy Ombudsman for a free, independent review.

You have up to 12 months to refer your complaint.

Please mention that your complaint relates to a Heat Network.

Independent Advice

You can also seek free, impartial advice from:

Citizens Advice:
0345 404 0506
www.citizensadvice.org.uk

For more on your rights as a network customer, visit:

www.heattrust.org/complaints

What You Can Expect

When resolving your complaint, we may offer:

- A sincere apology
- A clear explanation
- Remedial action to prevent recurrence
- Compensation, where appropriate

Identifying and Supporting Vulnerable Customers

We encourage customers or their representatives to inform us of any circumstances that may affect their ability to manage their services. All information is handled confidentially, added to our Priority Assistance Register and used solely to provide appropriate support.

Staff Training

All customer-facing staff receive training to:

- Recognise signs of vulnerability
- Communicate with empathy and clarity
- Offer appropriate support or referrals to specialist services

Data Protection

We comply with all data protection regulations, including the UK GDPR. Sensitive information is only recorded for the sole use to enhance the service we provide.

Continuous Improvement

We regularly review this policy and our procedures, incorporating feedback from customers, staff, and stakeholders to ensure we meet evolving needs and regulatory standards.

Contact Us

If you or someone you know may benefit from additional support, please contact our customer service team on **0345 078 3215** or by emailing **community.energy@sse.com**. We are here to help and will treat all enquiries with sensitivity and respect.

