



Department for  
Energy Security  
& Net Zero

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Minister for Affordability and Skills

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Ian Potter  
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Dear Ian,

I am writing to respond to the *Prevention of Future Deaths* report issued in relation to the death of Ms Bernadette Faulkner. You sent this report to the Minister of State for Housing, Planning and Building Safety, and it has been passed from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities to the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero for response.

This is a deeply tragic and heartbreaking case, that the Department and I take very seriously. I was very saddened to hear about Ms Faulkner's death and would like to express my personal condolences to Ms Faulkner's family.

The independent regulator, The Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem), is responsible for the regulation of energy suppliers and protecting the interests of consumers.

If a customer has any concerns about the safety of operating their meter, they should contact their energy supplier immediately for support. Under Ofgem's licence conditions, suppliers are required to ensure that a prepayment meter is safe and reasonably practicable for a customer's circumstances. In its guidance, Ofgem set out that they would expect an assessment of this to include consideration of the location of a meter and how this may impact a customer's ability to operate it. If at any time a supplier becomes aware that a prepayment meter is not safe to operate, Ofgem rules require suppliers to take action and offer to rectify this, which could include altering the position of the meter or providing an alternative method of payment for the customer.

In relation to future protections, Ofgem introduced new rules in November 2023 that restrict suppliers from installing a prepayment meter involuntarily for certain vulnerable groups, including those over 75 years old with no additional support in the household. These new rules also require suppliers to make at least ten attempts to contact an indebted customer and carry out a site welfare visit prior to any involuntary installation or remote switch of a smart meter taking place, to ensure the payment method will be safe in the customer's circumstances. A remote switch involves remotely changing a smart meter from credit to smart prepayment mode. Under these new rules, suppliers are now also required to assess whether a prepayment meter continues to be safe for a customer on an annual basis as a minimum.

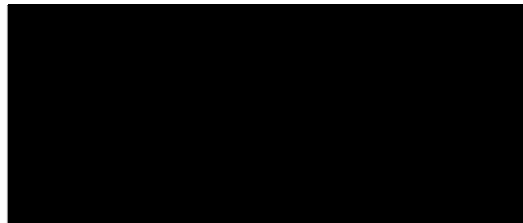
Alongside this, the smart metering rollout is improving prepayment customers' experience, by giving consumers a means to top up their credit without having to access their meters. The Department will continue to work with energy suppliers to drive them to deliver smart metering to as many households as possible.

Following this case being brought to my attention, I have spoken with senior Ofgem officials who have assured me that they are looking at this case in detail and will take any necessary actions to reduce the risk of such tragic incidents happening again. I also welcome the actions for industry that have been set out by Energy UK in their response to this report.

I also welcome Energy UK's commitment to work with a range of stakeholders, including the housing sector, to ensure more is done to identify those that need support and deliver interventions that keep customers safe. This is a useful action to bring together all those who can improve support for vulnerable customers across the energy and housing sectors. The government would welcome the opportunity to engage with these workshops, looking at relevant energy and housing considerations which could help vulnerable consumers.

My officials would be very happy to discuss this case with you further, or put you in touch with relevant Ofgem officials, if helpful. My officials will also work with Energy UK on the delivery of the actions highlighted in their letter, such as the proposed workshops on vulnerable customers, as appropriate.

Finally, I would like to reiterate my sympathies with Ms Faulkner's family. The Government will continue to engage with Ofgem and industry on this issue, to ensure the relevant parties are doing all they can to support and protect consumers.



**Amanda Solloway MP**  
**Minister for Affordability and Skills**