

# **FUTURE CLIMATE HMO TENANTS' GUIDE TO SMART METERS**

November 15, 2016

## **INTRODUCTION**

This is guidance produced on the smart meter roll-out for tenants living in houses of multiple occupation (shared houses).

## **SECTION 1: SMART METERS - BASICS AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR TENANTS**

### **What is a smart meter?**

A smart meter is a modern electricity or gas meter that sends automatic readings to the energy supplier – removing the need for estimated bills or for meter readers to visit the home regularly.

Every home in the country will be offered a smart meter to replace their existing gas and electricity meters, between now and 2020.

### **What is the in-home display?**

Every smart meter is issued with an in-home display device (one device per home for both electricity and gas use) which enables the household to track energy use and energy expenditure in their home.

### **What are the advantages of a smart meter?**

The main advantage of the smart meter is more accurate bills. The in-home display makes it easier to manage and control costs of energy in the home. In time, it will be possible to connect smart meters to different advanced (“smart”) energy services that can help reduce bills further (for example by offering discounts depending on the time of day that you use energy).

For pre-payment customers, smart meters can offer a wider range of pre-payment methods. When customers switch from paying their energy bills on a contract to pre-payment, there will also be no need to change the meter, as there is currently.

### **How much does a smart meter cost?**

There is no charge for having a smart meter fitted (though the costs of the overall roll-out will be borne by all energy customers).

## When will I get a smart meter?

The installation of smart meters is undertaken by energy suppliers with their own customers. Different households in the same neighbourhood will therefore be offered smart meters at different times between now and 2020.

## Who decides whether to get a smart meter installed in rented properties?

Gas and electricity meters in your properties belong to the energy supplier. It is the bill-payer's decision whether or not to replace the existing gas and electricity meters with smart meters. The bill payer can contact the energy supplier to ask for the smart meters to be fitted, or the supplier may contact the bill payer.

Therefore, if you are the energy bill payers, it is your decision whether or not to have smart meters installed. However, you may be in breach of tenancy agreements if this happens without your landlord's consent – it is important in all rented situations therefore that both tenants and landlords are happy to have the meter installed.

The energy company will need access to your property to install the meter.

## Can the landlord use the In-home display to monitor energy use in their rented properties?

As part of the installation process, the bill payer will be given an in-home display device to help them monitor energy use. This is wirelessly linked to – and locked to - the meters in that property. It only has a range to cover the house and its immediate vicinity. Accordingly, it is only useful for tenants to track their own energy use (it's range is not sufficient for it to be used by landlords to monitor energy use remotely).

## Can a meter be moved at the time of the smart meter installation?

Yes, you can ask for the meter to be moved, but you will need to make sure your landlord is happy to pay any costs resulting from this. If the smart meter installer says they need to move the meter to fit it correctly, then the energy supplier may consider bearing the cost (suppliers are obliged by their regulator to make reasonable efforts to install smart meters).

## What about if we lose the in-home display (IHD)? Can it be replaced? How much will this cost?

Different energy suppliers will make different arrangements (cost etc) for the replacement of lost IHDs. If you are a tenant paying the energy bills it is your responsibility to look after the IHD. If you are paying the energy bills then be sure to pass the IHD to the next tenants when they move in. Your IHD is locked to your home: it won't work in any future properties you move to.

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## **FOR SHARED HOUSES WHERE THE LANDLORD PAYS ALL THE ENERGY BILLS**

### **What are the issues to bear in mind?**

Your landlord will make the decision about whether or not to replace your existing electricity and/or gas meters with smart meters.

You will need to allow the landlord and the energy company access to your home to install the meter (as with any situation where the landlord needs access to your home, they should give you a week's notice). We recommend that at least one tenant is also there when the smart meter is installed, but this will need to be agreed with your landlord.

Your landlord is not paying anything for the new smart meter, cannot charge you anything for the new meter and should not increase your rent or fixed energy charge after the installation.

As part of the smart meter installation, your landlord will be given a new in-home display device. We are recommending that your landlord passes this to you – so that as tenants you can understand better how you are using energy in your home. However, it remains the property of the landlord and after you move out, future tenants will be able to use it. (Note that the in-home display will be set up to only work in your house).

### **What are the advantages of smart meters for tenants in shared houses who are not paying energy bills?**

- The smart meter will help you avoid wasting energy – even if you're not paying the bills, by saving on energy you're preventing carbon emissions and protecting the environment.
- The information from the in-home display will help reduce disputes over energy use with your landlord – it makes it easier for everyone to see when and how energy is being used.
- The energy supplier will need to visit your home much less often (no more meter reads), and the landlord will not need to make visits to read the meters.