

# Vulnerable Customers

Additional Support

Priority Services Register

## Definition of a vulnerable customer

We consider each customers' personal circumstances and characteristics which may cause vulnerability, these may include:

- Age, over 65 or under 5 years old
- physical or mental health
- disability
- financial insecurity
- bereavement

There may be additional circumstances which may arise that may cause you to be more vulnerable and unable to safeguard yourself or others in your household and these mitigating circumstances will be considered.

## Customers in need of additional support

Customers who may require additional support may include, but are not limited to, individuals who are:

- disabled
- of pensionable age
- chronically sick
- visually impaired
- hearing impaired
- non-English speaking
- digitally excluded, including those who have difficulty with literacy and/or access.

During registration with Kensa Utilities a customer's personal information may alert the customer services representative to the knowledge that the customer may need additional support.

During registration, each individual customer should also be asked voluntary Equality and Diversity questions and given the choice to be added to the Priority Services Register, if eligible, and be a registered as a vulnerable customer.

All customers are eligible to appoint a named person or persons to represent or advocate on their behalf about their account and have their correspondence sent to their representative. This person can be appointed at any point during the lifetime of the customer's account and can be done via letter or telephone call from the customer themselves.

## Guidance on working with people who are:

### Disabled

A person is considered disabled if they have a 'physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. They do not need to be in receipt of a disability related benefit or holder of a disability related, badge or pass.

### Visually Impaired

Kensa Utilities will do their utmost to offer their letters in alternative formats, such as large print. All correspondence can be sent electronically or to an advocate or nominated representative.

Where a person has a visual impairment, computer technology is often used to electronically read correspondence sent via email. We are also happy to read and explain to customers their letters via telephone.

### Hearing Impaired

Where a customer is hearing impaired, they can access our customer services using Relay UK by dialling 18002 followed by our customer services number.

### Non-English Speaking

When English is not a customer's first language, Kensa Utilities will endeavour to send correspondence electronically, so that the customer can use computer technology, if available to the individual, to translate. However, Kensa Utilities are aware that this may not be accessible to all customers and will procure a translation service when necessary to determine the best method of communication with individual customers.

### Digitally Excluded Persons, including those who have difficulty with literacy and/or access.

Kensa Utilities recognises that not all individuals have access to digital and online services, and as such not all individuals are computer literate, or as such cannot read written literature.

Kensa Utilities will support customers who do not have the ability to access online services such as email by supplying statements and written documents via post. For customers who cannot read written literature, Kensa Utilities are happy to relay information to a customer's appointed advocate or registered third party that a customer has named.

Additionally, we are happy to read letters to customers over the telephone or call them to discuss situations in addition to supplying them with letters in written format for their records.

Kensa Utilities recognises that customers have individual needs, and we will endeavour to work with everyone to ensure that they understand any literature presented to them.

## Priority Services Register

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is a database of customer details, identifying individuals who are eligible to receive a priority status should there be a disruption to service, or they require additional support. The Priority Services Register captures information about customers and will be updated at every contact with all customers to ensure that the Priority Services Register is inclusive, up to date, and well managed.

All customer services staff members must ask customers at point of contact the questions identified in the vulnerable customer identification process to determine if the need to be included on the Priority Services Register. Customers must be given the choice to be included on the Priority Services Register and given a full explanation of the benefits of the Priority Services Register and what this means for them as a customer.

Should a customer who is eligible for inclusion on the Priority Services Register decline, this must be recorded.

Please see KUL Priority Services Register Process for more information.

## Working with Vulnerable Customers

Customers who have multiple complex needs, are considered vulnerable, or have additional needs may require extra support, time and care when accessing customer support, services or needing a response from Kensa Utilities in the event of an issue with their heat supply.

Customer services staff should not rush individuals during call handling and should take the time to understand the customers' need in relation to the issue arising with their heat supply.

Use of language when communication with the customer is imperative. All staff should familiarise themselves with the following document:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability>

Customer services staff should reassure customers that their shared information will be handled sensitively and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

A customer may be assessed as being eligible to register as a vulnerable customer and be included on our Priority Services Register.

We consider each customer's personal circumstances and characteristics which may cause vulnerability, these may include:

- age (typically over 65)
- physical or mental health
- disability

- low income
- bereavement

There may be additional circumstances which may arise that may cause the customer to be more vulnerable and unable to safeguard themselves or others in their household and these mitigating circumstances will be considered.

**If a customer is eligible to be registered as a vulnerable customer, then they are also eligible to be on the Priority Service Register.**

Customers on the Priority Service Register and vulnerable customers have additional rights and Kensa Utilities have additional responsibilities.

## Further Information

More information about rights for customers can be found at:

[https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/sites/default/files/pdf/7\\_utilities.pdf](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/sites/default/files/pdf/7_utilities.pdf)

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/discrimination-in-the-provision-of-goods-and-services/discrimination-in-the-provision-of-goods-and-services1/disability-discrimination-and-energy-suppliers/>

<https://www.relayuk.bt.com/>

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/get-help-your-supplier-priority-services-register>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability>

Customers experiencing financial difficulty:

Step Change Debt Charity

0800 138 1111

Mon-Fri 0800-2000 and Saturday 0800-1600

[www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)

PayPlan

0800 280 2816

Mon-Fri 0800-2000 and Saturday 0900-1500

[www.payplan.com](http://www.payplan.com)

National Debtline

0800 808 4000

Mon-Fri 0900-2000 and Saturday 0930-1300

[www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)

Citizens Advice Debt Helpline

0800 240 4420

Mon-Fri 0900-2000 and Saturday 0930-1300

If you cannot speak or hear on the phone, you can type what you want to say: dial 18001 then 0800 240 4420

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

Citizens Advice Extra Help Unit

0808 223 1133

Mon-Fri 0900-1700

[www.ehu.org.uk](http://www.ehu.org.uk)

Mental Health and Money Advice

[www.mentalhealthandmoneyadvice.org](http://www.mentalhealthandmoneyadvice.org)

Energy Ombudsman

0330 440 1624

Mon-Fri 0800-2000 and Saturday 0900-1300

<http://www.energyombudsman.org/>

[enquiry@energyombudsman.org](mailto:enquiry@energyombudsman.org)

Ofgem- The Energy regulator

[www.ofgem.org.uk](http://www.ofgem.org.uk)