

Residential Heating Code of Practice



Simply better energy



Residential Heating Code of Practice

1.0 Introduction

Welcome to Metropolitan's Customer Code of Practice.

Please note that references to "we", "us", "our" and "Metropolitan" means Independent Community Heating Limited. Reference to "you" or "your" means the customer.

Independent Community Heating Limited, (trading as "Metropolitan") is a company registered in England and Wales at Synergy House, Woolpit Business Park, Woolpit, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, IP30 9UP.

Our code of practice:

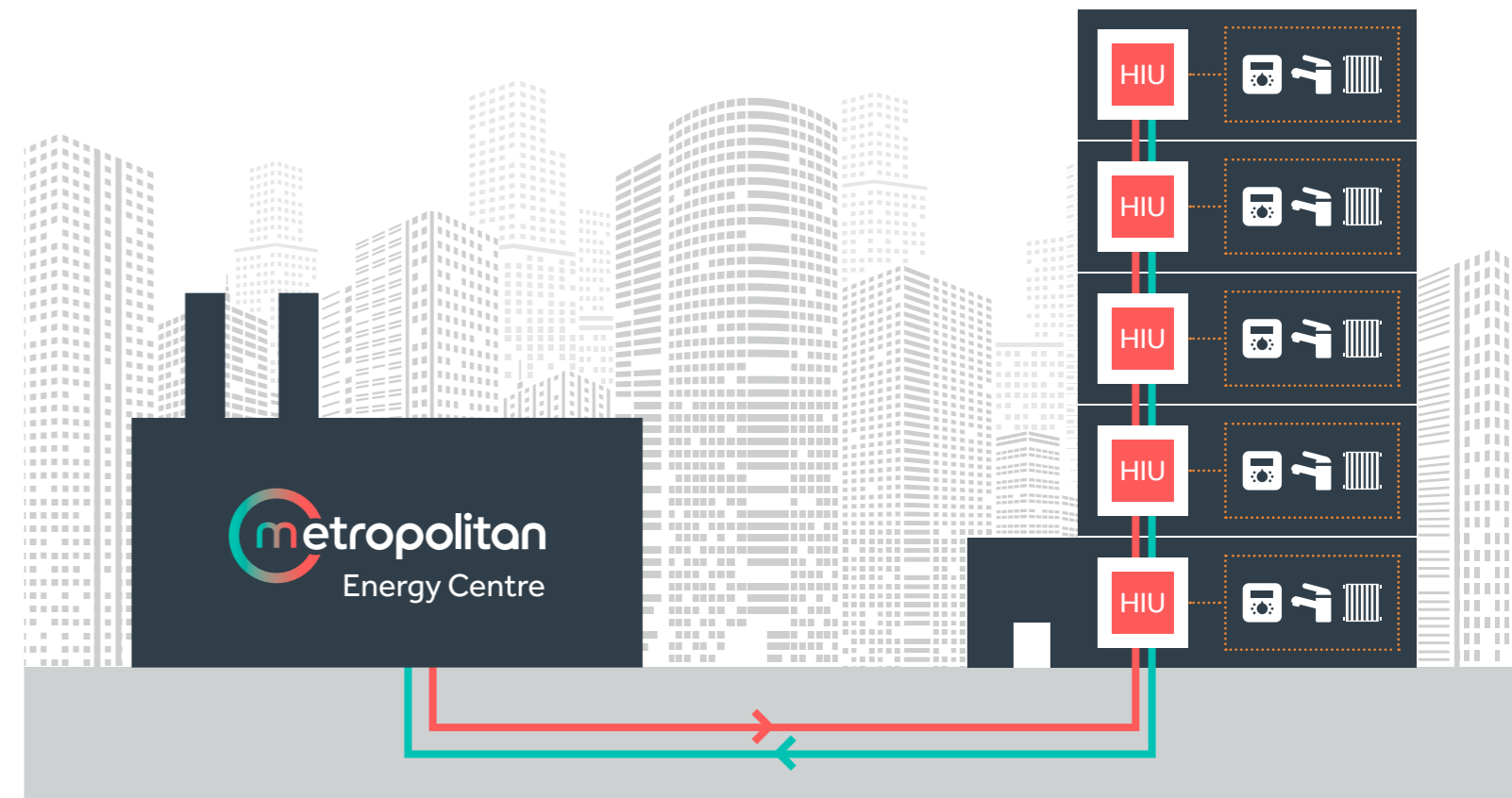
- Provides answers to a range of questions that you may have regarding our heat and hot water services.
- Provides information on how and where you can obtain advice.
- Provides help on products and services.
- Gives full and accurate information, in plain language, about how our services are provided, what they cost, how they should perform, who is responsible for your heat and what to do if you are not satisfied with the Metropolitan service.

This code will be reviewed annually — or immediately following any significant event or change in UK or European law that may materially affect it. The latest version of this code can be obtained from our website at www.metropolitanlocal.co.uk or by contacting us using the Contact Us, section 15 of this document.

For any general queries regarding the supply of heating and hot water to your home, then please do not hesitate to contact us on 02920 100346. Our office opening hours are Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and 9am to 1pm on Saturday. For any supply emergencies, the same number is in operation 24/7.

You can also send us a contact form through our website at www.metropolitanlocal.co.uk.

Nothing in this code affects your statutory or other legal rights; whilst the code provides useful guidance as to the manner in which we operate, it does not form part of any contract between us.



2.0 Who are Metropolitan and what is District Heating?

District Heating is where there is a supply of heating and hot water to your home that is generated at a central Energy Centre. The supply of heating and hot water is delivered to your home through a network of highly insulated pipes.

maintain the network up to and including the Heat Interface Unit in your home.

Because the water that is delivered to your home is already hot, there's no need for a boiler or gas supply to heat the water. The boiler is replaced by an Interface Unit, which is also called a Heat Interface Unit (HIU).

You as the homeowner are responsible for the maintenance and repair of the heating equipment in your home beyond the Heat Interface Unit.

Metropolitan are your heating and hot water supplier. We are responsible for generating the hot water at our Energy Centre before it is delivered to your home through our network. We

This includes your taps, radiators, underfloor heating, thermostats and programmers. If you're a tenant, it is your landlord's responsibility for the maintenance and repair of the heating equipment beyond the Heat Interface Unit.

Metropolitan's responsibility



Your/Landlord's responsibility



3.0 Our services

We offer heat services that can be utilised by you for heating and hot water.

For complete and up-to-date details of our services, pricing and availability, please check our website at www.metropolitanlocal.co.uk. Alternatively, you can give us a call or send us a contact form. Our contact details can be found in Section 15.

3.1 Our service standards and response times

EVENT	RESPONSE TIME / SERVICE LEVEL
HEATING SERVICE / HEAT SYSTEM	
Serious leak within the Heat System at the Supply Address resulting in an emergency	<p>The leak will be attended to within 4 hours of your call being logged with our Customer Service team</p> <p>The leak will be repaired within 24 hours of your call being logged with our Customer Service Team</p>
Leak within the Heat System at the Supply Address which is not an emergency	The leak will be repaired within 5 business days of your call being logged with our Customer Service team
Total or partial loss of heating or hot water at the Supply Address	Problem to be repaired within 24 hours of your call being logged with our Customer Service team

Where we fail to adhere to the above standards of service and response times you may be entitled to a guaranteed standards of service payment in accordance with our published Guaranteed Standards document.

For a fault with our heating equipment in your home that doesn't result in a total or partial loss of your heating and/or hot water supply, we will attempt to attend your property within 7 days from first being made aware of the fault. After that visit we will advise you how long we anticipate it will take us to resolve the fault.

4.0 What charges have to be paid?

The total charges you pay for your heat are comparable to the cost of heating your home using traditional utilities.

Our heat charges are split into two parts:

- Standing charge
- Variable charge

The standing charge is fixed and reflects your property's contribution to the purchase, upkeep and management of the district heating network, energy centre and Heat Interface Unit. The variable charge is metered and is based on the heat that you take from the network.

The fixed standing charge element of your heating bill is payable whether the property is occupied or unoccupied. The standing charge will accrue daily. This is normal and occurs on traditional utilities.

4.1 Who has to pay the charges?

The occupier is responsible for paying the heat charges unless another person, such as the landlord of the property, has agreed that they will pay.

If your property is let for periods of less than twelve months, we may regard the owner as being the occupier for the purpose of changes in our system.

4.2 When do the charges have to be paid?

If you are a Pay As You Go customer, you will need to apply credit to your account before using your heat.

The amount of heat you use will determine how often you need to apply credit to the account. Further information regarding our Pay As You Go service can be found in the useful documents section of our website at www.metropolitanlocal.co.uk.

If you are a Direct Debit customer, you will pay for your heat via monthly Direct Debit payments either based on a flat amount or on the exact heat used.

If you are not a Pay As You Go customer, this is the most hassle-free and cheapest way for you to pay for your heat. With Direct Debit your bills are paid on time, without you having to remember to pay.

As a direct debit customer, you can also decide if you want to pay for your actual heat usage month-on-month or spread the cost of your heating bill over the year with set monthly payments – a handy financial cushion when you turn up the heat in winter.

If your payment reflects your actual heat consumption for that month we will send you an email to let you know that your bill is available to view in your online Metropolitan account, so that you know how much your direct debit will be. Those customers who select equal monthly payments will receive a quarterly bill which can either be posted, or made available to view online to help monitor your payments against the heat you have used.

4.3 Price review formula and price promise – residential customers only

Charges are revised periodically in line with wholesale energy market fluctuations, inflationary influences, etc. For your Monthly Direct Debit bill after tariff changes your heating use will be split between the old and new charges according to the number of days that heat was consumed in each period. For Pay As You Go, the tariff will be updated on your account on the day of the tariff increase and applied to any credit balance remaining.

All tariff changes will be communicated at least 31 days before the new tariff comes into force. We will review our heat prices no more than once every six months.

The maximum price we will be able to charge you at each price review will be capped at the maximum heat price derived from the maximum heat price formula detailed in your Supply Agreement (if applicable). Your Standing Charge may be increased by an amount equivalent to the published Consumer Price Index (CPI) at the time of the price review.

We will ensure that, at the time of your price review, your total heating charges (including both the fixed standing charge and the metered variable charge for the standard tariffs applicable

to your development) over a twelve month period shall, for the assumed amount of heat used by a typical property in your postcode area, be no more than what the cost of a gas boiler providing central heating alternative would have been (the "Heat Cost Comparator").

The Heat Cost Comparator takes into account the unit cost of gas, and the costs of boiler installation, insurance and repair based on a reasonable assumption of boiler installation and servicing costs, lifetimes and efficiencies.

The Heat Cost Comparator shall then be determined using your postcode and the assumed amount of gas consumption in kWh for an average property in your development (based on the combined annual space heating requirement and annual water heating requirement as calculated for an average property in accordance with The Government's Standard Assessment Procedure for Energy Rating of Dwellings 2012 edition, version 9.92, dated October 2013, as updated from time to time).

If the underlying methodology for, or assumptions to our Heat Cost Comparator change, or where we otherwise deem it necessary so as to provide a fair, comprehensive and

representative annual cost of a gas boiler central heating alternative, we reserve the right to replace, amend and/or update the methodology by which we calculate the Heat Cost Comparator. We also reserve the right to withdraw this price promise in the event that statutory regulation of heating charges is introduced.

The Heat Trust (an independent, Government-recognised customer protection organisation), provide an online 'Heat Cost Calculator' (using the data and the relevant assumptions

described in the Heat Trust booklet 'Heat Cost Calculator) to enable heat customers to review against the prices they are being charged – Further information and background assumptions' dated January 2019.

We may vary the charges in accordance with the terms and conditions of your contract (including where required in order to reflect any increase or decrease in the cost to us of any of the utilities or utility services supplied to us) provided the Heat Cost Comparator is not exceeded.

4.4 Alternative tariff options – residential customers only

Aside from our standard tariff, we may at our discretion, offer you alternative tariff options that you may choose to select for your supply.

5.0 Ways to pay your bill

There are a number of ways that you can pay your bill.

5.1 Direct Debit

The easiest and cheapest way to pay for your heat:

- Get your bills paid on time, without the hassle of remembering to pay.
- Option to either spread the cost over the year or pay on demand when your bill arrives.
- Get peace of mind with the Direct Debit Guarantee.

If you decide to spread the cost over the year we'll work out how much you need to pay per month. At the end of each 12 month period, we will check you are paying the correct amount and adjust your payments for the following 12 month period accordingly.

You will receive monthly bills, either by post or an e-bill in your Metropolitan account. Customers who select to pay a set amount each month can choose to receive a quarterly

bill by post or e-bill summarising their payment against their heat consumption.

We reserve the right to recover bank charges and administrative costs resulting from invalid or dishonoured Direct Debits or any other means of payment we may agree with you.

Payments taken by fixed Direct Debit may be taken in advance of the periods for which the consumption for these payments occur.

The direct debit guarantee:

- We will notify you 10 working days in advance if the amount to be paid or the payment date needs to change.
- If an error is made by either us or your bank or building society, you will receive a full and immediate refund from your branch.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your bank or building society – please send us a copy of the letter.

5.2 Pay As You Go account

Another option available to our customers is to pay for heat up front with Pay As You Go.

You can top up either online through your Metropolitan account or by calling us on 02920 100346.

Some of our developments allow top ups through a Payzone card. Our Customer Services team will advise if this option is available to you, allowing you to top up at a local store that accepts Payzone transactions. The Payzone card will be sent by post to you after you register for our services.

Here are the various payment methods to top-up your Pay As You Go account:

PAYMENT METHOD	COST PER TRANSACTION	TIME FOR PAYMENT TO BE CREDITED TO YOUR PAYG ACCOUNT
Bank counter transfer	0p	Next business day
Internet bank transfer	0p	Next business day
Payzone	0p	Within 3 hours
Maestron debit	0p	Within 3 hours
MasterCard credit	0p	Within 3 hours
MasterCard debit	0p	Within 3 hours
Visa credit	0p	Within 3 hours
Visa debit	0p	Within 3 hours
Visa electron	0p	Within 3 hours
JCB	0p	Within 3 hours

Any bank transfers should include your customer reference number and be sent to:

Barclays
Account number: 13029190
Sort code: 20-00-00

As a Pay As You Go customer you will be sent an annual statement of your heating and hot water usage to monitor your spend.

5.3 Additional charges

Aside from the fixed standing charge and the metered variable charge, we reserve the right to charge you for the following:

- Abortive charges where either you make an appointment for us to attend your property but you then either are not available, refuse us access or we are unable to access the Heat Interface Unit (HIU).
- Abortive charge where we attend your property at your request but find that the fault or issue is not within our remit.
- Disconnection (or reconnection) of our equipment.
- You ask us to attend your property outside normal working hours.

5.4 Bill and statement frequency

Bills and account statements will be viewable on your online account. Upon request we can send you paper copies.

The frequency that bills and statements will be available will depend on how you pay us for the services we provide and are summarised as follows:

PAYMENT METHOD	BILL OR STATEMENT FREQUENCY
Pay As You Go	Statement at least once a year
Monthly Fixed Direct Debit	Quarterly bill
Monthly Variable Direct Debit	Monthly bill

6.0 Bill and statement frequency

Each property provided with Metropolitan heating and hot water has its own heat meter located within the Heat Interface Unit.

Our technology allows us to remotely read your heat meter on an hourly basis, without requiring access to your home. Our aim is to always provide accurate heating bills that are based on actual readings and reflect your accurate heat usage.

Should there be an issue with automatically reading your meter, we will take a manual reading at least once a year, as long as access to the meter is not restricted or denied. Where we have not been able to read the meter, we may ask you to provide a reading or we will send you a bill based on your past or estimated consumption. We will also estimate consumption during any periods when the meter is not working correctly or

fails to register the quantity of heat consumed. Any estimates may be adjusted later if necessary and if you are overcharged due to our estimate you can request the credit to be refunded. If you receive an estimated bill, you can provide us with the correct meter reading by calling us on 02920 100346 or write the actual reading on the bill and send it back to us. We will update your account. For our Vulnerable Customers (see section 8), we offer to read your meter within five working days of your request.

To ensure that we can maintain our heating and hot water delivery guarantees, Heat Interface Units will be serviced by ourselves at least every two years and we will contact you at least two months prior to the due date to arrange a suitable appointment.

We make every effort to ensure that charges are billed correctly. However, if we do make a mistake we will make sure we put it right and always do so where the adjustment would be in your favour.

6.1 What if I think my heat meter is faulty?

The reading on the meter, inside your Heat Interface Unit, is regarded as evidence of the amount of heat you have used. The Heat Interface Unit is a sealed unit and should not be opened.

If you want us to test the meter we will do so, but a charge is payable if the meter is found to be accurate to within the accepted tolerance.

If you suspect that the meter is faulty, you can contact us on 02920 100346, or on our website via the online contact form and request that we test it. The meter will be tested where it is and if necessary, be removed and replaced within 40 days.

7.0 What if I have a problem?

We are responsible for the heating and hot water service up to and including the Heat Interface Unit.

You are responsible for the use of all heat registered on your meter. Our district heating system ends at the Heat Interface Unit in your property and we are responsible for repairing or replacing up to this point, providing the damage was not caused

Please note, your Heat Interface Unit is the property of Metropolitan, regardless of its location, and it is a criminal offence to tamper with or remove it. You must allow us access to take readings or to replace it. Failure to allow us reasonable access to fit or read a meter may result in legal proceedings.

If you disagree with the results of the initial test, you can request for the meter to be removed and sent off for independent testing. If the test confirms that the meter complies with the limits of error and is found to be fault free, you will be liable for the cost of the test, including replacement of the meter, postage and packaging, and other admin costs.

If the meter is found to be over recording, charges will be adjusted to reflect the correct level of heat consumption, either from the date that the meter became faulty, or if this is not known, then from six months prior to the date of the last reading taken by ourselves. If the meter is found to be under recording, then the charges will not be backdated. We will provide you with a copy of the meter test report as soon as it becomes available.

by you or a third party. If you damage the district heat system, you will be liable for the cost of repairing it.

Outside of our Heat Interface Unit, you are responsible for any costs to repair damage or failure to the heating system and pipes within your property.

8.0 Vulnerable customers

Vulnerability can come in a range of guises, and can be temporary, sporadic or permanent in nature. Many people in vulnerable situations would not diagnose themselves as 'vulnerable', it is our responsibility as a company to pick up on the signs and act accordingly.

We provide a range of services to support customers that identify as vulnerable. This can include customers who have a disability (including mental health), or who are chronically sick. Customers with a visual or hearing impairment, have a child under the age of five living in their home, customers experiencing financial hardship, customers who are of pensionable age or have communication barriers (low literacy/language barriers).

We will endeavour to provide as much support as possible. This can include:

- Third party nomination for someone to manage your account on your behalf.
- Setting up a door knocking password which only our representatives will know.
- Large printed bills or bills printed in braille.
- Providing an alternative means to heat your home should you be left without heating for over 12 hours.
- Never suspending your heating and hot water supply during the winter months (October to March).

You can highlight your needs when you register online or over the phone. Should your circumstances change, please let us know as soon as possible and we can adapt the way we manage your account.

8.1 Our literature

If you would like to view any of our vulnerable customer documents, you can find these on our website. You can also

request printed copies of these by contacting us by phone or sending us a contact form through our website.

8.2 Bill payment

Vulnerable customers may nominate somebody who can help them manage their heating and hot water account.

Specifically, this nominee can:

- Be the person to whom your bill is sent.
- Be the person to whom any enquiry will be made by us in the event of a bill not being paid.
- Pay the bill on your behalf, although they will not be held legally liable for the bill.

8.3 Supply agreement

If you have a problem reading the terms and conditions of your contract, you can ask for our representative to explain it to you. If possible, please ensure that our Customer Services team

is made aware of any individual needs during the service registration, so that the above services can be offered effectively, if or when needed.

9.0 Bogus callers

Unfortunately there are criminals who may pretend to work for utility companies to gain entry to your home. These are known as "bogus callers".

Please bear in mind that it is very rare for us to visit your home without making an appointment with you first. All of our employees and contractors working on behalf of Metropolitan will carry identification cards.

If you are unsure of their identity, you can ask to see their ID before letting them in or you can call us on 02920 100346 and

we can confirm their identity. DO NOT phone any other number that the visitor may give you.

We also offer a password service, which will help you to identify us. This service is FREE and available to all of our customers. Remember if you are in doubt, DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR. You can sign up for the password scheme when you register. You can also request to add this to your account at any time after you have registered by getting in touch with our Customer Services team by phone or by leaving us a contact form via our website.

10.0 Moving property

When you inform us that you are moving out, you can either agree to provide us with a meter reading or we can remotely read the meter to calculate the final bill.

You can expect to receive your final bill within six weeks of your move. You need to give us at least two working days' notice if you would like us to read your meter on the day of your move. You can do this either by calling us on 02920 100346 or by sending us a contact form through our website at www.metropolitanlocal.co.uk.

If you do not give us two working days' notice, you will be liable for charges until whichever of the following occurs first:

- The new occupier contacts us and informs us that they are now responsible for the charges.

- The twenty-eighth day after we are informed.
- The date on which the meter would normally have been read in order to calculate the final bill.

If you move out of your home without notifying us and a new customer moves in without notifying us, we will need to take a meter reading in order to calculate the average daily use. We will use this to determine the amount owed by the new customer since the date they moved in. We take the reading at midnight on the move date.

If you are moving, please contact our Customer Services team to inform us of your move and we can send a final bill to you within five working days.

11.0 Confidentiality

We will treat any information we hold about you in confidence and will not disclose it to anyone except yourself, or in accordance with any instructions you have given us.

However, there are circumstances in which we may be required by law to disclose information. Such requests normally come from Statutory Authorities, for example: Police Forces, Security Services, Revenue and Customs, etc.

Any such disclosure will be strictly controlled and will be made fully in accordance with current UK legislation, in particular the Data Protection Act (1998).

This is overseen by The Office of the Information Commissioner. You can find more details on their website at (www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk) or write to them at:

The Office of the Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

We are also committed to maintaining the privacy of all visitors to our website. For more information regarding our privacy policy, please visit our website at www.metropolitanlocal.co.uk.

12.0 Customer communication

Our customers are very important to us and we think that effective communication is the best way to build their confidence and trust.

You can contact us in a number of ways (see section 15 of this document). From time to time, we will promote our services to you through a variety of channels, but only where you have agreed to such contact.

We will do so in accordance with accepted industry best practice and standards:

- Following the UK Direct Marketing Association guidelines on when to contact customers (i.e. only between 8.00am-9.00pm unless specifically requested to call outside these hours).
- Abide by the Distance and Doorstep Selling Practice, and other relevant UK and EU Regulations.
- Stop specified "promotional" contact if requested to do so by the customer in accordance with the Data Protection Act, Telephone Preference Service (TPS), Mailing Preference Scheme (MPS), and the Facsimile Preference Scheme (FPS).
- We will follow the rules of relevant regulatory bodies such as the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).

13.0 How can you complain?

If you have a problem with our service, it is essential that your complaint is dealt with quickly and efficiently in accordance with our Customer Complaints Procedure. We aim to respond to all complaints within 10 working days.

The complaints procedure has been developed to ensure that all employees and contractors working on our behalf are able to promptly manage and resolve your heating problem, whether via the telephone or in writing.

We define a complaint as any communication by a customer or potential customer in which dissatisfaction is expressed with an aspect of service, a process or an employee or contractor working on our behalf. If your complaint is billing related, then any debt recovery action that has commenced on your account will be suspended until you have received a full response.

We aim to operate in a way that makes communication easy, offering a variety of ways for you to get in touch with us. If there is anything more we can do to make it easier for you to make a complaint then please let us know using the contact information in section 15 of this document.

13.1 Complaints from customers for whom English is not their first language

Metropolitan will always try to deal with a customer for whom English is not their first language in a way that helps the communication process.

The arrangements necessary to enable this may mean that it takes longer to handle these complaints.

13.2 Complaints about employees

If you have a complaint about one of our employees, please direct it to the Customer Service team, or to the Customer Service Manager, should your complaint involve an employee working in the customer services department.

We take any complaint made against our employees very seriously and we will investigate thoroughly. However, in accordance with our company policy, we will not disclose the outcome of any disciplinary action we may choose to undertake.

14.0 Debt recovery

We understand that it can be difficult to find the money to pay for your heat services. If you can't pay your bill please tell us and we can help you manage your payments.

Please call us on 02920 100346 as soon as possible – we will not be able to help you unless you notify us.

Please bear in mind, however, that while we will do all we can to help you manage your payments, the contract between us still applies.

Our approach to debt recovery varies depending on whether you are a Monthly Direct Debit or Pay As You Go customer. However the basic principles are outlined below.

If you do not respond to the final notice, depending on your payment history, we will perform one or more of the following actions:

- Try and call you to discuss payment.
- Switch your account to Pay As You Go (if an available option)
- Agree a payment plan with you.
- Ask a debt collection agency to recover the outstanding money.
- Ask the County Court to issue a claim against you.
- Disconnect your supply.

- i) For Direct Debit customers we may agree to increase your Direct Debit payments for a specified period in order to clear a debt on your account.
- ii) For Pay As You Go customers, we may agree to increase your Standing Charge for a specified period in order to clear a debt on your account.

The occupants of the property are usually liable to pay heat charges unless agreed otherwise. If you think your bill may be wrong or that you may not be responsible for it, please call us on 02920 100346 to ask us to investigate. Any debt recovery action will be put on hold during this process. If we cannot resolve the issue with you, we may have to pass your account to a debt collection agency or ask the County Court to make a determination.

If you do not get in contact with us, we may be forced to take action to recover the debt. This could result in your details being passed to a debt collection agency or legal action being taken, which affects your credit rating. Any costs arising from our debt recovery process may be passed on to you.

If you have a problem getting payment to us because of illness or disability, please contact us on 02920 100346 to allow us to make arrangements that are more convenient for you.

Who else may be able to help?

For independent specialist advice and support regarding your finances you can contact the Citizens Advice Bureau or your local authority financial inclusion services.

Further information can be found in our Debt Recovery Procedure document, which is available to download from our website www.metropolitanlocal.co.uk or you can request a copy from us by calling 02920 100346 or by sending us a contact form via our website.

15.0 Contacting us

You can contact us in the following ways:

By telephone

Call 02920 100346
8am – 8pm Monday to Friday
9am – 1pm Saturdays

On the website

Send us a contact form at
www.metropolitanlocal.co.uk

By post

Metropolitan, Driscoll 2,
Ellen Street, Cardiff,
CF10 4BP

Our office opening hours are Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and 9am to 1pm on Saturday. For any supply emergencies, the same name is in operation 24/7.

Alternatively, you can refer to our website at www.metropolitanlocal.co.uk for answers to frequently asked questions, as well as to view our most up to date customer information.

16.0 Our registered office

Independent Community Heating Limited (trading as "Metropolitan") is a company registered in England and Wales at Synergy House, Woolpit Business Park,

Woolpit, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, IP30 9UP, registered company number 05366042.



Simply better energy



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