

Christine Chapman AM  
Chair, Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

26 May 2015

Dear Chris

**Re: Renting Homes (Wales) Bill**

Thank you for your request for information, following evidence given to the committee during scrutiny of the Renting Homes (Wales) Bill. Colleagues have advised me of the processes followed by British Gas for customers under the age of 18.

In routine circumstances, British Gas does not set up an account in the name of anyone under the age of 18. Instead we would ask for the account to be established in the name of a guarantor, until the customer is no longer a minor.

In cases where there is no guarantor available, the process will depend on the circumstances at the property where the customer is looking for British Gas to supply energy:

1) Where British Gas is already the supplier

- Where a pre-payment meter is already installed, the minor will be required to remain on this payment type at least until they reach the age of 18
- Where a credit meter is installed, the minor would be encouraged to accept the install of a pre-payment meter.

2) Where a minor is looking to switch to British Gas

- We would not take on the account of anyone under the age of 17 - instead, a guarantor would be required.

I am aware that there was discussion at the committee this week as to whether minors would be disadvantaged by requiring to pay for their energy by pre-payment meter.

The committee may be interested in the following information about the way British Gas looks after its pre-payment customers:

- Our customers with pre-payment meters pay the same as other customers who pay by cash or cheque;
- Unlike most other suppliers, we have always offered fixed rate tariffs to pre-payment customers to give them the option and peace of mind of fixing their energy prices over a longer period;

- We do not charge customers for replacing a pre-payment meter with a credit meter, nor do we charge to fit a pre-payment meter;
- We are leading the way in smart pre-payment meters, allowing customers on a pre-payment meter to have the advantages available from smart meters. Smart pre-pay is currently being trialled by around 5,000 customers and is transforming the way our customers manage and top up their energy.

Following our submission of evidence around gas and electrical safety, we are taking a close interest in your committee's scrutiny of the Bill. Please do get in touch if there's any further information that would be helpful to you and the committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'N Speed', written in a cursive style.

**Nick Speed**  
Public Affairs Manager, British Gas