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By email

Response to Ofgem's consultation on new Code requirements

Citizens Advice continues to have concerns about the potential impact of the Competition and Market Authority (CMA) remedy to remove the Whole of Market (WoM) requirement.

As a result, Citizens Advice is supportive of Ofgem's rationale for undertaking an intermediate step, before consulting on the full removal of the CMA's WoM code remedy for price comparison websites (PCWs). We recognise that the regulator has carried out a comprehensive assessment of the potential risks and benefits as part of the Impact Assessment¹ and compared to continuing with the status quo.

Citizens Advice supports Ofgem's proposals that aim to ensure consumers understand the results they are seeing and that they can trust the results shown on accredited PCWs. This approach will help ensure consumers do not make switching or searching decisions based on erroneous assumptions. We strongly agree with the decision that consumers should be able to easily select the Wide Results page under the partial implementation of CMA's Whole of Market remedy.

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https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/system/files/docs/2017/07/confidence_code_review_2016.wom_-_final_-_4_july.pdf

We concur that it is essential for Ofgem to closely monitor the changes resulting from the decision on the partial implementation of the CMA's Whole of Market remedy and the new Code requirements when they take effect. It is important that the right measures are in place to counteract any negative impact on consumers. If it becomes apparent that the consumer experience has deteriorated then appropriate consideration should be given, potentially not implementing the CMA remedy or returning to the previous Code requirements.

Question 1: Do you agree that our proposed Code changes meet the policy goal of providing clear messaging to consumers about market coverage of an accredited PCW's Partial View. If not, how should the Code be changed to meet this policy goal?

Yes. Citizens Advice agrees that Ofgem's proposed changes to the Code meet the policy objective of ensuring there is clear messaging to consumers about the market coverage displayed by accredited PCWs on their Partial View. As we highlighted in our response² to the Code consultation in 2016, it is critical that it is clearly communicated to consumers using PCWs what their Partial View includes.

Question 2: Do you agree that our proposed Code changes meeting the policy goal of providing clear messaging on what an accredited PCW's Wide Results page covers. If not, how should the Code be changed to meet this policy goal?

PCWs must provide transparent and clear messaging to consumers. It is essential that appropriate measures are put in place to guarantee consumers are protected from being misled as a result of the removal of the default WoM view. We agree that the changes Ofgem have proposed should provide clear messaging on what an accredited PCW's Wide Results page includes. It is important that any messaging regarding what is covered on, and the limitations of the Wide Results page is clear, not overcrowded or confusing for consumers.

We strongly agree with monitoring the implementation of the proposals discussed in the document. In particular, Ofgem reviews how PCWs have met Requirement Two (A) (ii). Details of any consumer testing that were used to

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<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/policy/policy-research-topics/energy-policy-research-and-consultation-responses/energy-consultation-responses/response-to-ofgems-consultation-confidence-code-review-2016/>

inform accredited PCWs' approaches to meet this requirement will be useful in understanding what consumers think they are seeing on the Wide Results page. This will help inform thinking on future policy development.

Question 3: Do you agree that our proposed Code changes meets the policy goal of ensuring accredited PCWs list tariffs in price order in any default view. If not, how should the Code be changed to achieve this?

Yes. The proposed changes reflect the policy aim to make sure accredited PCWs list tariffs in price order in any default view.