07 December 2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

From April 2017 businesses, charities and public sector organisations in England will be able to switch their supplier of water and sewerage retail services. By switching, or negotiating with the current supplier, customers could get a better price or a more tailored service. Retail services include meter reading, billing and handling customer queries and complaints.

The Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) is the independent consumer body for the water industry in England and Wales. We want your members to know about these upcoming changes in the non-household (NHH) retail water and sewerage market. There will be potential financial benefits and savings for your members.

We would like to speak to National Care Association so we can explain what the changes could mean for your members and provide them with clear advice and information. Our policy managers would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss how we may able to share our expertise. We would also like to submit an informative article for a publication that your members would benefit from reading.

The briefing below will give your members an informed view about how they can participate in the new market from April 2017. Please use this information on your website or in your newsletters and members’ magazines.

If you would like further information contact us at marketreform@ccwater.org.uk or on 0121 345 1028. We would be happy to call or meet with you to discuss retail water competition in more detail.

Best regards,

Evan Joanette

CCWater Policy Manager (Market Reform)

**Click on a topic to learn more**

* [Am I eligible to take part in the retail water market?](#Eligible)
* [Background to non-household retail competition](#Background)
* [How could my members and their customers benefit from the retail water market?](#Benefits)
* [Who will be operating in the non-household retail market?](#Retailers)
* [How is CCWater supporting customers?](#Support)
* [Can CCWater help us raise awareness among our members?](#Awareness)

**Am I eligible to take part in the retail water market?**

From April 2017, all non-household (NHH) customers (i.e. businesses, charitable organisations and public sector organisations) at eligible premises in England – some 1.2 million customers - will be able to switch their supplier of water and sewerage retail services. Retail services include meter reading, billing and handling customer queries and complaints

**Background to non-household retail competition**

Currently, only very heavy water users (5 million litres per year in England or 50 million litres per year in Wales) can switch water supplier. Five million litres would fill two Olympic-sized swimming pools. However, from April 2017 this usage threshold will drop to zero in England, effectively opening up competition to all NHH customers.

The Welsh Government has decided to keep a 50 million litre threshold in Wales.

In Scotland, NHH customers have been able to choose their retailer since 2008. Around 30% of customers have switched and around 50% have negotiated with their current retailer.

**Who will be operating in the non-household retail market?**

New retail suppliers are being split from water and sewerage companies that you already know. Some retailers operating in Scotland have sought licences to operate in England. It is also possible that entirely new retailers including those operating in the energy and telecoms sectors could offer retail services.

**How could my members and their customers benefit from the retail water market?**

Retailers will compete with each other to offer customers a better price and service. Many larger customers expect to make a saving by consolidating billing across multiple sites.

Other customers tell us they would value added-value services like water efficiency checks to root out leakage or more frequent meter reading to get better control over their usage.

**How is CCWater supporting customers?**

We support the opening of the retail market. However, the systems and processes must work effectively and customers must be protected from poor practices which have affected other markets.

CCWater is working with market designers, the regulator (Ofwat), and retailers to ensure that customers’ views collected through our research and advocacy work are considered at the design, testing and implementation stages.

When the market opens we will continue to give advice and where necessary take up complaints on behalf customers who have not been able to resolve matters with their retailer.

**Can CCWater help us raise awareness amongst our members?**

CCWater can help you raise awareness. Our market reform team can provide you with a brief for your website and newsletter. If your members would value speaking to us, we would be happy to attend your next meeting.

Contact us at marketreform@ccwater.org.uk or on 0121 345 1028 for more information. You can visit CCWater’s website at [www.ccwater.org.uk/business-customers](http://www.ccwater.org.uk/business-customers)