

# The energywatch Confidence Code

A voluntary Code of Practice for price comparison services



# Introduction

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The energywatch Confidence Code sets out the minimum requirements an internet domestic electricity and gas price comparison service (service provider) should meet.

The energywatch Confidence Code should be interpreted in accordance with the attached Guidance. The energywatch Confidence Code Guidance is to have the same force as if it was part of the energywatch Confidence Code.

## 1. Requirement One

The service provider must be independent of any gas or electricity supplier. It can take commission from suppliers but this must not influence the provision of information. The service provider must state clearly each supplier it receives commission from. Advertisements from suppliers or their agents should not be accepted.

## 2. Requirement Two

The service provider must include price comparisons for all currently available tariffs for all licensed suppliers (for gas, electricity and dual fuel). Comparisons should be on a like for like basis. If they do not cover “historic” tariffs that are no longer generally available then this should be stated clearly.

## 3. Requirement Three

The service provider must be a company that runs its own website and uses its own tariff database and calculator.

## 4. Requirement Four

Payment methods must include:  
standard credit by cash/cheque  
monthly and quarterly direct debit  
prepayment meter

## 5. Requirement Five

Prices from no less than five of the cheapest suppliers must be listed. Prices must include VAT (and state that they do so).

## 6. Requirement Six

Customers should also be invited to consider quality of service issues and energy efficiency programmes and be told where to find this information.

## 7. Requirement Seven

Prices and price comparisons must be accurate and state when they were last updated.

### 7.1 Calculation assumptions

The assumptions that a service provider bases its calculations on should include:

- discounts for paying by a certain method (e.g. monthly direct debit)
- dual fuel discounts
- online discounts
- compulsory paperless billing discounts
- fixed charges (e.g. a fixed monthly membership fee)

The assumptions that a service provider bases its calculations on should not include:

- introductory sign up offers that may be for a limited time/one-time discounts/special offers
- discounts that depend on customers behaving in a certain way (e.g. prompt pay)
- discounts that apply to other services that a supplier may add to a product offering
- non-price offers

### 7.2 Updating tariffs

A service provider must update tariffs within 2 working days of a price change coming into effect.

## 8. Requirement Eight

The service provider must comply with an annual audit undertaken by an auditor appointed by energywatch. The cost of the audit will be borne by the service providers.

## 9. Requirement Nine

The service provider must have effective consumer complaint and enquiry handling procedures in place and respond to any complaint or enquiry within seven working days of receipt.

# The energywatch Confidence Code Guidance

## Introduction

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The energywatch Confidence Code Guidance accompanies the energywatch Confidence Code and states clearly what is expected of each service provider under each requirement of the energywatch Confidence Code.

### Requirement One

1. Where a consumer chooses to search by price, results should be presented strictly in terms of best price.
2. A service provider must provide impartial advice, not advice that is biased in favour of one or more particular gas or electricity suppliers.
3. A service provider must list each supplier it has a commission agreement with. This list must be displayed prominently on, or accessible from, the results pages.
4. Where consumers can't automatically switch to a supplier through the service provider's site, the service provider should not recommend an alternative supplier.

### Requirement Two

5. Green tariffs must be included. Green tariffs are those tariffs that conform to the Ofgem Guidelines on Green Supply Offerings in the domestic electricity market.
6. Historic (or preserved) tariffs are those tariffs that are no longer available to new customers (however, some old customers may still be on them).
7. Historic tariffs may be included at the discretion of a service provider.
8. Where gas and electricity tariffs are bundled (e.g. include telephony), the gas and electricity base prices must be included, with details provided on the additional components of the tariff.
9. Details of non-cash offers (such as airmiles and supermarket points) should be listed separately to the gas and electricity base prices.
10. A service provider may include price comparisons for Supplier Agent tariffs at their discretion.
11. A service provider may include price comparisons for non-standard meters (e.g. Economy 9) at their discretion.
12. A service provider has sole responsibility for obtaining and updating all licensed suppliers' tariffs.

### Requirement Three

13. A single brand or web domain of a company may only sign up to the energywatch Code.
14. A service provider can make its calculator available to third parties. These third parties can state that they use a service provider's calculator or database and state that the service provider is signed up to the energywatch Code. The third party however must not use the energywatch logo.

### Requirement Four

15. A service provider should provide consumers with an explanation of the following payment methods:
  - Standard credit by cash/cheque
  - Monthly and quarterly direct debit
  - Prepayment meter

### Requirement Five

16. A service provider may provide filters so that consumers may search results based on supplier service rating, etc, but these must be opt in options only.
17. A service provider should provide a facility or follow-through page so that the consumer has the ability to view a list of all of the savings results.

### Requirement Six

18. Where a service provider assigns supplier service ratings energywatch must review the methodology. The methodology should be stated clearly to consumers.
19. The supplier service ratings must not in any way influence the provision of price comparison information.
20. A service provider should at the least provide contact details for the Energy Saving Trust, as well as referring consumers to grant schemes such as Warm Front, Warm Deal (Scotland), the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (Wales) and the Energy Efficiency Commitment.

### Requirement Seven

21. A service provider should provide consumers with details of recently announced price rises by suppliers e.g. average price rises and effective dates.

### **Requirement Eight**

No accompanying guidance.

### **Requirement Nine**

22. A service provider should provide energywatch with a contact name and number for complaint referrals that energywatch receives on behalf of a service provider.
23. A service provider should respond to a referred complaint by energywatch within seven working days and should copy energywatch into any response.