

Radio Teleswitch Service Switch-off

Citizens Advice Scotland Briefing, May 2025

The RTS switch-off is putting people across Scotland in jeopardy

Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) is deeply concerned about the upcoming Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) switch-off. The switch-off exposes thousands of households to harm, especially in rural and island communities. Impacted households may lose control of their heating and hot water and suffer financial detriment when they move to new tariffs. This situation is unacceptable.

Decisive action is required to protect households from harm

- Suppliers must do more to increase the number of engineer appointments available and reduce instances of missed or failed appointments.
- Suppliers must ensure that no RTS households are worse off financially after they replace an RTS meter.
- Anyone who pays for repair work to facilitate an RTS meter replacement needs easy access to funding that will reimburse these costs.
- Ofgem should update its licence conditions around RTS meters and undertake necessary enforcement action against suppliers who do not respond adequately to the impending switch-off.

There are persistent problems securing engineer visits

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) advisers are supporting an increasing number of people with the RTS switch-off. Many of them are elderly, living with long-term health conditions, experiencing other forms of vulnerability and/or living in Scotland's most deprived areas.

People with RTS meters and CAB advisers have found it challenging to arrange engineer visits. One CAB adviser spent eight hours securing appointments for two people with RTS meters. In both cases, the engineers did not attend the appointments. When the CAB adviser contacted the suppliers to arrange new visits, the supplier informed them that no appointments were available. This problem is particularly acute in rural and island communities.

Simon's experience: Simon lives in a rural community. He attended a CAB outreach event in April 2025 because he was worried about the RTS switch-off. He received a letter from his supplier about the switch-off in December 2024. He contacted his supplier several times after receiving this letter but had been unable to secure a meter engineer visit. This situation has caused significant distress for both members of Simon's household, who are in their 80s.

Suppliers are missing or failing to complete meter replacement appointments

Our advisers have identified many instances of missed or failed engineer visits across Scotland, particularly in rural and island communities. Missed and failed appointments are slowing the pace of RTS replacement, creating disruption and causing distress for impacted households. Ofgem should examine what enforcement action it can take against suppliers who fail repeatedly to attend and complete meter replacement appointments.

Dugald’s experience: Engineers visited Dugald’s council house four times before they were able to replace his RTS meter. The engineers working on behalf of Dugald’s supplier and his local authority could not agree on who was responsible for relocating a 24-hour switch. An engineer and council electrician completed the exchange during the fourth visit. This process had left Dugald – who is in his 90s and living alone – extremely concerned about his heating and hot water.

Switching tariff after an RTS meter replacement may leave people worse off financially

There are specific RTS tariffs available in Scotland (Comfort Plus and Total Heat Total Control). There is a risk that households moving to new tariffs after an RTS meter replacement will experience financial detriment when their electricity bill increases. Our evidence shows that people are already facing huge difficulties around energy costs. Around 4,000 people asked their local CAB for advice on fuel vouchers or energy trust funds between January and March 2025.

Anne’s experience: Anne had an RTS meter and associated Total Heat Total Control tariff. Her supplier moved her to a smart Economy 7 meter. An Economy 7 meter is meant to record peak and off-peak rates, but Anne’s meter was recording only one rate. This problem led to extensive billing issues and her CAB supported her to receive a £3,000 refund from her supplier. Although her heating is working, Anne has still not received an accurate bill. This problem took months to resolve, causing Anne uncertainty and inconvenience for a prolonged period.

Households need access to funding to cover the cost of repair works

Replacing an RTS meter can involve remedial work like rewiring. Paying for this work means people incurring extra costs, exposing vulnerable households to financial hardship. No one should be left worse off after paying for RTS-related repair work. Ofgem is working to make funding available to help people cover the cost of remedial work. Access to this funding must be straightforward.

Problems with smart meters are hampering RTS meter replacements

Suppliers are replacing RTS meters with smart meters but there are repeated instances of smart meters experiencing connectivity issues, especially in rural and island areas. Connectivity problems have caused meter replacement appointments to fail. Recent changes to the Smart Energy Code should provide suppliers with more options to ensure smart meters connect properly. Suppliers should use the expanded range of smart meter options to quicken the pace of replacing RTS meters.

Lorna’s experience: Lorna, who lives in a rural area, lost heating after she tried to switch suppliers while using an RTS meter. A meter engineer confirmed the switch had caused the problem and installed a smart meter. Poor connectivity meant the smart meter would not work. A second visit was needed to install a working smart meter. In addition to the significant disruption and confusion these meter problems created, they also pushed Lorna into energy debt. She had to contact her local CAB for debt advice.



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