**Event on regulating essential services after the pandemic and the cost of living crisis**

September/October date?

The regulatory framework, policies and relationships between stakeholders have come under substantial pressure through the pandemic and the subsequent cost of living crisis. It seems essential to begin a conversation about the delivery and regulation of essential services going forward.

Issues:

Regulatory institutions going forward

There are a number of issues here: for example, are the duties of regulators, originally constructed to focus on economic matters but heavily amended since then, appropriate for an age where there is more focus on affordability and environmental matters? Is there a more “social” element to regulation? What should be the appropriate division of responsibilities between regulators and government? Not obvious that strategic policy statements/steers have worked well.

House of Lords Industry and Regulators Committee has had a recent inquiry on UK regulators.

Experiences of consumer representation:

Perhaps a panel with CC Water, Financial Services Consumer Panel, Consumer Communications Panel, Citizens Advice. Alternative voices? *National Consumer Federation, Which? JRF?*

Affordability

* Key issue – social tariffs, benefit system – long running debate – how do you help the poor/destitute? *views from Advice charities – MAT, CA, NEA, Auriga*

Helping charities help customers

* Customers in vulnerable circumstances – how to improve support – *Input from charities*
* Could we get a panel of actual hard to reach consumers? *Do any of the debt/advice charities have an existing panel/board member representing service users?*
* Digitally excluded – *Perspective/research on accessibility/cost/skills - from e.g. Age UK, IA, Ofcom, StepChange,*
* Other excluded groups, e.g., refugees, - *Perspective/research from e.g. Refugee council, Homeless charity,*

Complaint handling

* How are complaints used to identify industry issues? - *FOS, CMA?*
* Note complaint handling in water has changed recently

Devolution – English regions

Transition to net zero – *Input from NEA, CSE*

Keynote speakers: Celebrity names (of whom only Martin Lewis springs to mind), senior regulators/voluntary sector heads, politicians – chairs of relevant committees, actual/Shadow Ministers (very unlikely), any key academics? *Current research areas – ask Tim/Cosmo for ideas/contacts*

**Target audience:**

*Range of organisations that might be interested and also the roles/level?*

*Would we be looking to attract decision makers, to input into current research/policy development, to reach advisers/consumer champions?*

*Do we want a mix of regulators, policy leads and advisers or for the event to be more of a sounding board for the speakers to discuss issues and ideas with people who are working at the coal face?*

*Are we looking at this as a one-off event or something that leads on to a further conversation (not necessarily another ESAN event)?*