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SUPPLY LICENCE REVIEW: VIEWS SOUGHT ON PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS

Energy regulator Ofgem has today (Tuesday) published a document encouraging consumer groups to suggest how gas and electricity supply licence conditions which protect vulnerable customers could be revised.

Last year, Ofgem announced it was undertaking a review of the supply licences and one of the main aims of the project is to ensure the conditions give adequate protection to customers who are either elderly, disabled, suffering from long-term sickness or on low incomes. Protection to such customers is provided through Ofgem's own enforcement powers and general consumer protection law.

A working group comprising Ofgem and other organisations has been examining the relevant licence conditions including those relating to debt and disconnection and the Priority Service Register. Now some initial conclusions have been reached, Ofgem wants to ensure a wider range of stakeholders have the opportunity to input their views. The consultation document sets out a range of options for protecting vulnerable customers.

Ofgem is specifically looking to consumer groups which represent vulnerable customers to respond to the document. Two seminars have been organised to give consumer groups an opportunity to discuss the issues raised.

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Notes to editors

1. Copies of the document "Supply Licence Review - Implications for Vulnerable Customers" are available on the Ofgem website www.ofgem.gov.uk. Hard copies can be ordered from the Ofgem distribution centre on 020 7901 7116 or by email from distribution@ofgem.gov.uk. The closing date for submitting views is 28 April.
2. The seminars for consumer groups will take place on 31 March in Glasgow, and 3 April in London. Consumer representatives wishing to attend should contact Liz Chester from Ofgem's social issues team on 020 7901 7403 or liz.chester@ofgem.gov.uk
3. Customers who are either elderly, disabled or suffering from long-term sickness are eligible to apply for **free special services** by ringing their gas and electricity companies. Once registered, they can benefit from the a range of free services.
4. Ofgem is the Office of the Gas and Electricity Markets, which supports the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority, the regulator of the gas and electricity industries in Great Britain. Ofgem's aim is to bring choice and value to all gas and electricity customers by promoting competition and regulating

monopolies. The Authority's powers are provided for under the Gas Act 1986, the Electricity Act 1989 and the Utilities Act 2000.

For further press information contact:

Mark Wiltsher 020 7901 7006/Out of hours 07774 728971

Chris Lock 020 7901 7225 /Out of hours 07766 511 470