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Dear Dave

**Report on the quality of energy efficiency advice from electricity and gas suppliers.**

Thank you for the copy of the report you sent me on 08 January.

Atlantic is very pleased with its performance in the recent mystery shopping exercise and believes that, over the last year, it has made real improvements in its provision of energy efficiency advice to consumers. In particular, we are pleased that Atlantic's energy advisers were found to be the most knowledgeable of all those surveyed. For a small supplier (with the resource constraints that that entails) we believe that is a real achievement.

However, we are aware that some areas of our performance need addressing and here are our specific comments in relation to those areas:

**Call centre performance –**

From the information you provided us with, it appears that the mystery shopper pressed the wrong button on the automated telephony system. Pressing "3" on the system directs the caller to an out-sourced marketing company that sends information packs to people wishing to become an Atlantic customer. We are aware that, due to technical problems around transferring the call to this other company, customers have sometimes experienced problems with this. Our Call Centre Manager has checked the telephony records for the days the mystery shopper tried to contact us and there should have been no problems speaking to one of our own advisers about a billing query, so long as the correct button had been pressed.

Furthermore, although the call centre can get extremely busy at peak times, customers have the option (every 30 seconds) to leave a voice-mail message for us. If they require a response, we will ring them back within 24 hours. We



find that a lot of customers find this facility to be very useful – on average, 5000 customers leave us a voice-mail each week.

Since the mystery shopping exercise, we have also introduced a “place in queue” message so that customers can at least estimate how long they may have to hang on to speak to an adviser. At this point, they can then decide whether to wait, leave us a message or try again later.

We are sorry that the mystery shopper was unable to contact us. However, our current abandonment rate runs at 5 – 7 % which is a very good performance when compared against other call centres. We also believe that we have adequate facilities in place so that customers don't simply have to hang on the phone endlessly. It is unfortunate that the mystery shopper pressed the wrong button but we feel quite confident that, had the prompts been followed correctly, they would have been able to speak to an adviser.

#### **Asking about benefits/age –**

We have reminded all helpline staff of the importance of asking, early in the conversation, whether the enquirer is on benefits and how old they are.

#### **Provision of verbal advice on controlling CH/HW/Cooking –**

All of our advisers are fully versed in these subjects, which are the subjects of regular in-house workshops, and general advice is given over the telephone regarding the operation of this equipment. Because of the wide range of equipment that has been available over the years, and is still in use in households throughout the UK, it is sometimes not possible to give specific guidance on some components or controls, and enquirers are therefore then referred to manufacturers, registered installers or trade organisations. We do not offer advice on this equipment in the home, as we feel this would be better coming from manufacturers and / or installers, who should be able to give good practical advice on the equipment they supply.

#### **Giving more info on grants –**

We give detailed advice to enquirers about the EEC grants offered by Atlantic Electric & Gas, if they appear to qualify for them by status and / or area of residence. Specific advice is not given on grants offered by competitor organisations or other bodies (other than Warmfront), but, when Atlantic grants do not seem appropriate, enquirers are advised that other grants may be available, and they are further advised to contact their local EEAC (number given) and / or their Local Authority HECA Officer.

Grant information may be given in newsletters and other communications, but is not normally the subject of separate written letters. Atlantic do, however, arrange for trained surveyors to visit householders in properties which may



benefit from EEC insulation schemes and, subject to the results of the survey and further checking of the priority status, will give written recommendations for improvements (Lofts or CWI) together with the cost estimate and the grant available.

### **Advice on how often to service boiler –**

Enquirers are advised to have boilers serviced at least every 12 months UNLESS they have been advised to have more frequent servicing, OR are experiencing difficulties, OR have any suspicions about the safe working of the appliance (large yellow flames, strange smell, etc) when they are urged to switch the appliance off and seek immediate assistance.

### **More info on Low Energy Bulbs –**

We have reviewed our training and re-emphasised to our advisers the importance of discussing CFLs with all enquirers.

### **Home visits –**

Atlantic Energy Efficiency Advisers do not make home visits. In appropriate cases, however, trained surveyors employed by our appointed insulation contractors will complete energy surveys (see below) which will be subsequently processed by Novacroft, with the resultant report sent back to the householder by post, together with a lifestyle 'Hints and Tips' extract from the Atlantic Code of Practice. In a covering letter, the householder is encouraged to call one of our EE advisers to discuss the report and any possible improvement measures.

### **Sending Home Energy Report –**

Since the mystery shopping exercise, we have introduced a Home Energy Report, a sample of which I attach to this letter for your information. This is in addition to the "Hints & Tips leaflet" which gives generic lifestyle advice that supplements and supports the specific advice given in the Home Energy Report.

The reports are completed and posted to householders using three alternative routes.

- 1) Callers to the helpline are encouraged to give details of their properties over the telephone, and the results are immediately processed using MVM Maxim3 Software and discussed with the enquirer. It is recognised that this software only reports on the energy efficiency of the building, but our advisers also take the opportunity to discuss lifestyle measures during the call. Everything is subsequently confirmed in writing.
- 2) Where this is not convenient, a questionnaire is posted to the



enquirer, for completion and return to Novacraft, who process the data and send the report and recommendations back to the householder together with a covering letter and a 'Hints and Tips' leaflet.

3) A survey report is prepared by an appointed contractor, as described in the Home Visits section above.

Finally, I would like to add that all energy efficiency advice is provided by Novacraft, who are fully registered in accordance with the Domestic Energy Efficiency Advice Code of Practice, with all activities subject to independent audit by BSI in accordance with their ISO9001:2000 International Quality Standard Registration.

I trust that this information is useful to you. However, if you require anything else, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Siobhan O'Loughlin  
Regulation Officer.

