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Dear David Barnes and Russell Hamblin-Boone

**A strategy to define and prevent the disconnection of vulnerable customers**

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond to the above consultation. Please note that this response should not be taken as representing the views of individual Trust members.

We very much welcome the proposals presented in the consultation document to develop a common definition for vulnerable customers that will be applied across the whole industry, and to develop a process to better identify, and protect vulnerable customers. We do however have a number of concerns about the proposals, specifically:

- **There is no mention of the role of energy efficiency and energy efficiency advice.** Energy efficiency advice to vulnerable consumers has an important role to play. Many vulnerable consumers are eligible, but do not know it, for free energy efficiency measures through the Government's Warm Front (and equivalents in Scotland and Wales) Programme, and cut price measures from their suppliers. Action taken, in terms of the installation of energy efficiency measures, as a result of referring customers to available help, will result in lower fuel bills, making them easier to pay, and give consumers more control over the energy they use.

Obviously energy efficiency advice and the subsequent installation of energy efficiency measures will not solve the problem on its own; it does however have an important role to play and should be an integral part of any strategy to protect vulnerable customers.

- **Definition of Vulnerable.** We believe that the definition of vulnerable eventually adopted must be as inclusive as possible. In particular, we believe that this definition should extend to children, and to *all* of the household's inhabitants, not just the individual named on the bill.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our response in further detail with you.

Yours sincerely

Elaine Waterson