

A background image showing a person in a white protective suit and mask, possibly a healthcare worker or a utility worker, looking down. The image is partially obscured by a large white rounded rectangle containing the title.

Communicating with Vulnerable Customers Best Practice Workshop

26 September 2006

Why are we here today?

Common goal: improving communication with all customers

- Communications with customers on energy matters can convey important messages (supply interruption, non-payment of bills, increased energy charges etc)
 - Certain groups of customers may need additional information/alternative materials to process information
- Aim of the workshop:
- Share views, ideas and best practice on how to meet the communication needs of certain customer groups
 - Discussion/advice on available tools to improve communication and ways to improve current practices

Attendees

- Energy companies: suppliers and network operators
- Agencies and service providers
- Specialist groups (to share expertise and best practice)
- Ofgem's own Communications Team

Background to the workshop

- Licensees already have arrangements in place to aid communication with vulnerable customer groups:
 - Licence obligations
 - Other initiatives

- Supply Licence Review consultation (March 2006) and consumer group seminars (Spring 2006)
 - Respondents highlighted needs of some particular groups of customers and areas for possible improvement

- Ofgem: no need for further regulatory action but workshop to examine best practice and draw on expert advice

Aim of the workshop

- Understand how to make further improvements in communicating with customers
- Advice from specialist organisations on identifying customers' needs
- Provide useful and practical advice on how to better meet the communication needs of various groups
- Deliver best practice in communication

Communication needs

- Workshop focuses on the communication needs of a number of customer groups:
 - Customers with learning disabilities
 - Customers with sensory impairment (including dual-sensory impairment)
 - Customers whose first language is not English
 - Elderly customers
- Are clearly other people who may require tailored communication

Key issues to consider

- Types of communication:
 - Existing customer base
 - Attracting new customers
 - In-bound and out-bound communications

- Challenges in meeting the communication needs of certain customer groups
 - Identifying a person's communication needs
 - Understanding how to meet those needs
 - Delivering improvements (cost and practicality)

Structure of the workshop

- Introductory presentation (energy suppliers' perspective) on challenges and good practice

Presentations from specialist organisations; focusing on:

- Understanding the needs of particular groups
- Available tools, support and best practice

- Discussion and questions



Promoting choice and value for all
gas and electricity customers



