

### Identifying and meeting the communication needs of all EDF Energy Networks customers

EDF Energy Networks has an effective customer communication strategy which commenced with our substantive customer research in 2004 (*see 2006 submission*) followed by company-wide implementation of new ideas in 2005/6, leading to a seminar on 23 January 2007 (see below) to understand specific needs for vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups. We use each and every customer contact, (including complaints), to continually learn and improve our services. This information we share throughout the business and is used as an opportunity to improve our customer experience.

Our wider communication strategy is underpinned by all employees attending a monthly face-to-face briefing. This consists of the latest company information and includes customer focus data along with our balanced scorecard showing our achievements against targets. Some months we focus on particular topics (*see PCC submission*) but always on two-way communication. Many initiatives currently in place have been as a result of suggestions coming from these meetings.

To 'care more for our customers' is a company-wide ambition, and performance against this is assessed using the balanced scorecard approach (*see introductory page*). An example is we coach our staff how to recognise different communication needs and to recognise when someone needs extra help and to reassure and give them the support they need. How do we monitor this? Ongoing performance management and coaching is part of our business as usual and is linked to our customer service quality measures. Calls are recorded and assessed on factors most important to our customers such as empathy, rapid answer, taking ownership and providing accurate information.

### How do we currently communicate with our customers?

We utilise a range of communication channels including:

- ❖ local and national media channels
- ❖ proactive customer contact
- ❖ website updates in emergencies
- ❖ introduction of a dedicated priority services number publicised via Braille cards
- ❖ modern telephony systems (including SMS and automated voice updates)

However, we recognise that there are several groups who may face difficulties using solely traditional communication channels. We realise that we need to do more to make our services accessible to customers with learning, visual or hearing disabilities as well as those with language or other communication needs.

*"This was a very productive event. Communications wise, I have a much better idea of who to contact in EDF Energy"*

**Marie Hartley (London Borough of Hackney)**



### How have we identified customers' communications needs?

As part of our ongoing engagement with stakeholder partners we hosted a seminar in January 2007 to which we invited over 70 public and voluntary sector groups. By bringing together such a wide ranging audience including local authorities, Primary Care Trusts, leading UK care charities and Ofgem, we were able to explore customers' specific communication needs in detail.

Through round-table discussions, the day generated over 300 individual suggestions and comments.

We have already implemented a number of these including:

- ❖ calling customers with a reminder the day before planned power interruptions
- ❖ redesigning our pictorial factsheet for hard-to-reach customers

Using general customer feedback and the comments received at our seminar, we have identified new ways of communicating with hard-to-reach sectors in the communities we serve, and created a number of successful partnerships to achieve this.

### Talking newspapers

- » In partnership with Chatterbox, the weekly talking newspaper based in Norwich, we trialled the recording of an awareness-raising item on our Priority Services Register (PSR), which was distributed to visually-impaired people in the local community.
- » Following a positive response from listeners, we have now expanded this initiative to a further 34 talking newspapers across our area, reaching over 5,000 customers and resulting in many new additions to our PSR.

### Hospital radio

We believe that hospitals are key partners in promoting the PSR to some of the most vulnerable members of our communities.

- » We are working with Radio West Suffolk, Ashford Hospital Broadcasting Services (AHBS) in Kent and Whipps Cross in London, and plan to expand this to a further 53 hospital radio stations in our network area.
- » AHBS has recorded material for us that we will distribute to other hospital radio stations in our network area.
- » A senior member of our staff was interviewed by KMFM radio regarding this initiative.

*"AHBS broadcasts a variety of information to patients 24 hours a day. We can reach exactly the kind of people this scheme is designed to help."* **Daniel Jones – Chairman AHBS**

### Accessible literature

Following our stakeholder discussions we reviewed our printed literature detailing our essential services and explaining how to deal with emergency situations.

- » Working with Mencap, we produced Easy Read formats of our fact sheets. While these are principally aimed at customers with learning disabilities, they also benefits those who are unable to read or write and those whose first language is not English (*see fig one*).
- » These leaflets are being distributed through local community outlets such as libraries and Citizens Advice Bureaux as well as by field and office-based staff.
- » We have also developed fact sheets in Braille, Moon and audio formats.
- » We are currently redeveloping our website,

to be launched during the summer, which will meet the standard for accessibility and colour-blindness. It will also support the main UK disability-software readers, Braille and Moon keyboard pin readers and software used by people with mobility disabilities.

### Customers whose first language is not English

- » Recognising the diversity of our customers we use Language Line, a real-time translation service, to ensure that our non-English speaking customers are able to benefit from our services.
- » Following a suggestion from one of our employees, we also use the extensive language skills within our company. Our internal phone directory now includes a list of people who act as interpreters in over 50 languages, further improving the customer service experience.

### Customer awareness training

We place great importance on training our employees to understand and exceed all our customers' needs and expectations.

- » We invited RNID Typetalk to train over 20 employees to handle calls from hearing impaired customers via the type talk system (*see fig two*).
- » Over 57 employees attended learning disability training seminars run by Mencap.

### Young people

Young people are often overlooked when considering communications. We recognise that our equipment may pose a real danger to inquisitive children, and have a dedicated team of six education advisors whose main work is to promote an electrical safety message to youngsters ranging from seven to 15 years of age.

- » The topics of electricity, safety, sustainability and climate change all appear in the National Curriculum, meaning that our work in schools can fully support teachers.
- » Our education advisors worked with over 92,000 pupils in 2006.

### Keeping customers informed

New technology has also enabled us to seek new communication solutions for our customers.

- » We have successfully introduced a facility for our customers to receive automated updates via their phone on restoration details.
- » Also, over 13,000 calls are made each month by our advisors to update customers who are experiencing power cuts. Priority is given to vulnerable customers (*see fig four*).

## KEY

- Fig one Mencap press release and leaflet
- Fig two RNID article
- Fig three WRVS article
- Fig four Proactive contact graph

## Finchley's Dean helps others with a learning disability through EDF Energy partnership

Dean Meuleman, 26, from Finchley, North London, has been helping people with a learning disability, to understand more about EDF Energy, the company that distributes electricity throughout the capital.

As part of Mencap's partnership with the energy provider, Dean, who has a mild learning disability, has produced an easy read leaflet called Planned Shutdowns. This explains what happens when work has to be carried out on the electricity network and supplies are interrupted plus the role of EDF Energy's Priority Services Register, which helps vulnerable customers during maintenance work and emergencies.

The partnership between EDF Energy and Mencap began in 2005, cementing EDF Energy's commitment to serve people with a learning disability more effectively. People with a learning disability are among EDF Energy's most vulnerable group of customers and Mencap's expertise, through employees like Dean, has enabled the energy group to better understand their needs and respond proactively towards them.

Dean said: "I work for Mencap helping to make information clear and easy to understand for people with a learning disability, like myself. I find the worst information is often produced by gas and electricity companies. However, having the opportunity to work with EDF Energy has been great and I know we have produced something of real value."

**WHY PLANNED SHUTDOWNS DO NOT ALWAYS GO AHEAD**

We may decide not to shut the power off if the temperature drops below freezing.

**IF YOUR POWER GOES OFF WITHOUT WARNING**

If your power goes off without warning please call our power cut helpline:  
**0800 783 88 66**

**MENCAP** Understanding learning disability  
Mencap helped to make this easy read accessibility@mencap.org.uk  
Thanks to Photosymbols for the images

Fig. one

### STAFF IMPROVE THEIR COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

CUSTOMER SERVICE STAFF IN IPSWICH HAVE BEEN IMPROVING THEIR COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS WITH HELP FROM THE ROYAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE DEAF (RNID).

Teams at Fore Hamlet already use a 'Type Talk' system to handle enquiries from customers with hearing difficulties. Two group sessions with the RNID helped to enhance their skills.

'Type Talk' works by the customer sending a message to an operator in text form, which is then communicated to our customer service advisors. They communicate directly with the operators to send information back to the customer via text.

The training sessions focused on sentence structure - sentences can often be lengthy, meaning the operator sends information to the customer too quickly. Customer service business analyst Glen Pearce was pleased with the success of the sessions. "The biggest complaint is that sentence structure is too long and involved. This is where this training helps," says Glen. "The training went really well and we are looking to roll out more in the New Year."

Fig. two

WRVS - News & features - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by EDF Energy

WRVS make it count

Home page > News & features > News Item

**News & features**

Driving home support during power cuts

**CAMPAIGNS**

WRVS raises awareness of issues faced by older people. View our latest campaigns

Since 2003, a partnership between EDF Energy and WRVS has ensured that emergency services volunteers support customers who have been identified as needing extra support during power cuts. In these situations, vulnerable customers such as older people or those with a medical condition or disability are contacted or visited in their homes and receive help in the form of comfort, advice and hot food and drinks.

WRVS has recently pledged our support to EDF Energy by guaranteeing WRVS volunteers work with the energy provider's own staff, from its specially equipped customer support vehicle, during particularly lengthy power cuts or other emergencies.

The vehicle was introduced in April 2005 to provide information where it's needed and practical help when lengthy faults mean customers could be without power for prolonged

Fig. three

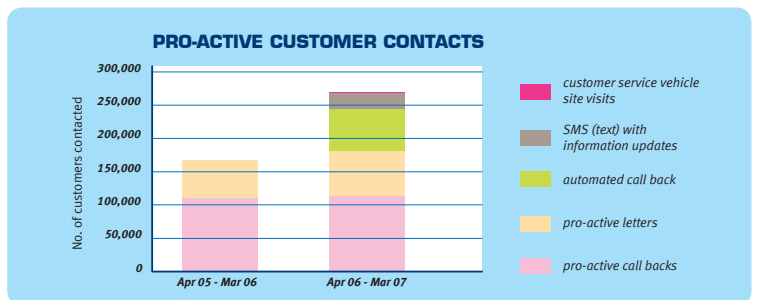


Fig. four