

Citizens Advice Methodology for social tariff analysis

May 2008

Citizens Advice welcomes the opportunity to provide some suggestions for what might be included in the monitoring and reporting of suppliers' social initiatives to help vulnerable customers.

The areas in which we would like to see improvements are set out in the recent response we sent on Ofgem's Energy Supply Markets Probe.

We summarise below the areas we think should be monitored for improvement and how we think the voluntary sector should be involved.

Pre-payment meters

- A target for bringing the cost of pre-payment meters into line with other tariffs.

Customer service

- A target for improved experience of customers and intermediaries
- Use of Citizens Advice data to monitor ease of contact and efficiency of service
- Compliance with OFGEM's debt and disconnection guidelines.

Help with switching

- A target for improvements in the clarity of sites
- Clarity in comparison of tariffs
- Simple, straightforward information to enable customers and intermediaries to make meaningful comparisons between suppliers

Reaching the most vulnerable

- to provide clear information for trusted advice agencies to enable them to guide the elderly and other vulnerable consumers to the best offerings
- facilitate switching for pre-payment meter customers through switching sites
- A target for the reduction in numbers persuaded to switch on the doorstep

Maximising Income

- A target on the engagement with the voluntary sector to undertake benefits checks undertaken and debt identified and dealt with

Use of the voluntary sector

- A target to show financial support to voluntary agencies including the CAB service to provide innovative and holistic approaches to reaching vulnerable customers, maximising their income, ensuring they are accessing grants and energy efficiency measures, funding for financial education and information sessions around fuel poverty