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**R/15**

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## **ENERGY SCHEME CONTINUES TO DELIVER VALUABLE MONEY SAVING ADVICE FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMERS**

A scheme delivering face-to-face advice will have reached over 44,000 energy consumers with information on how they can typically save over £100 a year from their energy bill by switching to a better deal. It also raises awareness of energy-related help and benefits.

The **Energy Best Deal** programme, run by Citizens Advice with support from Ofgem and most recently funded by energy suppliers, delivers information sessions to consumers and frontline support workers that:

- explains how domestic customers can reduce their energy costs by changing tariff or supplier;
- raises awareness of government benefits and grants that can help with fuel bills and improve the energy efficiency of homes; and
- explains about the range of help that energy suppliers offer their vulnerable and fuel poor customers, such as social tariffs and rebates.

An evaluation of this year's **Energy Best Deal** programme, carried out by the Centre for Sustainable Energy, found the scheme had a significant and positive impact on the consumers and frontline workers who attended the sessions. Virtually all the consumers said they found the advice useful and most said they would take positive action, such as contacting an energy supplier.

Welcoming the evaluation report, John Rhodes, Head of Financial Capability at Citizens Advice said: "This is a brilliant partnership. Funding from utilities and support from Ofgem is enabling Citizens Advice Bureaux and other community agencies to help hard pressed consumers reduce their energy bills. We have been unable to keep up with demand and hope that continued support will allow us to reach even more people this winter."

Sarah Harrison, Ofgem's Senior Partner for Sustainable Development, said: "Energy Best Deal is a vital scheme and the evidence shows it continues to provide valuable help to consumers on how to cut energy costs. This is important help for consumers in tough economic times and Ofgem is proud of the role we have played with Citizens Advice in supporting Energy Best Deal."

Ends

**Notes to editors:**

1. **Energy Best Deal** builds on the research under Ofgem's Consumer First Programme which showed that many vulnerable customers needed:
  - more information and guidance on tariff payment options;
  - access to grants to install insulation and central heating; and
  - ways to manage bills through energy efficiency.
2. The national roll out of the campaign across England and Wales in 2008/09 was funded by the Department of Energy and Climate Change and supported by Ofgem, following a successful pilot phase funded by Ofgem. The 2010 national campaign was funded by energy suppliers EDF Energy, E.ON, npower and Scottish Power.
3. The independent evaluation report from the Centre for Sustainable Energy is available online:  
<http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/SUSTAINABILITY/SOCACTION/PUBLICATIONS/Documents1/Energy%20Best%20Deal%202010%20evaluation%20report%20final%20030810.pdf>
4. A joint Citizens Advice/Ofgem leaflet setting out **Energy Best Deal** advice is available here:  
<http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/SUSTAINABILITY/SOCACTION/PUBLICATIONS/Documents1/Energy%20Best%20Deal%20Booklet.pdf>
5. **Energy Best Deal** is delivered in the community by members of Citizens Advice Financial Capability Forums. Citizens Advice has set up and funded 14 regional financial capability forums throughout England and Wales, with support from CFEB (Consumer Financial Education Body). Led by Citizens Advice Bureaux or other community partners, they provide a focus where people with an interest in financial capability share best practice, network and get joint initiatives off the ground. Over 150 Bureaux and more than 500 other community agencies participate in the forums.
6. New rules put in place by Ofgem following the regulator's probe of the energy supply market in 2008 mean that it is now easier than ever for consumers to shop around and choose the best energy deal. Suppliers are now required to:
  - provide clearer information on bills;
  - provide customers with an annual statement telling you what tariff you are on, the amount of gas or electricity used for the past 12 months with that supplier, estimated cost in £s for the next 12 months supply – if you use the same amount of energy on the same tariff;
  - allow card, key or token meter customers to switch even if they have debts of up to £200;
  - not charge customers more for one payment than another, unless the charges can be justified by cost; and
  - have their doorstep salespeople provide customers with written estimates and sales literature that is clear, accurate and easy to understand.
7. The **Citizens Advice** service is a network of independent charities that helps people resolve their money, legal and other problems by providing information and advice and by influencing policymakers. For more information in England and Wales see: <http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>

8. **Ofgem** is the Office of the Gas and Electricity Markets, which supports the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority, the regulator of the gas and electricity industries in Great Britain. The Authority's powers and duties are largely provided for in statute, principally the Gas Act 1986, the Electricity Act 1989, the Utilities Act 2000, the Competition Act 1998, the Enterprise Act 2002, the Energy Act 2004 as well as arising from directly effective European Community legislation.

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