

Ofgem Customer Service Reward Scheme

Wider Communications

Active Customer Engagement

Feedback from customers told us:

- Many are not aware of WPD.
- They like proactive callbacks after a power cut.
- PSR & vulnerable customers may find it difficult to contact WPD during a power cut.
- They want updates on restoration times.
- They want information via SMS text and online.
- Suppliers and larger customers want more information from us.

We have responded with:

- A customer awareness campaign across regional TV and newspapers and mailing our 2.6m customers about our service.
- Proactive callbacks for all customers.
- Proactive SMS texts to customers during power cuts.
- Improved services for deaf customers to meet the RNID Louder Than Words Charter.
- A range of stakeholder events and an annual stakeholder report.

NEW Customer Awareness Campaign

Ofgem research undertaken during 2008/09 showed that many domestic customers do not understand the role of a distributor as distinct from their energy supplier. This lack of awareness is a key barrier to engaging with domestic customers.

In February 2010, we launched our first ever customer awareness campaign "Power for Life". This six-week campaign, costing over £400,000, was designed to engage with our 2.6 million customers, raise awareness and to encourage contact and dialogue. The campaign was run across regional TV and newspapers as well as a four-page information leaflet sent to every home and business in our region.

The leaflet provided details about our areas of responsibility, our performance and our investment programme, and encouraged customers to have their say in our future plans by providing a range of contact details including a new 0800 number.

RESULT Over 100 customers contacted us via the special 0800 number or email. We also formally surveyed 800 customers to assess the impact of the campaign on customer awareness. This showed a 90% level of awareness of WPD amongst those who had been exposed to the campaign compared to 54% amongst those who could not recall the campaign.

NEW Stakeholder Workshops

We have made stakeholder workshops a regular part of our business process. We held workshops in July 2008 as part of our regulatory review process and developed a comprehensive database of stakeholders.

Since November 2009, we have held 12 events for stakeholders to explain who we are, our performance, our future investment plans and the impact of price changes. These range from events within local communities to those aimed at large national customers and suppliers.

RESULT The survey and feedback from stakeholder events revealed preferences for receiving information from WPD through newsletters, TV/radio and the website, and preferred information about WPD's responsibilities, what to do in a power cut and contact information.

We used the feedback to improve the format and frequency of future communications with customers and other stakeholders.

IMPROVED We have improved our website to make it more customer focused and more interactive - including a new section on stakeholder engagement where customers and other interested parties can register for events and download information.

NEW We have published a stakeholder report using feedback on how customers would like to receive updates on our business.

NEW We are now holding an annual event for suppliers and large industrial customers.

BENEFIT The benefit to customers and our business of the customer awareness campaign and stakeholder workshops is to encourage greater feedback from customers and participation in our stakeholder engagement programme. This will enable us to be more responsive to the changing needs and priorities of our customers in the future.

IMPROVED Proactive Callbacks

A key source of feedback from customers on our service is from the proactive callbacks team. From October 2009, we now ring back every customer who calls us to report a power cut to provide an explanation, reassurance and an apology and seek their feedback. We continue to call every registered priority services customer affected by a fault during severe weather, even if they haven't called us. In 2009/10 we made over 120,000 customer callbacks, with an estimated 10% to vulnerable customers.

BENEFIT Our proactive callback system has helped us to improve our customer satisfaction DNO ranking for our Contact Centre from 2nd & 3rd to 1st and 3rd with an increased score out of 5 from 4.57 to 4.71 for Wales and 4.51 to 4.62 for West for 2009/10.

RESULT This feedback told us that customers like proactive calls from WPD but they don't like having to call back if the power stays off longer than expected.

Our vulnerable customers focus groups held in 2009 highlighted that these customers do not find it easy to contact WPD during a power cut but that accurate information about restoration times is vital to them.

Customers also asked to be able to communicate with us by text or online during a power cut.

We used this feedback to improve communication with customers during power cuts.

NEW Automatic Texting Service

In March 2010 we introduced an innovative system to provide text/automated messaging to customers affected by an HV fault. This means that customers will no longer need to call us to report a power cut. We also call customers when the restoration time that we advised them changes. Customers can also respond by text.

BENEFIT This new service will be of particular benefit to deaf customers and vulnerable customers. We are working with RNID to promote our services especially the new texting service to encourage deaf customers to register on our Priority Needs Register. We visited local Deaf Clubs to promote the service.

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NEW Working With Suppliers

The PSR dataflows that we receive from suppliers do not currently contain customers' telephone contact details. We collect this data from customers who ring us on a daily basis and we wrote to 15,000 PSR customers where we did not hold their contact details. We also raised a request with suppliers via the industry forum to include this data within the electronic dataflows. We are currently working with suppliers and other DNOs to implement this change and look at other data that could be provided. This builds on our previous work with suppliers to improve data flows.

BENEFIT We need this data to communicate proactively with PSR customers.

UPDATE Contact Centre staff have also improved the process for registering PSR customers directly with WPD. This provides a one-stop process for the customer without the need to confirm their details again to our Records Team.

NEW Online Service

As many customers now have access to battery powered laptops and hand held devices, the WPD website is now accessible during a power cut. We are developing a system to provide information to those affected by major power interruptions. Customers will be able to click on the ticker tape message on the home page, taking them to a page listing the towns and areas affected by the fault and the estimated time of restoration.

BENEFIT This gives customers an alternative means of contacting us for information. From a business perspective it enables Contact Centre staff to focus on receiving information from customers on unknown incidents and network damage.

NEW Understanding the Needs of Deaf Customers

We also reviewed the quality of communication with deaf and hearing impaired customers. WPD has over 5,000 deaf or hearing impaired customers registered as priority services customers. We asked the RNID to provide awareness training to all our Contact Centre staff and give feedback on our facilities. This helped our staff understand the communication needs of deaf customers who use BT typetalk or minicom textphones. The RNID helped us undertake a wider review of our Contact Centre provision for deaf customers and staff by benchmarking us against the Louder Than Words criteria.

RESULT This enabled our Contact Centre to meet the criteria for the RNID "Louder Than Words" Charter.

We also upgraded our minicomms and other equipment as recommended by the RNID, and provided some additional staff training.

UPDATE Understanding the Communication Needs of Visually Impaired Customers

In 2009, RNIB Cymru helped us to make our customer information more accessible and promoted our services through their local clubs.

UPDATE Understanding the Communication Needs of Older Customers

In 2009 we continued to work with Help the Aged to promote our emergency contact number to older customers. We are also working with Age Cymru to provide training to our Contact Centre staff on communicating with older customers.

NEW Promoting Energy Efficiency Grants to Hard to Reach Customers

In 2009 Project Outreach was part of our stakeholder engagement strategy. The aim was to build links with agencies working with vulnerable customers and seek their views on how we could provide our services more effectively to vulnerable customers. As a result, Energy Action Grants Agency (Eaga) Cymru, who manage the HEES Home Energy Efficiency Scheme on behalf of the Welsh Assembly asked us to promote the scheme to hard to reach customers in South Wales where there is a low take up of the grants available. We are the first DNO to work in partnership with Eaga in Wales to promote energy efficiency grants. We selectively mailed over 30,000 PSR customers in South Wales with details of how to apply for HEES grants.

RESULT 450 customers responded to the mailshot, equating to up to £600,000 worth of heating and insulation work – this accounted for 15% of HEES referrals in the mailshot month. Eaga consider this to be a very good response rate from the targeted group.

BENEFIT Vulnerable fuel poor customers can reduce their fuel bills and have warmer, healthier homes.

NEW Low Carbon Expert Panel

In advance of Ofgem's Low Carbon Network Fund initiative, in partnership with Regen South West and the Centre for Sustainable Energy in Bristol, we have set up an expert panel to advise us on ways to develop our network to

Helping customers with low carbon & energy saving initiatives

- Helping vulnerable customers keep warm and save money with energy efficient grants.
- Helping the Isles of Scilly to go green – support for the E-day community monitoring scheme.

facilitate customer's low carbon and energy saving initiatives.

BENEFIT This provides peer group review of potential projects.

We also worked with the Green Alliance think tank in the preparation of their report *An electricity network for the 21st century* and supported its launch.

NEW E-Day Isles of Scilly Project

We helped to facilitate the inspirational Energy Saving "E-Day" community energy monitoring project on the Isles of Scilly.

E-Day, described as a world first, experimental, slightly crazy and just for fun is an ongoing project launched on 6 October 2009 to see whether the 2,000 strong community, the school and a family on the Isles of Scilly could reduce their energy demand compared to the rest of the UK.

We facilitated this project with live streaming of metering data for the Island to the E-Day website.

RESULT The E-Day final results showed an overall 2.9% reduction in daily electricity use compared to the UK baseline achieved despite bad weather on the day. The Five Islands School achieved a 8.3% reduction and the family achieved a 52% saving – showing what is possible.

BENEFIT We have been approached by other communities with requests for similar data and we are looking at ways to develop this.

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Supporting Information

The screenshot shows the website for 'E-DAY 2009 Isles of Scilly'. At the top, there are navigation links: Home, Earth, National, Island (highlighted), School, Family, About. Below this are social media icons for YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Green Thing, Radio in Schools, and 5 Things. A date stamp indicates 'Tuesday 9 October 2009'. The main content area includes a section for 'Island Meters' with a brief explanation of the real-time electricity usage meters. Below this are three featured items: a video player for 'Live Wire: E-Day 2009 Isles of Scilly', a text block for 'Western Power' explaining the undersea electric cable, and a photo for 'The Scillonians'. At the bottom of the screenshot is a 'Real-time demand' meter showing a scale from 1.5 to 2.5 MW. The meter indicates 'Today' usage at 2.1 MW and 'Yesterday' usage at 1.9 MW, with a 3.4% increase. The time shown is 10:51 am.

Working with RNID



"Our Louder than Words charter simply informs people of your commitment to providing the best possible service to your deaf and hard of hearing customers and staff... and to engaging with customers and offering a better service.

All staff were found to be most helpful and welcoming and were obviously keen to offer deaf and hard of hearing people a good quality service." **RNID Louder Than Words Report on WPD.**

"Attending the course has taught me invaluable techniques on communicating with both deaf and hard of hearing people. I now feel confident in communicating with deaf and hard of hearing people, the trainer made me realise what barriers deaf people face with even day to day activities for example staying in a hotel or going to a reception. I found the communication tips really useful, I have taken two calls from typetalk previously and now feel more confident about doing this in the future." **WPD member of staff who attended the Deaf Awareness Training.**

Support from Community Partners HEES

"We were delighted to work with Western Power Distribution on this project, highlighting the benefits of the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme to vulnerable householders on their Priority Services Register, making homes warmer and healthier places to live, and reducing fuel bills for those most in need." **Adam Chown, Eaga Wales.**

Feedback from customers

"It's so lovely to have a phone call after the fault to apologise for me going off supply, it's wonderful" **Mrs Linguard, Customer.**

Age Cymru

"We have worked closely with Western Power Distribution (WPD) for a number of years and many older people have benefited from this joint working. Throughout our working relationship it has been very evident that WPD is interested in learning about the needs and some of the problems facing older people with regards to their energy supplies. We look forward to continuing our relationship in the future." **Robert Taylor, Chief Executive of Age Cymru.**

Feedback from Stakeholders

"As a supplier we value these workshops and appreciate your openness" **Stakeholder Workshop Bristol.**

"1st Class opportunity to pick up and improve knowledge on the issues and challenges of distribution in South Wales. Job well done!" **Stakeholder Workshop Cardiff.**