

## Customer and Social issues working group – Carbon Monoxide (CO) session

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Executive summary for the customer and social issues working group meeting the 25<sup>th</sup> of November held at Ofgem.

From	James Veaney
To	CSIWG
cc	
Date	25 November 2010

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### 1. Introductions

1.1. James Veaney and Steve Brown representing Ofgem welcomed attendees of the working group meeting which included the following representatives: Leigh Greenham (CoGDEM), Stephanie Trotter (CO-Gas Safety), Erika Melen (ENA), Mark Elliott (SGN), Stephen Hanman (WWU), Andy Fuller (NGN), Paul Rogers (NGG), Tracy Hine (NGG).

1.2. This session of the Customer and Social Issues Working Group (CSIWG) focussed solely on the issue of Carbon Monoxide. Minutes of the CSIWG for 12<sup>th</sup> November 2010 provide an update on actions from the previous meeting.

### 2. Ofgem Open Letter

2.1. On 19<sup>th</sup> November 2010, Ofgem published an open letter (attached) responding to the GDN proposals to undertake certain initiatives recommended by the GDPCR1 CO Working Group to address the risk of Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning and suggesting ways forward for GDNs implementing their initiatives. Views were sought on this letter.

2.2. NGG were 'disappointed' with Ofgem's position on funding for initiatives. They did however appreciate the clarification. They were now looking to take this issue forward over the course of the current price control and also to inform their proposals for RIIO|GD1.

2.3. In the letter Ofgem highlighted the Discretionary Reward Scheme (DRS) and Innovation Funding Initiative (IFI) as possible sources of reward or funding for trials. NGG felt that of the two, the IFI may be a less appropriate source of funding and would therefore seek advice from Ofgem as to whether a particular scheme could qualify for funding. It was felt the DRS could be applicable provided it included focus on the learning gained from an initiative, as well as the success of the scheme.

2.4. Ofgem highlighted that in taking any initiatives forward, we would look for companies to provide feedback on learning gained, how and what to measure, costs, implications and impact of each scheme. This information should inform submissions made under DRS. The higher the quality of the submission the more likely a reward would be granted.

2.5. It was highlighted that the letter referred to risks arising from 'fossil based' fuels. This was potentially misleading since wood burning stoves could produce carbon monoxide. Ofgem accepted that the suggested 'carbon based' fuels was a more appropriate term.

### 3. Update from GDNs

3.1. NGG announced that from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010, they will be running a CO trial in Staffordshire/Shropshire. Under this trial, when First Call Operatives (FCOs) are called to an emergency and they judge the resident to be a vulnerable customer, they will issue a CO alarm and provide advice regarding use and positioning. This trial will run through to April 2011.

3.2. NGG will use this trial to measure impact on awareness as measured by CO-related calls received by their call centre. This will be benchmarked against historic data and equivalent data from other regions. The scheme will commence with a 'soft launch', with minimal publicity, followed by more publicity later in the period. The assessment of the scheme will reflect the impact of publicity. NGG estimated that the issue of an alarm could add an additional 10 mins to the time spent at the property by the FCO. This would also be assessed during the trial.

3.3. In the ensuing discussion, it was noted that at present GDNs consider that they have no legal liability in relation to CO safety and that any activity relating to the issue or installation of alarms could potentially increase their liability. NGG had taken this into consideration but were still prepared to proceed with their trial.

3.4. SGN outlined work in handing out alarms to the Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies in Scotland. Their approach was to use external organisations to distribute alarms. SGN are considering their options going forward as a result of Ofgem's recent letter. SGN gave feedback to the group on the rationale and history of their initiative to equip their FCOs with Personal Air Monitors (PAMs). By way of background, SGN highlighted that the scheme was primarily intended to protect their staff from toxic gases or oxygen depletion when attending premises. At present staff carry PAMs configured to detect up to four gases. FCOs have PAMs with the functionality to identify the presence of CO.

3.5. Since the scheme was launched in December 2008, there have been around 100 CO-related activations. Given that there is only a limited requirement on FCOs to report incidents where the CO has been identified (and also that they are attending incidents where appliances should have been turned off and the property ventilated) this provides only a partial indication of the likely prevalence of CO in premises. It was also noted that following activation, the FCO will isolate appliances and leave instructions for the resident for what to do next. The FCO does not investigate CO incidents or check appliances to see which are 'spilling' excess CO.

3.6. WWU are conducting trials involving the issue alarms to Fire and Rescue Services as well as handing out safety leaflets. No feedback however is available on the impact of these schemes. WWU are looking to develop contracts/service level agreements to ensure these arrangements become more tightly co-ordinated and monitored.

3.7. In conjunction with the Fire and Rescue Services, NGN have issued 100,000 leaflets to potentially vulnerable customers. Although they have no trials planned at present relating to the issue of alarms, they report that 80% of Fire and Rescue Services have agreed in principle to distribute alarms. Although they are considering the way forward following receipt of Ofgem's letter, they acknowledge that any trial involving the Fire and Rescue Services would need to give consideration to training requirements, service level agreements and monitoring of effectiveness.

#### **4. Development of outputs**

4.1. The discussion then focussed on whether any output measures could be identified that would provide an indication of the effectiveness of GDN efforts in this area. **Action: Members of the group were asked to submit their thoughts on suitable outputs in this area by 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2010.**

#### **5. Any other business**

CoGDEM advised that a recent National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NIHCE) report (PH29/PH30) had assessed whether people who had been provided with a smoke alarm free of charge would still value the alarm. The report concluded that although free distribution did affect perception of value, the net benefits gained from distributing free

alarms outweighed those associated with charging for the alarm. The evidence did not cover all the home safety equipment available and there were no evaluations of interventions involving the installation of carbon monoxide alarms.