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HELP IS AT HAND FOR THOSE STRUGGLING WITH WINTER ENERGY COSTS

Energy Best Deal reaches out again in 2011

Households facing higher energy bills in the New Year could benefit from free advice offered by the Energy Best Deal campaign, which is being stepped up again this winter. The campaign, run by national charity Citizens Advice with support from energy regulator Ofgem and some leading utility companies, offers a package of energy related advice for consumers who really need it. Last year, over 44,000 customers are estimated to have benefitted from the scheme.

Staff from agencies that give face-to-face advice to the public have been trained to deliver advice that will help people make their homes energy efficient, ensure they are claiming the right benefits and are on the best energy tariff for them. To date almost 1,360 frontline advisers have been trained.

At least 280 sessions will be delivered across England and Wales in the first few months of 2011. Presentations are aimed at consumers and frontline advisers who are likely to be in contact with those most at risk of falling into fuel poverty, such as pensioners and those on low incomes.

In 2010, the Energy Best Deal campaign saw 370 energy advice sessions delivered across England and Wales by Citizens Advice Bureaux and other agencies (such as housing associations and independent advice agencies) selected from the membership of Citizens Advice's regional financial capability forums.

John Rhodes, Head of Financial Capability at Citizens Advice said: "At a time when temperatures are regularly freezing it is more important than ever to reach the more vulnerable consumers. It is vital that they know how to get the best deal on their energy, where they can get help to keep their homes warm and how to keep their bills as low as possible."

Sarah Harrison, Ofgem's Senior Partner for Sustainable Development, said: "The Energy Best Deal scheme delivers vital practical advice on the wide range of help available to householders struggling to manage their energy bills. It is important that consumers will continue to receive this information face-to-face from a trusted source this winter."

An independent evaluation in 2010 showed that 98 per cent of consumers who received Energy Best Deal information found the sessions useful and more than a third went on to look into getting a better deal on their energy. The campaign continues this year due to funding from energy suppliers EDF Energy and E.On.

For details of your local Energy Best Deal adviser visit: www.adviceguide.org.uk

For further information about the campaign please go to:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/.../fsfl_projects_energybestdeal.htm

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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;
 - Ways to manage bills through energy efficiency.
2. The first national roll out of the campaign across England and Wales in 08/09 was funded by the Department for Energy and Climate Change and supported by Ofgem, following a successful pilot phase funded by Ofgem. In 2009/10 the second phase of the campaign was funded by energy suppliers EDF Energy, E.On, npower and Scottish Power - with support from Ofgem.
3. The latest phase of the campaign has been funded by energy suppliers EDF Energy and E.On, and is supported by Ofgem. It will see at least 280 training sessions delivered in England and Wales.
4. 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: www.citizensadvice.org.uk
5. **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. **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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