



Wednesday 6 April 2011

ONLINE MONEY SAVING ADVICE LAUNCHED

- **Over 60,000 people have benefited from Energy Best Deal - putting the campaign online will help even more**
- **Campaign provides advice on keeping energy bills as low as possible and on consumers' energy rights**
- **Impartial advice is vital for consumers as Ofgem's research shows only 1 in 5 consumers say they are active in the energy market**
- **Consumers who have not switched pay around £170 more on average for their energy***

Citizens Advice and energy regulator **Ofgem** today launch their **Energy Best Deal** campaign on-line. Consumers are now just clicks away from getting impartial advice from Citizens Advice and Ofgem on how to keep the cost of energy as low as possible through energy efficiency and getting a better deal in the energy market.

The videos ensure consumers know their energy rights when it comes to dealing with energy companies. They cover dealing with doorstep sales people, debt and disconnection, and getting help for consumers struggling to pay their energy bills.

John Rhodes, Head of Financial Capability at Citizens Advice said "We are very excited to launch Energy Best Deal online with Ofgem. This will help give even more people the confidence to get the right deal. At a time when utility prices are once again rising, it is particularly important that hard pressed consumers don't spend more than they need to."

Last month, Ofgem's Retail Market Review showed that energy companies make higher profits from consumers who do not switch. This is important as Ofgem's research also shows that only one in five consumers say that they are actively engaged in the market. This means four out of five consumers are at risk of paying more for their energy than they need to. On average consumers who have not switched pay around £170 more for their energy.*

Ofgem has proposed a radical overhaul of the industry to address the lack of effective competition by sweeping away complex and unfair pricing and breaking the stranglehold of the Big Six over the electricity market. However, there is still plenty that consumers can do to save money on their energy bills before Ofgem's reforms come into effect.

Sarah Harrison, Ofgem's Senior Partner for Sustainable Development, said "Our latest research shows that consumers who are not active in the market are paying on average around £170 a year more than they have to. Energy Best Deal is here to help the four out of five consumers who say they not taking part in the energy market shop around to get a better deal."

“While Ofgem is working to bring in reforms to make comparing energy deals even easier, consumers should still take advantage of recent improvements like annual statements and the advice in these videos to help reduce the cost of their energy.”

The established **Energy Best Deal** face-to-face advice scheme has already reached over 60,000 ordinary consumers since it was launched by Citizens Advice and Ofgem in 2008. Now, its key messages have been distilled into seven short videos that explain, in an easy to understand way, actions that that everyone can take to keep their energy bills as low as possible.

Watch the videos on line here:

<http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/Consumers/smebd/Pages/smebd.aspx>

Outline of each video:

Shopping around for the best energy deal: this section guides the consumer through the simple steps to take if they want to look for a better energy deal. It also ensures that it's the right deal for them and, if they want, how to go about switching supplier.

How to be energy efficient: presents a range of handy hints on how to save money by using less energy in the home. This film also points householders to further sources of energy saving advice.

Getting help with your energy bills: there is help and advice available to people who might find paying their bills difficult. Most energy suppliers can offer help to customers on low incomes or who have special requirements. There are also a range of government benefits. Watch this section to find out about entitlement.

Dealing with sales people: Ofgem sets energy suppliers rules they must follow when it comes to the conduct of their sales staff. This films tells domestic consumers what they should expect from energy sales people who might knock at their door or call them on the phone, and what they need to know to be confident they are getting a good and appropriate deal for them.

How to make a complaint: sometimes disputes arise between customers and their energy suppliers. This clip gives a useful guide on what customers can expect if they make a complaint to their supplier and what to do if they are not happy with their suppliers' response.

Avoiding debt and disconnection: advice for those who get into debt about what their supplier can do to help, and what steps they can take to avoid the possibility of disconnection.

More money in your pocket: a case study featuring consumers who have received help from Energy Best Deal from Citizens Advice.

A final film gives an outline of how Energy Best Deal works and some consumers give feedback on how they were helped to save money.

Ends

***This is for an offline Dual Fuel Direct Debit customer switching to the best deal available.**

Notes to editors:

1. Hosting Energy Best Deal videos

If you would like to host any of the Energy Best Deal videos for your website you can download them from the following link:

<http://cdn.jacaranda.co.uk/static/ofgem/ebd/partners.html>

2. **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.

The campaign has been jointly developed between Citizens Advice and Ofgem and is delivered and managed by Citizens Advice who also involve other agencies as part of their Financial Capability Forums.

An independent evaluation in 2010 showed that 98 per cent of consumers who received face-to-face 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.

3. Following a successful pilot phase funded by Ofgem, the first national roll out of the face-to-face campaign delivered by Citizens Advice across England and Wales in 2008/09 was funded by the Department of Energy and Climate Change and supported 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. The face-to-face campaign continues this year with funding from energy suppliers.

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 700 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, the Energy Act 2008, the Energy Act 2010 as well as arising from directly effective European Community legislation.

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