

Conclusion

Significant numbers of people are continuing to come to bureaux for support on energy matters. Energy prices are going up and this means there will continue to be a need for the campaign.

We have shown that this campaign makes a difference and there is an appetite for more. Most of the frontline workers that attended last year's sessions said they would like refresher training to keep their knowledge up to date. We also want to keep reaching new groups.

Using the web to reach a wider audience

This year we launched a series of seven short videos that promote the Energy Best Deal message. These are proving popular, and have been viewed by over 10,000 people since their launch in April. They can be accessed via You Tube and other websites. They complement our face to face training and are reaching a wider, less vulnerable, audience. Financial capability forum members and others have promoted the videos which cover topics such as 'Struggling to pay' (getting help for energy costs) and 'Shopping around' (checking for the best tariff).

Watch the videos (available in English and Welsh) online at:

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

or at

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEFFC984E6A3F18D8&feature=viewall>

(English version)

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7292D1B370730489&feature=viewall>

(Welsh version)

Further information

For more information about Energy Best Deal go to:

http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/partnerships/financialskillsforlife/fsfl_projects/fsfl_projects_energybestdeal.htm

You can also contact Beth Bell at beth.bell@citizensadvice.org.uk
or call Beth on **01565 733761**

For a copy of the full evaluation report, go to:

http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/partnerships/financialskillsforlife/fsfl_resourcespublications/fsfl_rp_publications.htm

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Citizens Advice

Registered charity number: 279057

Citizens Advice is an operating name of The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux

ofgem



Raising awareness of
energy savings and
help in paying bills

Energy Best Deal 2011 was supported by EDF Energy and E.ON



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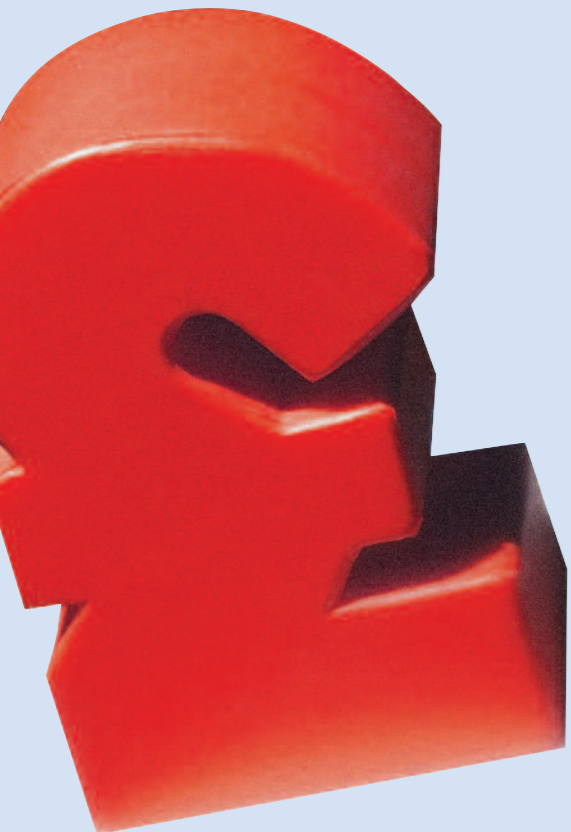


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2011 Review





Why Energy best deal?

Many consumers are struggling to keep on top of their energy bills, especially due to the recession and increasing energy prices. We know that vulnerable consumers, such as disabled or chronically ill people, are especially at risk.

- Last year Citizens Advice Bureaux dealt with over 100,000 enquiries from people seeking help with fuel debts. This year also saw a 78% increase on last year in the number of people looking at the Citizens Advice website, www.adviceguide.org.uk, for information about how to get a cheaper energy deal
- Ofgem saw a rise in the average amount owed by people who had an energy debt in 2010.

Consumers require impartial information to help them reduce their energy consumption, get the best energy deal for their circumstances and advice on where to find help if they are struggling with their bills.

What is Energy Best Deal?

Energy Best Deal is a consumer campaign developed by Ofgem and run by Citizens Advice in England and Wales. This year it was funded by EDF Energy and E.ON. It provides trainer led group sessions to frontline advice workers and consumers. Sessions raise awareness on how to:

- reduce energy costs by switching tariff or supplier;
- get help from suppliers and government if paying energy bills is a struggle; and
- save money by being more energy efficient at home.

Sessions reach a range of consumers, but are particularly designed to benefit people on low incomes. Almost a third of consumers attending found their winter bills to be a strain. But over three fifths had never switched to a better tariff with their supplier.

Feedback from Energy Best Deal sessions shows that they have a real impact; significant numbers take action to improve their situations and pass information to others.

¹ This figure is based on the sector recognised estimate of each frontline worker trained using the information to help a minimum of 15 consumers over the following year.

1,000 sessions have been delivered to over **12,000 frontline workers and consumers** since 2008.

By passing on what they've learnt, a **total of 94,000 people¹** will have benefitted from this campaign by next spring.

Campaign Evaluation 2011

The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) carried out an evaluation of our 2011 campaign. For the third year running this was funded by Ofgem. CSE surveyed attendees through questionnaires and telephone interviews. They also carried out a small scale follow up survey of attendees from our campaign last year.

Who delivers the training?

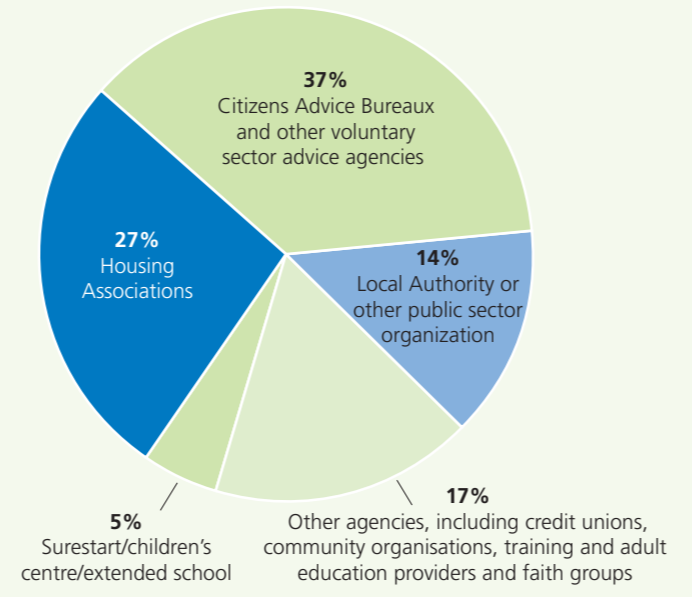
Training is delivered through regional financial capability forums. Forums provide a focus where agencies with an interest in financial capability can get together to share best practice, network and get joint initiatives off the ground.

114 different regional financial capability forum members delivered Energy Best Deal sessions. 66 were Citizens Advice Bureaux and 48 were other forum partner agencies. These included independent advice agencies, social housing providers, credit unions, employment advice agencies and older people's charities.

Who is being helped?

- Only 27% of consumers attending the sessions were in work. 9% were disabled or long-term sick.
- 43% of consumers were social housing tenants.
- Just over a half of consumers were using a bank account to pay for their energy via regular direct debits or standing orders. The rest were using other means, with 22% using pre-payment meters or budget card schemes.
- Sessions were delivered to a range of vulnerable groups and the workers who support them. These included vulnerably housed people, young parents and people living with cancer.

What organisations are frontline workers from?



Finding a better deal

Joan, an elderly client, thought she was getting a good deal from her energy provider as she'd recently received a £30 shopping voucher from them. But her Advisor, from Bury St Edmunds bureau, had recently attended an Energy Best Deal session and worked with her to see if this was the case. Joan and her Advisor successfully negotiated a reduction of £168 per year with the same provider by getting a better tariff.*

*name changed to protect identity

Reach of 2011 sessions

- Delivered 339 sessions
- 1,742 frontline workers and 2,002 consumers attended sessions
- By next spring nearly 30,000 additional consumers will benefit as a result of front-line workers passing on what they have learnt¹

Consumers found the sessions useful and spread the word to family and friends

At the end of the session:

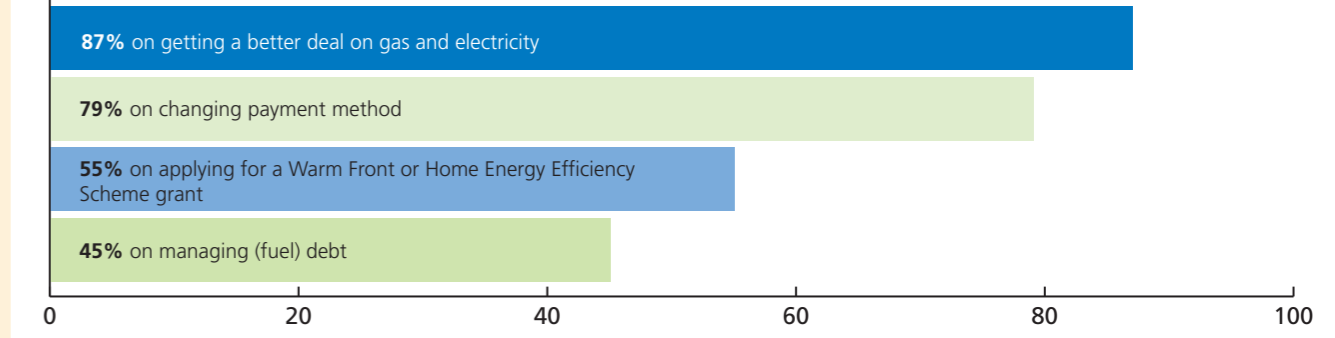
- 97% of consumers said that they found it useful
- 80% of consumers said they would definitely or probably do something as a result.

Follow up interviews² two months after found that:

- 60% had done at least one thing as a result of the session
- 29% had taken action to get a better deal, including contacting their existing supplier to get a better tariff and looking at switching websites
- 38% had taken some kind of action to reduce their energy use
- 61% had passed on information from the session to friends and family. On average 2.8 people each.

Frontline workers improved in confidence and went on to give advice to clients on the topics covered, including topics they'd never advised on before

At the end of the session frontline workers felt more confident about advising their clients across a range of topics:



- 68% of frontline workers also said they would definitely pass information from the session on to colleagues.

Follow up interviews³ two months after found that:

- 65% of frontline workers had given advice to their clients on the topics covered in the session. Nearly three quarters of these had given advice on a topic they had not previously advised on
- Half of the frontline workers surveyed about last year's programme⁴ had been using the information from Energy Best Deal consistently or fairly consistently in the year after attending a session.

¹ This figure is based on the sector recognised estimate of each frontline worker trained using the information to help a minimum of 15 consumers over the following year.

² Eighty people who had attended the 2011 Energy Best Deal sessions and returned questionnaires with contact details were selected at random for follow up interviews.

³ Follow-up interviews were carried out with 20 frontline advice workers.

⁴ Based on a sample of 10 frontline workers who attended Energy Best Deal sessions in 2010.