



Energy Best Deal

Evaluation Report, 2011/2012

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Summary of key findings

The Energy Best Deal programme seeks to inform domestic energy consumers about how they could reduce their energy costs: by changing tariff, payment method and/or supplier, taking up energy efficiency measures and by providing debt advice. Run by Citizens Advice in England and Wales and Citizens Advice Scotland in Scotland, the programme offers domestic energy consumers and frontline workers (both paid workers and volunteers) the opportunity to attend an information session on getting a better deal on their energy bills.

Between December 2011 and May 2012, 1,176 sessions were delivered by 158 delivery partners across the 14 regions of the Citizens Advice Financial Capability Forums¹ in England and Wales, and 140 sessions were delivered by 18 Citizens Advice Bureaux in Scotland. In total during 2011/2012, the programme reached 8,473 consumers and 6,105 frontline workers. The programme will have an ongoing impact through the consumer advice work of the frontline workers.

This report describes the results of an evaluation of the 2011/2012 programme. The evaluation was carried out using paper questionnaires completed immediately following the session, and follow-up telephone interviews carried out an average of three months after the session. A total of 9,781 questionnaires and 306 telephone interviews were completed. The ongoing effect of the 2010/2011 programme was also investigated, using a small sample of 20 interviews with people who attended information sessions in 2010/2011.

Impact of the 2011/2012 programme – consumers

- In total, 8,473 consumers attended the Energy Best Deal sessions, 77% in England, 12% in Scotland, and 11% in Wales.
- Questionnaire responses were received from 5,795 consumers, 68% of all consumers who attended sessions. Eighty percent attended sessions in England, 11% in Scotland, and 9% in Wales.
- Almost all (97%) consumers who responded said they found the session useful.
- Seventy-six percent of consumers who responded to the questionnaire said they would probably or definitely do something as a result of the session.
- Follow-up interviews with 153 consumers found that 36% had taken action to get a better deal on their energy bills since the session.
- Fifty-six percent of the consumers interviewed who looked for a better deal found one (equal to 20% of all interviewees)
- Forty-six percent of consumer interviewees had taken some kind of action to save energy in their home since the session.
- Twelve percent of consumer interviewees had started the process of installing a major energy efficiency measure (mainly cavity wall insulation) following the session.

¹ The Financial Capability Forums are open to all organisations in a region with an interest in financial education. They meet quarterly and provide a way for member organisations to share experiences and resources and to develop new partnerships.

Impact of the 2011/2012 programme - frontline workers

- In total, 6,105 frontline workers attended Energy Best Deal sessions; 79% in England, 10% in Scotland, and 11% in Wales.
- Questionnaire responses were received from 3,986 frontline workers, just over 65% of all frontline workers who attended sessions. Eighty-one percent attended sessions in England, 11% in Scotland, and 8% in Wales.
- Ninety-seven percent of frontline workers said they felt better informed following the session.
- Eighty-one percent of frontline workers said the session had changed their opinion on the importance of fuel poverty for the people they work with.
- Thirty-two percent of frontline workers estimated that between 60% and 80% of their clients were experiencing, or were at risk of, fuel poverty. A further 30% estimated this figure to be 40%-60% of their clients.
- Following the session, 91% of frontline workers said they felt more confident advising on at least one of the topics covered in the presentation, and 40% felt more confident about all topics².
- Of the 153 frontline workers who were interviewed several months after the session, 72% had given advice on getting a better deal on energy supply, and 67% had advised on changing payment method. This compares with 28% and 36% respectively before the session, a significant increase.
- In the average of three months since the session, frontline workers had passed on information from the session to a median of eight clients. On average this represented around 50% of the clients they had seen in this time.

Ongoing impact of the 2010/2011 programme

- Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with ten consumers and ten frontline workers who attended Energy Best Deal sessions in the previous campaign, 2010/2011.
- Of the ten consumers interviewed, two had switched following last year's session, and a year later are still happy that they made the decision to switch.
- Five consumers had looked into getting a better deal following the session in 2010/2011, but had not switched tariff or supplier. A year later, four of these people had done something further to make sure they had the best deal, including two who switched to a better tariff with the same supplier.
- Five of the ten frontline workers interviewed had continued to use information from the Energy Best Deal session over the year since the session.
- Six of the ten frontline workers said they felt they would benefit from a refresher session on the same topics.

² However, a small group of respondents said that they felt both more *and* less confident on the same topic, indicating that each topic has different aspects within it.

The Energy Best Deal programme

Energy Best Deal is a consumer campaign developed by Ofgem and run by Citizens Advice in England and Wales and Citizens Advice Scotland in Scotland. For 2011/2012 the campaign was funded by the six largest energy suppliers: British Gas, EDF Energy, E.ON, npower, ScottishPower, and Scottish and Southern Energy. Together they gave a total £600,000 to fund Energy Best Deal, the highest level of funding for the programme yet.

Energy Best Deal provides trainer led group sessions to frontline workers and consumers. Sessions raise awareness on how to:

- reduce energy costs by switching tariff, payment method and/ 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.

The Energy Best Deal programme started with a pilot funded by Ofgem in 2008 and was then rolled out across England and Wales; it has been running annually in England and Wales since then. In Scotland, Energy Best Deal was first delivered in 2010/2011 by Consumer Focus Scotland to frontline workers only. The 2011/2012 campaign was the first to be delivered by Citizens Advice Scotland and reached both frontline workers and consumers.

Between December 2011 and May 2012, 1,176 sessions were delivered by 158 delivery partners across the 14 regions of the Citizens Advice Financial Capability Forums³ in England and Wales, and 140 sessions were delivered by 18 Citizens Advice Bureaux in Scotland. In total during 2011/2012, the programme reached 8,473 consumers and 6,105 frontline workers. This is a huge increase on the previous campaign of 2010/2011, which reached 2,002 consumers and 1,742 frontline workers through 339 sessions in England and Wales, and 325 frontline workers in Scotland.

Methods

A survey of consumers was conducted at the end of each session using a self-completion paper questionnaire distributed by the trainer. The delivery partner then input this information into an online form using the web tool 'Survey Monkey'. The web tool collated the responses into a spreadsheet format which was then passed to the evaluator. The total number of valid responses from consumers was 5,795⁴.

A survey of frontline workers was conducted in the same manner. The total number of valid responses from frontline workers was 3,986⁵.

³ The Financial Capability Forums are open to all organisations in a region with an interest in financial education. They meet quarterly and provide a way for member organisations to share experiences and resources and to develop new partnerships.

⁴ Sixty-eight percent of the total of 8,473 consumers who attended

⁵ Sixty-five percent of the total 6,105 frontline workers who attended

In both the consumer and frontline worker questionnaires, some respondents omitted answers for some questions, and so all the percentages given in this report are calculated as percentages of the total number of respondents who gave answers for the relevant questions.

Approximately three months after the session, a telephone survey of consumers (n=153) and frontline workers (n=153) was carried out, using information provided on the self-completion questionnaires. The target number of 280 interviews was exceeded, resulting in a total of 306 interviews completed.

The ongoing effect of the 2010/2011 programme was also evaluated, using telephone interviews with ten consumers and ten frontline workers who attended Energy Best Deal sessions in 2010/2011.

The questionnaires and interview questions were designed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy, with input from Citizens Advice and Ofgem.

Analysis of the 2011/2012 questionnaires and interviews was undertaken using the statistical analysis software package SPSS. In order to assist statistical analysis, the questionnaires and interview schedules consisted mostly of closed questions, with a limited number of open questions.

This report shows the results for England, Scotland and Wales combined. Results for the individual countries are reported in an appendix, to be published separately, and in presentations in each country.

Consumers: questionnaire responses

Demographic information

In total, 8,473 consumers attended the Energy Best Deal sessions, 77% in England, 12% in Scotland, and 11% in Wales. Questionnaire responses were received from 5,795 consumers, equal to 68% of all consumers who attended. Figure 1 shows how the questionnaire responses were divided between the three countries; it is very similar to the overall attendance, with very slightly fewer responses in Wales and slightly more in England. Figure 2 to Figure 4 show demographic characteristics of the consumer respondents.

Figure 1: Country of respondents

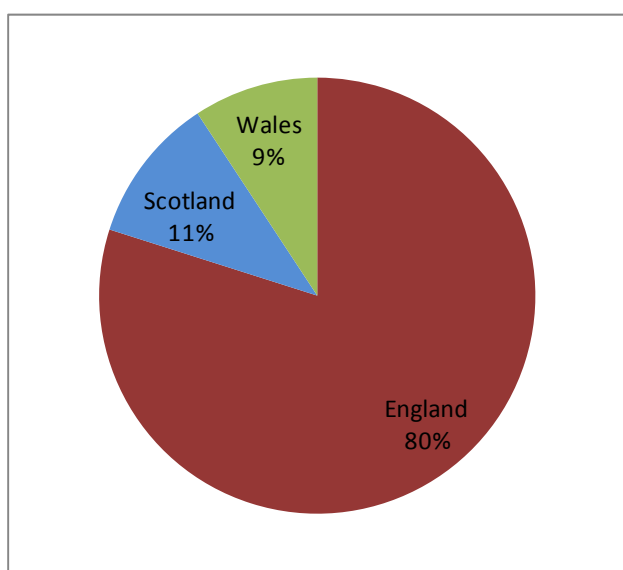


Figure 2: Age of respondents

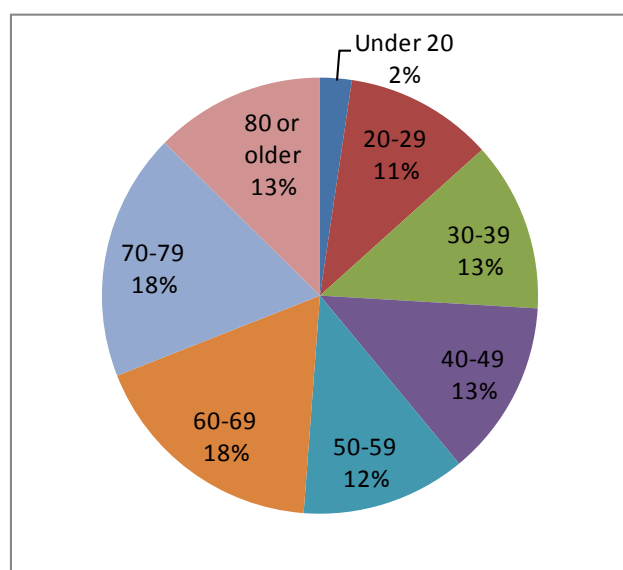


Figure 3: Tenure of respondents

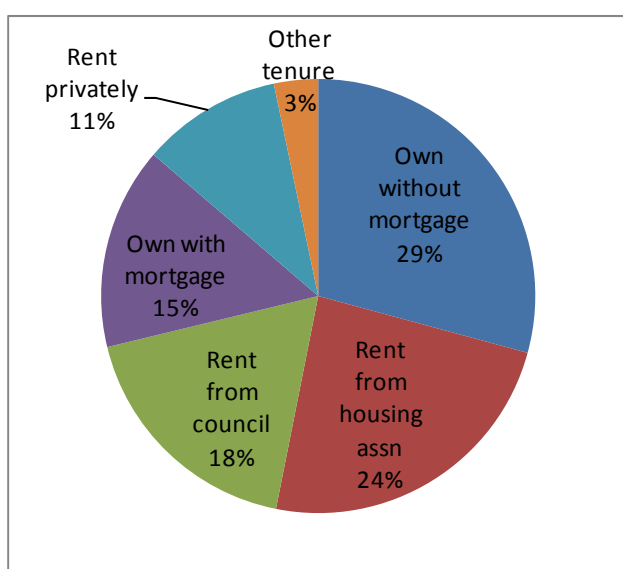
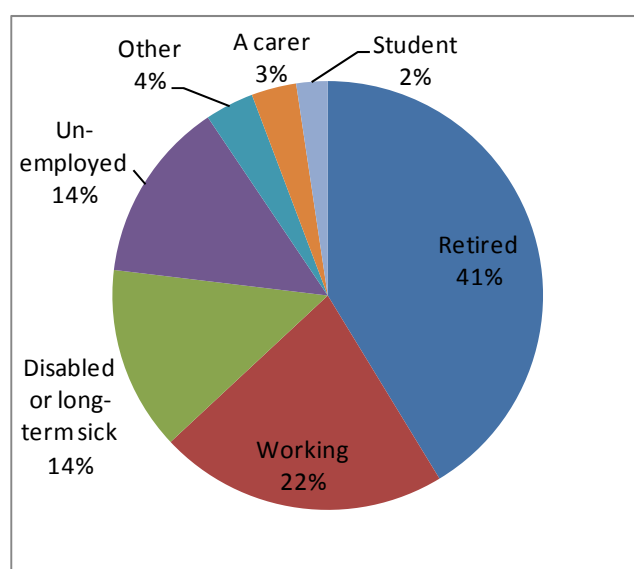


Figure 4: Occupation of respondents



Attitudes to bills

To find out how consumers coped with their winter fuel bills, they were asked, "In the winter, would you say your fuel bills are...", with a range of options which are illustrated, by individual country and for all countries together, in Figure 5.

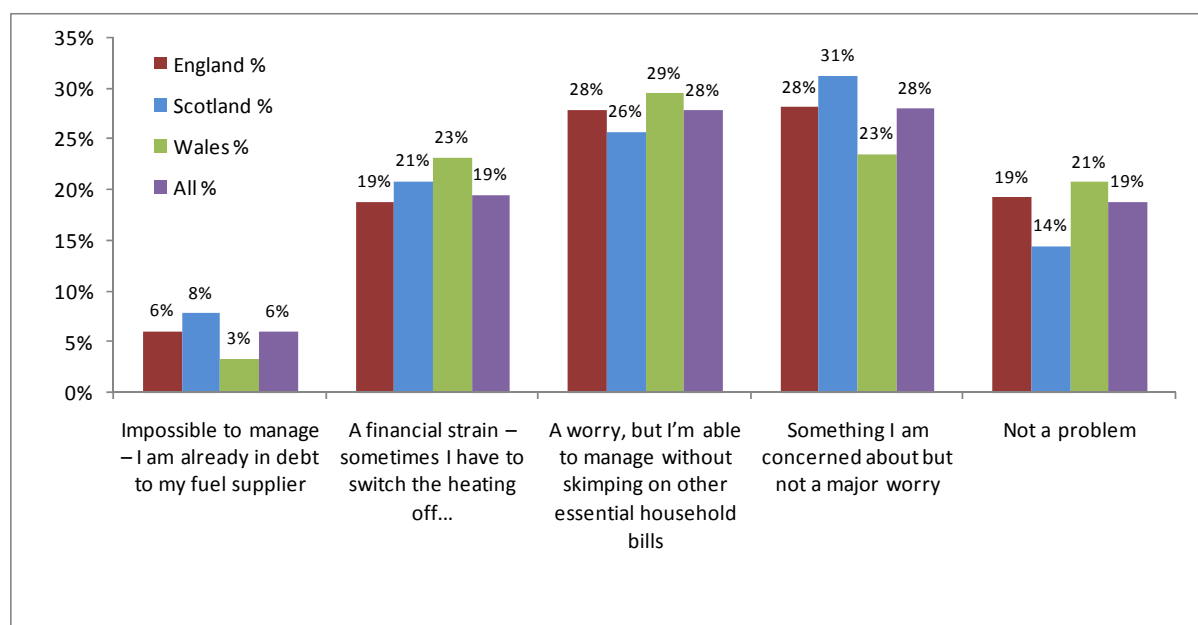


Figure 5: Attitudes to winter fuel bills

The rest of the report shows results aggregated for England, Scotland and Wales together. Results for individual countries will be shown in an appendix, to be published separately, and in presentations in each country.

Experience and knowledge of switching prior to the session

Ninety percent of consumers already knew that it was possible to switch energy supplier. It is interesting to note that this percentage has been slowly increasing over the last few years: 87% of consumers who attended the 2010/2011 Energy Best Deal sessions and 88% in 2010/2011. Thirty-four percent of respondents had already switched supplier once in the past, while a further 21% had switched more than once. Two thirds (66%) of those who had switched in the past were proactive switchers, having switched of their own initiative to get a better deal, while the rest were reactive switchers, switching in response to an approach from an energy supplier salesperson. Those switching as a result of an approach by an energy supplier salesperson may not have considered the full range of tariffs available to them before switching.

Sixty-three percent of respondents said they had never switched to a different tariff with the same supplier, while 19% had done so, and 18% did not know whether they had or not.

The impact of the session

Ninety-seven percent of those who answered said they found the session useful (this question was left unanswered by 431 people, equal to 7% of respondents). Figure 6 shows what consumers said they found useful about the session. Information about how to find the best deal was considered

useful by the highest number of people, at 65% of respondents, with information about how to switch coming second at 50%.

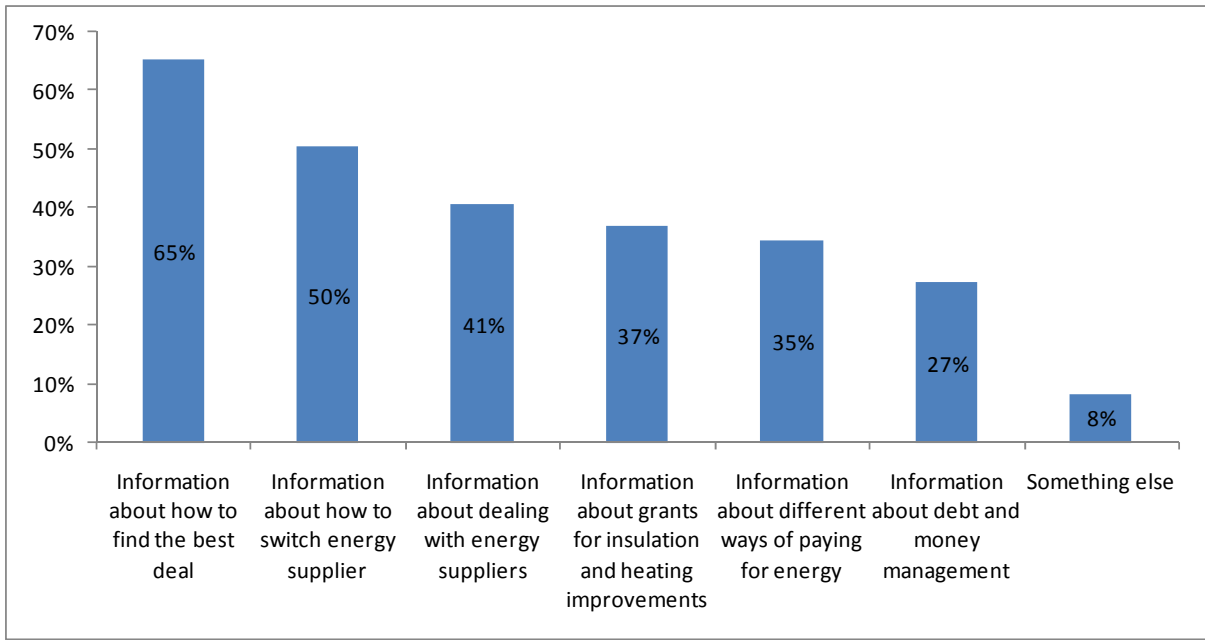


Figure 6: What did you find useful about the session?

Follow-up actions

Seventy-six percent of people said they would definitely or probably do something as a result of the session. Figure 7 illustrates this.

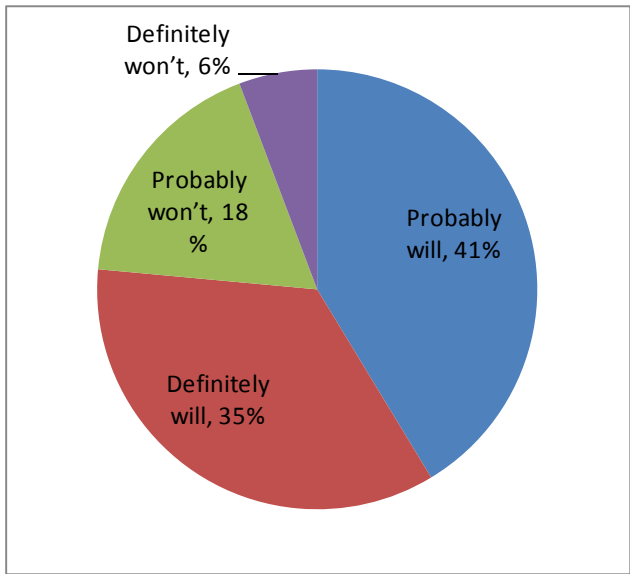


Figure 7: Will you do anything as a result of the session today?

Consumers were asked what they planned to do as a result of the session. The responses are shown in Figure 8. Contacting the current energy supplier was the most popular planned action at 50% of respondents, with looking at other companies’ prices and telling friends and family about what they learnt at the session also being popular, at 36% and 34% respectively.

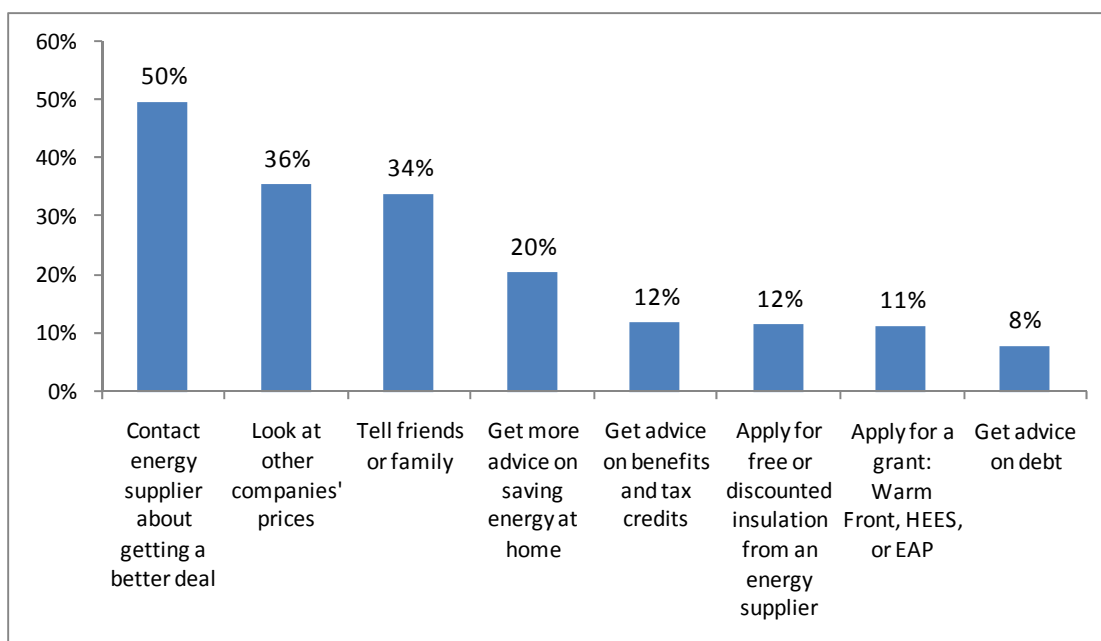


Figure 8: Planned actions following the session

Consumers: follow-up interviews

From the set of consumers who had completed questionnaires with contact details, 153 were selected at random to take part in a follow-up interview, an average of three months after attending a session. Seventy-four percent (133) were from England, 10% (15) were from Scotland, and 16% (25) were from Wales (this compares with overall questionnaire responses of 80% from England, 11% from Scotland, and 9% from Wales).

Action taken since the session

Fifty-five people (36%) had taken action since the session. Twenty-one percent of interviewees (32 people) had contacted their existing supplier to see if they could get a better deal. Of these people, 19 (59%) were offered a better deal, and 17 of these switched (53% of all those who contacted their supplier). Reasons for not switching to the better tariff were not yet having got round to it, and waiting for the energy company to post information. Forty-two people (27% of interviewees) had looked into prices from other suppliers, using a variety of methods. The proportions of interviewees taking actions to check prices from their own or other energy suppliers is shown in Figure 9. 'Other' actions were checking with the landlord, and looking at a website giving advice about switching.

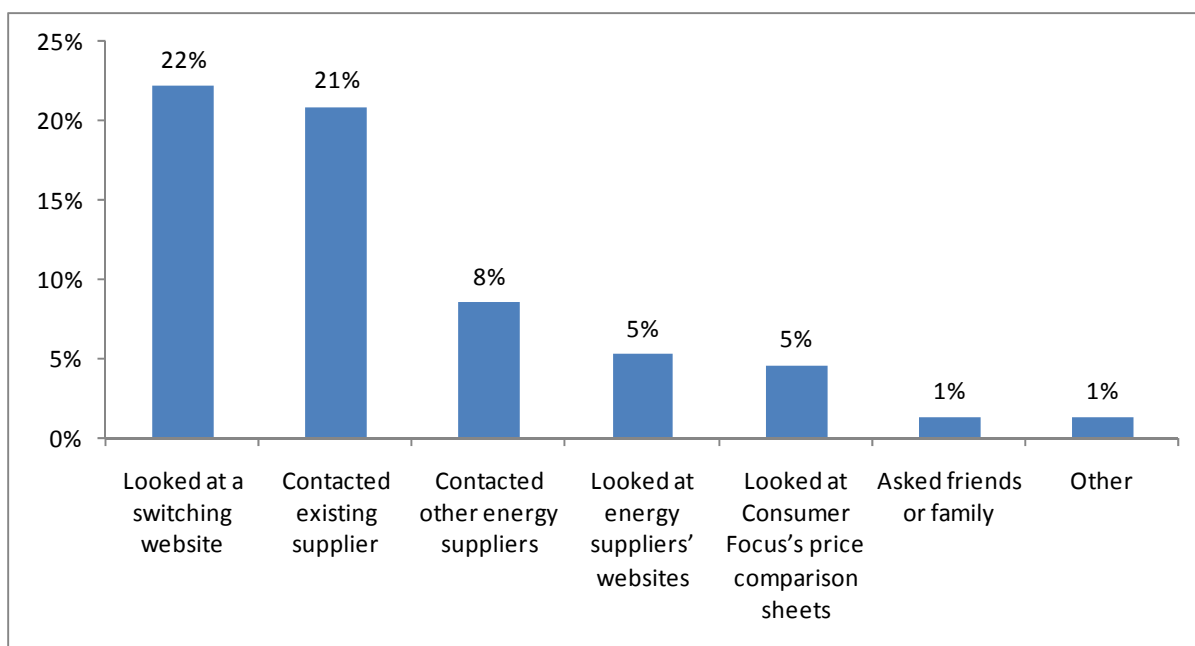


Figure 9: Proportion of interviewees taking actions to check prices from their own or other suppliers

As a result of these actions, 19 people were offered a better tariff with their current supplier, and 15 people found a cheaper deal with another supplier. Some people were offered both; the number of people who had found a better deal, either with their current supplier or a new supplier, was 31. As well as those who switched to a new tariff with their existing supplier, eight people have switched to another supplier, or started the process of doing so, with a further three people intending to switch to another supplier.

Figure 10 to Figure 12 summarise the success of interviewees in finding a better deal. Figure 10 shows the number of people who contacted their current supplier, relative to the whole group of interviewees, and Figure 11 shows the number of people investigating prices from other suppliers. Some people contacted both their current supplier and investigated prices from other suppliers, and so there is some overlap between the two charts. Figure 12 removes this overlap and shows the total numbers of people investigating prices (either from current or other suppliers) and being successful in getting a better deal.

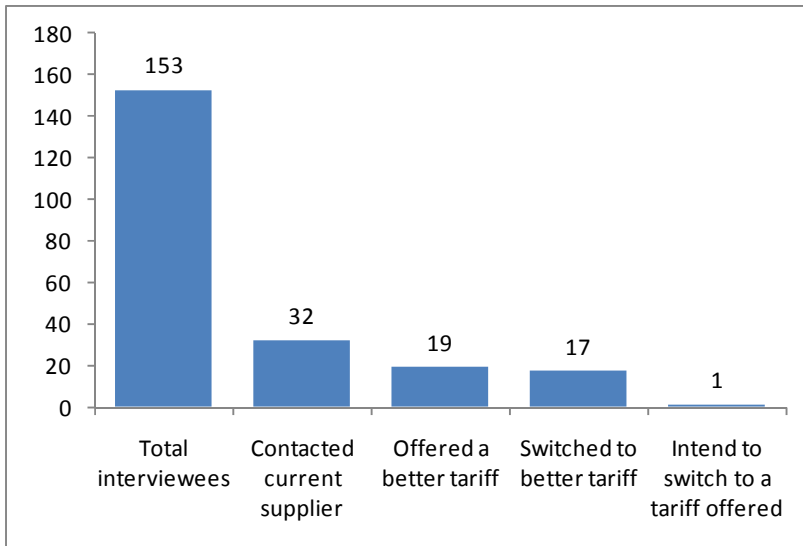


Figure 10: Breakdown of results - approaching current supplier

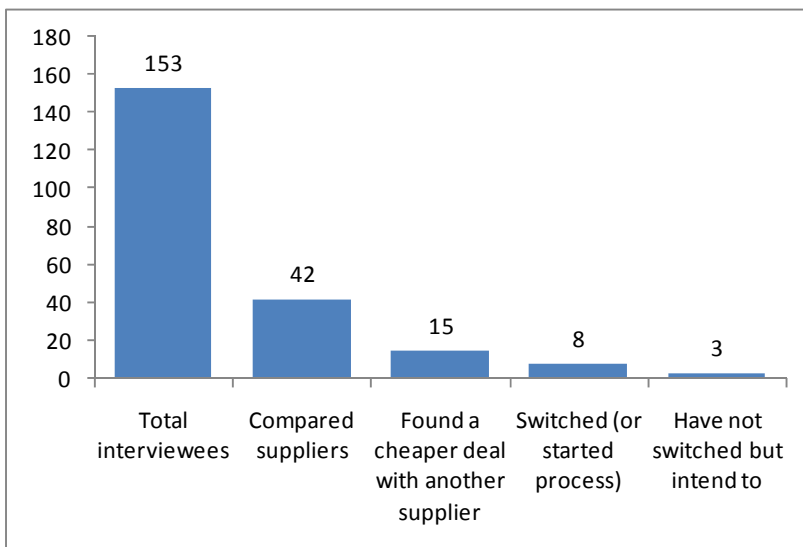


Figure 11: Breakdown of results - comparing prices from other suppliers

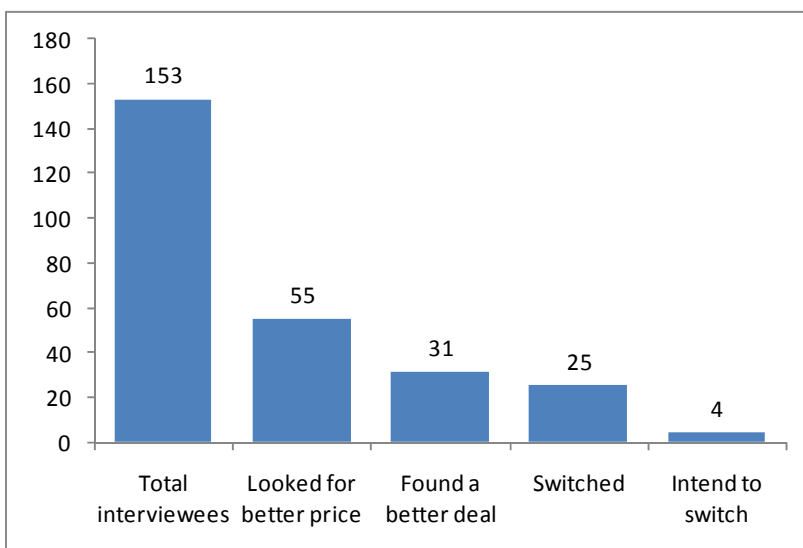


Figure 12: Breakdown of results - current supplier or new supplier

Interestingly, contacting the current supplier appeared to be more likely to reveal a better deal than looking at the prices of other suppliers: 59% of enquiries led to a better deal when contacting the current supplier, compared to 36% for comparing prices of other suppliers. Some of this effect could be explained by the fact that some consumers who were offered better deals by the current supplier did not go on to check other suppliers' deals⁶. Consumers were also more likely to take up a better deal if it was offered by the current supplier (89% take-up for current supplier, compared to 53% for comparing other suppliers). There were three consumers who found a better deal both with their own and other energy suppliers; all of these opted to stay with their current supplier. It seems that in general, the consumers had a preference for staying with their existing supplier.

It can be seen from Figure 12 that 56% of people (31 out of 55) who looked for a better deal found one. Eighty-one percent of those who found a better deal switched to it, and this rises to 94% if those who intend to switch soon are included.

The process of switching supplier

Eight people (30%) had switched to a new supplier, or started the process of doing so. Six had found the process very or fairly easy (88%), with 1 person finding the process fairly difficult (finding that the process took a long time). When asked for comments about what they found problematic, even those who found the process easy had comments:

- One person received an incorrect bill
- One person commented that it was tricky to find all the required information on their bill
- One person expressed doubt about the pricing, saying they hoped there would be no hidden charges after switching

When asked what they found helpful about the process of switching, five people had positive comments, including that the suppliers were helpful, the supplier website was helpful, and that the process was smooth.

Factors which put people off

All interviewees were asked if there was anything that had put them off looking for a better deal (even those who did look for a better deal were asked this, to pick up on any factors which could have delayed them taking action). The results are shown in Figure 13 (responses only shown where more than 5% of respondents gave an answer).

⁶ Therefore the consumers who could not get better deals from their current supplier were more heavily represented in the group that went on to check other suppliers' prices; these consumers may already have been on more competitive tariffs. It should also be noted that it is beyond the scope of the evaluation to test whether the tariffs obtained were in reality better than the current tariff; the evaluation measures consumers' own judgement about whether the deal was better.

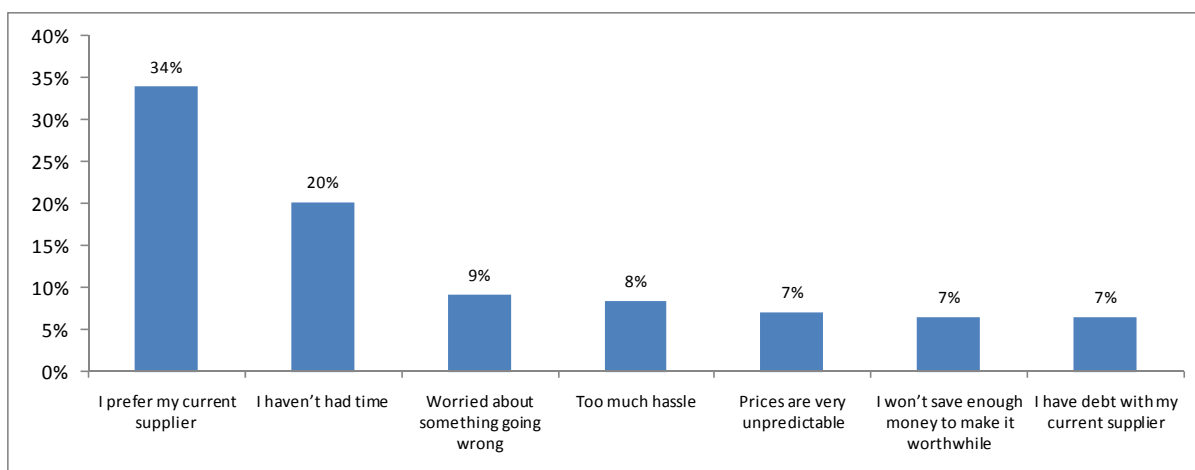


Figure 13: Factors which put people off looking for a better deal

One person answered that they were put off switching because their current supplier owes them money, while another answered that they were in arrears and so could not switch. This may indicate that the sessions which these people attended did not emphasise enough the fact that a supplier would be required to pay back any money owed to the customer on switching (and in fact that the customer can request this to be paid back to them at any time, not only when switching), and also that customers can switch supplier even if they are in arrears, up to £200.

One interviewee said that they were put off because they did not recognise the name of the supplier which came up as the cheapest. This shows that the public image of the company and its trustworthiness are important.

Interviewees were asked how trustworthy they perceived energy companies to be, in general. They were given the options: very trustworthy, fairly trustworthy, not trustworthy, and 'I think mine is ok, but not all of them are trustworthy'. The responses are shown in Figure 14. Despite the bad press that energy companies receive, only a third of interviewees felt they were not trustworthy, with everyone else rating them fairly or very trustworthy, or at least feeling that their own supplier was trustworthy.

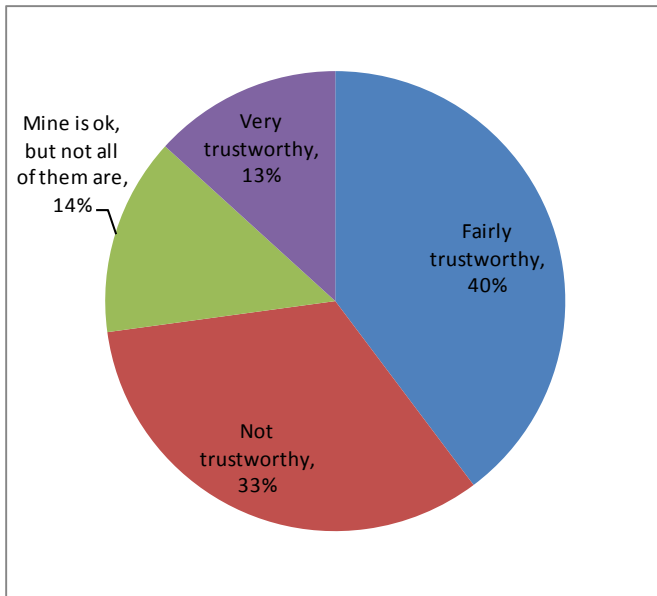


Figure 14: How do you rate the trustworthiness of suppliers?

Payment method

Fourteen people (9%) had switched payment method. Nine of these people had switched to direct debit, and two had switched to prepayment meters.

Other actions

Interviewees were asked about other actions they had taken since the session. Seventy-one people (46%) had taken at least one action, with 38 (25%) taking two or more actions and 20 (13%) taking three or more actions. The most popular action was contacting the current supplier for advice, followed by seeking advice on energy efficiency and looking into getting free or discounted insulation. Actions are summarised in Figure 15 below.

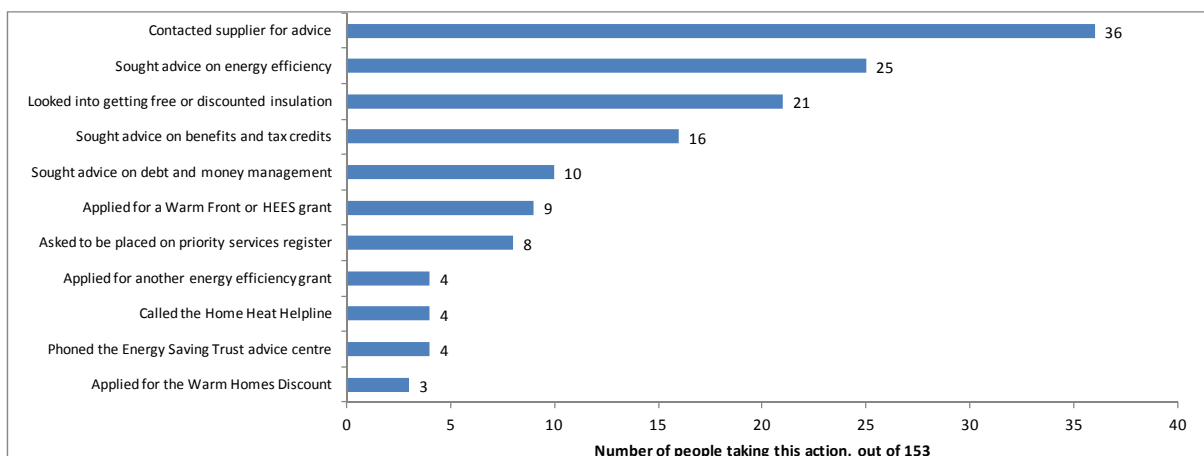


Figure 15: Other actions taken by interviewees

Energy efficiency actions

Interviewees were asked if they had taken any steps to save energy in their homes since the session. Seventy people (46%) said that they had done something. Forty-six people (30% of all interviewees) identified low- or no-cost actions such as monitoring appliance use, draught stripping and turning down the heating. Two people had received energy audits of their homes. Two people (1% of all interviewees) had installed cavity wall insulation in their properties, while three people (2%) had checked the insulation in their property. Two of these people found that they already had cavity wall insulation, while the third was in the process of checking to see if he could increase his loft insulation. Five people (3%) had looked into getting loft or cavity wall insulation (one of these had found his property was not suitable, while the others were investigating the best schemes). In addition, three people had installed or were planning to install DIY loft insulation. Two people were getting subsidised roof insulation, two had switched to economy 7, one was planning to install solar PV, and two people had installed new boilers. This is a total of 19 people looking into installing or having installed larger scale measures, equal to 12% of all interviewees.

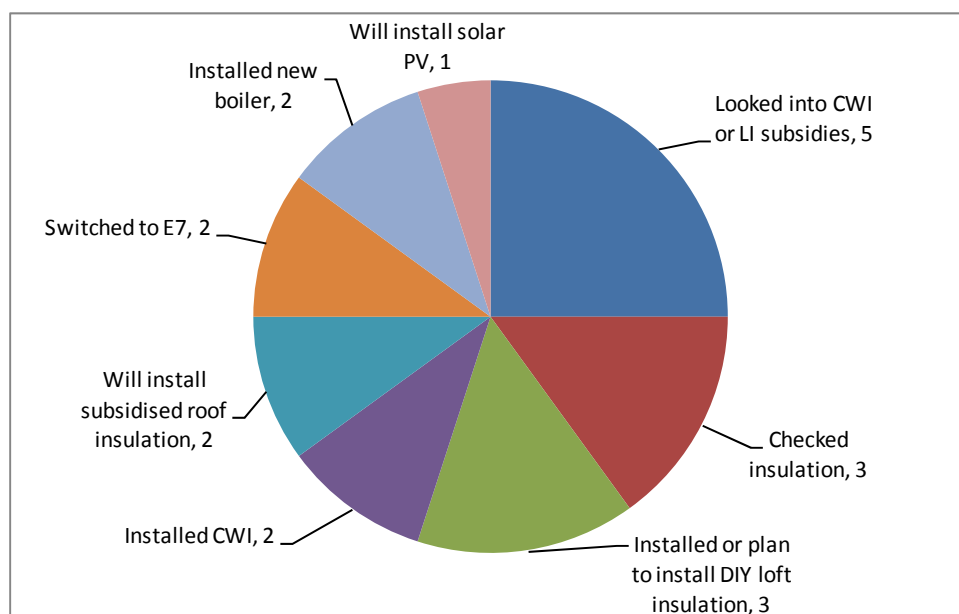


Figure 16: Actions taken by the 19 people who installed or planned to install major measures⁷

Some energy saving actions were mentioned which were likely to impact unfavourably on the individual's standard of living. One person indicated that he or she no longer uses the immersion heater (it was not clear whether any other form of water heating was available), while another said he or she no longer uses the oven. While they might save energy, these actions would have a detrimental impact on people's day to day lives, and so these are not desirable actions. This suggests that the individuals have severe fuel poverty issues.

⁷ This is a total of 20 actions taken by 19 people. The home energy audits listed in the previous paragraph are not included as they are not measures.

Consumers qualifying for CERT⁸ Super Priority Group

For the 2011/2012 evaluation, additional questions were asked in the interview to ascertain the proportion of interviewees who would qualify for Super Priority Group (SPG) under CERT. Although CERT is almost over, the qualification criteria for ECO are likely to be similar. Interviewees were asked⁹:

- Does anyone in your household receive either Pension Credit or Child Tax Credit?
- If the latter, is your household income under £16,190?

Although there are other qualifying criteria for SPG, there was a need to strike a balance between getting useful information and asking so many questions that interviewees would be reluctant to answer, which is especially a risk when asking about benefits claimed. In addition, as the criteria for ECO were unclear at the time of setting the questions, these two major criteria were considered to be the ones most likely to be retained in the change from SPG under CERT to ECO¹⁰.

Thirty-one interviewees (20%) receive Pension Credit, while 26 (17%) receive Child Tax Credit and have a household income under £16,190, making a total of 37% of interviewees who meet the SPG criteria. As the other benefits criteria for SPG were not included in the interview, the actual eligible number of qualifying interviewees may be higher.

Information passed on to friends and family

Seventy percent of consumer interviewees had passed on something that they had learnt at the Energy Best Deal session to friends and family. The median number of people told was three¹¹ (the average amount of time between the session and interview was three months).

⁸ The Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) is an obligation which government has put on energy suppliers to reduce carbon emissions from domestic energy use. Suppliers do this by funding discounted energy efficiency measures for domestic consumers. Under CERT there is a 'Priority Group' and a 'Super Priority Group' of customers with specific circumstances (e.g. types of benefits claimed, age). Energy suppliers must provide a specific proportion of their CERT work to these groups, which means that energy efficiency measures such as cavity wall insulation are normally provided free to consumers in these groups.

⁹ It was beyond the scope of the evaluation to provide advice to interviewees who qualified for CERT; however, interviewers were provided with a list of telephone numbers for local advice lines which they could give to the interviewee if more information on subsidised measures was requested.

¹⁰ CERT is due to end in September 2012. A new scheme, the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), will replace it. This will also provide discounted energy efficiency measures to consumers and target groups under ECO are likely to be similar to those under CERT.

¹¹ This takes into account those consumers who did not pass the information on to anyone. If these people are excluded, the median is 4.

Frontline workers: questionnaire responses

Profile

In total, 6,105 frontline workers attended Energy Best Deal sessions; 79% in England, 10% in Scotland, and 11% in Wales. Questionnaires were received from 3,986 frontline workers, equal to 65% of all attendees. Figure 17 shows how this is divided between countries; the split is very similar to the proportions of total attendees in each country.

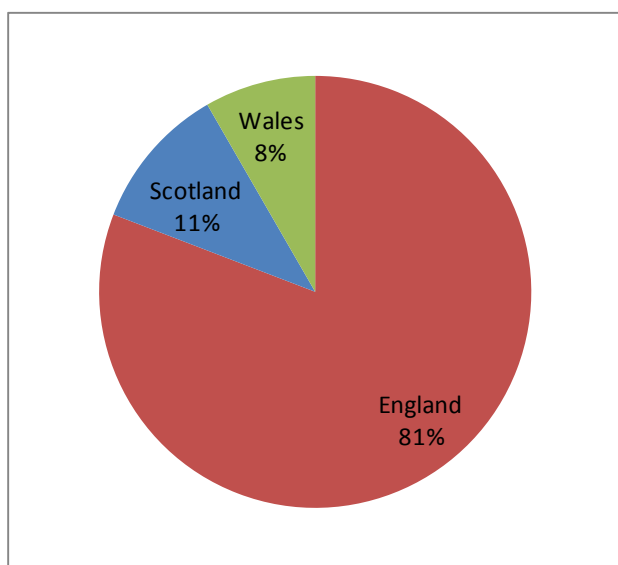


Figure 17: Frontline worker questionnaire respondents by country

Figure 18 shows the organisations represented by the frontline workers. The largest group were from Citizens Advice Bureaux (this was the largest group in each individual country as well; in England it was 23%, in Wales it was 32%, and in Scotland it was 61%). The second largest group overall was local authorities and other public sector organisations (this was 21% in England and 23% in Wales, but only 6% in Scotland).

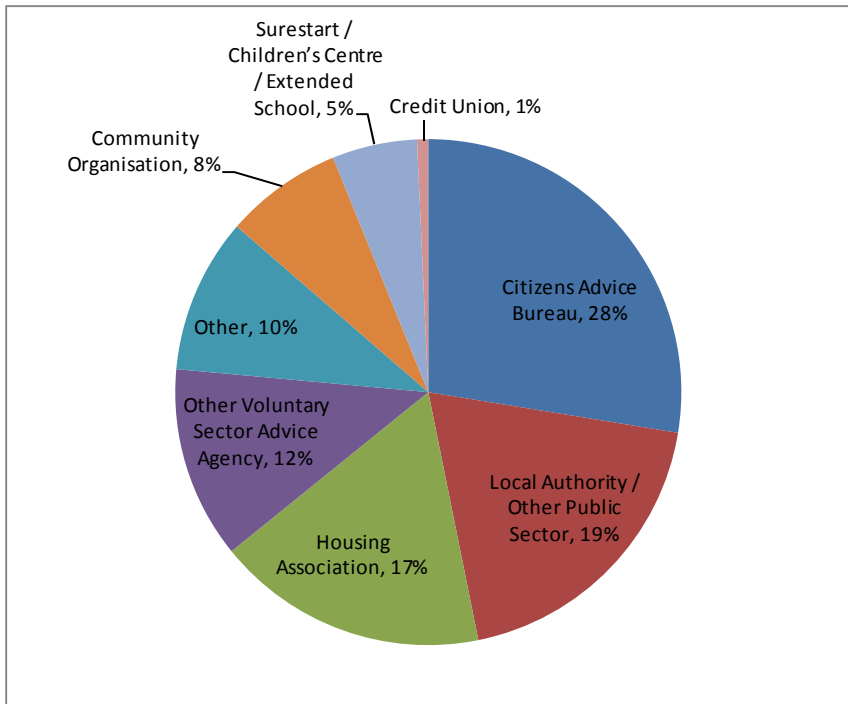


Figure 18: Frontline worker organisation types

The 'Other' category included representatives from many different charities (for example, homelessness, mental health, and children's charities), care and repair agencies, schools, and faith groups.

Previous advice-giving

Figure 19 shows the topics on which frontline workers had given advice on prior to the session. Just over half had given advice on debt and money management, while topics more specifically about energy were less common but still advised on by a good proportion of frontline workers prior to the session. 'Finding the best deal on energy costs' was the topic which the smallest proportion of frontline workers had previously advised on, at 28%. Therefore quite a large proportion of frontline workers had some experience of the topics covered in the Energy Best Deal session.

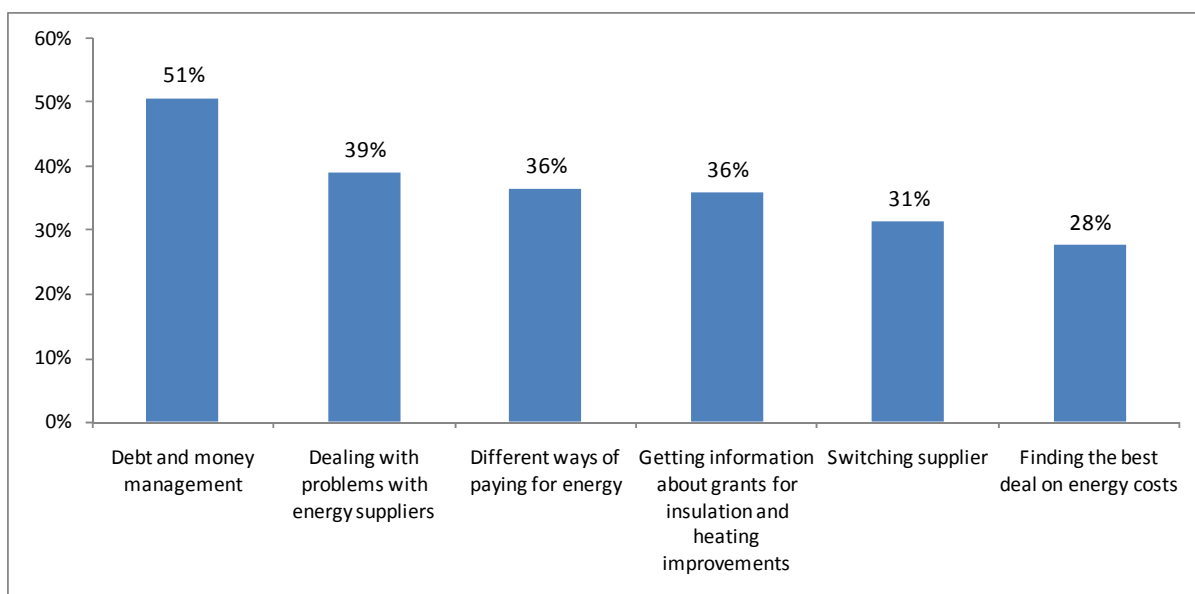


Figure 19: Previous advice-giving

The impact of the session

Eighty-one percent of frontline workers said that the session had changed their opinion on the importance of fuel poverty to their clients. This percentage was virtually the same across all three countries (81% in England, 80% in Wales, 80% in Scotland).

Frontline workers were asked to estimate the proportion of their clients who were in fuel poverty or at risk of fuel poverty. The results are shown in Figure 20. Almost a third estimate that 60-80% of their clients are in, or at risk of, fuel poverty, while 30% estimate this figure to be between 40% and 60% of their clients.

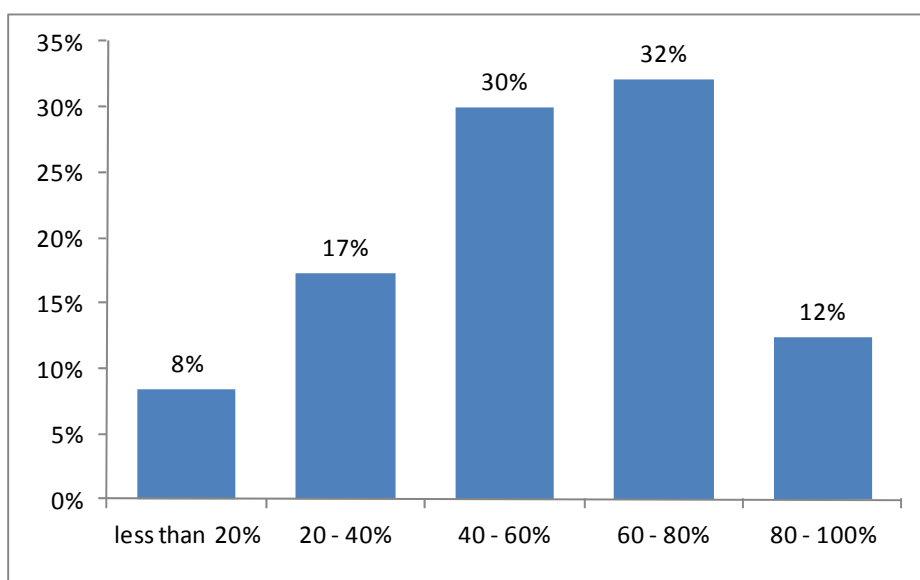


Figure 20: Estimated number of clients in fuel poverty

Ninety-eight percent of respondents already knew that it was possible to change gas and electricity supplier, and 88% of respondents knew that some payment methods are more expensive than

others. Seventy-six percent said they intended to look for a better deal on their own energy following the session.

Frontline workers were asked if they felt better informed as a result of the session. Ninety-seven percent said they did; 53% to a great extent, and 44% to some extent. This is illustrated in Figure 21.

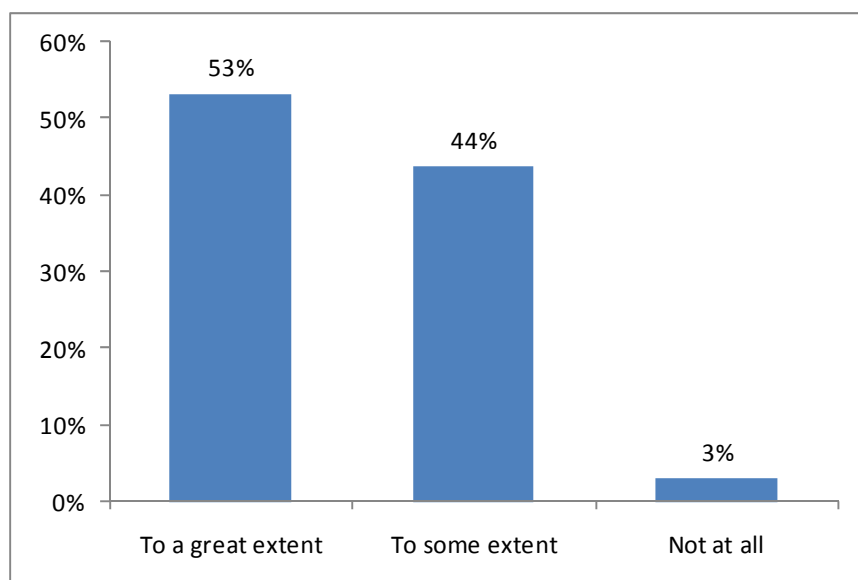


Figure 21: Do you feel better informed as a result of the session?

Frontline workers were asked if they now felt more or less confident in advising clients about the topics covered in the presentation. The answers are illustrated in Figure 22.

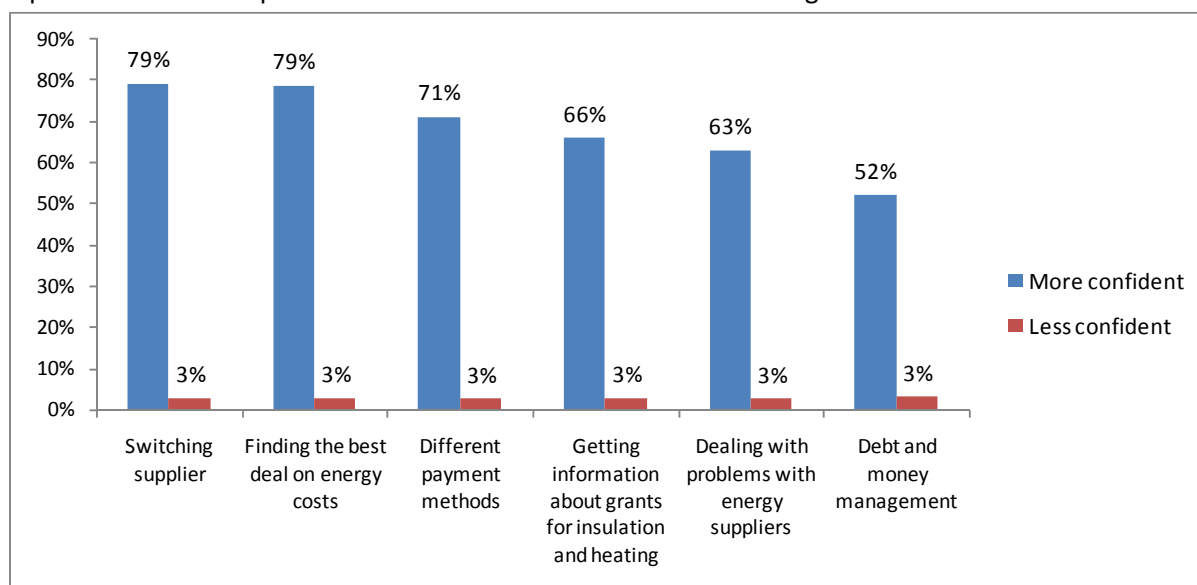


Figure 22: Increases and decreases in confidence since the session

For all topics, at least half felt more confident advising on the topics covered in the presentation. Ninety-one percent of frontline workers felt more confident about at least one topic covered in the presentation. A small group felt less confident following the session – this remained at 3% for all topics covered. A total of 325 people (8%) felt less confident about one or more of the topics covered in the presentation, but 280 of these people also felt more confident about one or more

topics. Several people indicated that they felt both more *and* less confident about the same topic (56 was the highest number saying this, for 'finding the best deal on energy costs'), indicating that within each topic there were some aspects that they felt more confident about and some that they felt less confident about. Reasons given for feeling less confident tended to indicate a lack of confidence in the frontline worker's own skills or knowledge, a feeling that giving people advice on these topics was not within their job remit, and anxiety about the consequences of giving the wrong advice. Representative comments included:

- Being scared about giving the wrong information and costing the tenant more (this was from a warden at a housing association)
- Financial issues not within the frontline worker's remit (from a housing officer at a local authority)
- Not qualified to deal with debt management (from a volunteer at an advice agency)
- Feeling like trying to give advice on the topics covered would be 'a minefield for someone with limited knowledge'

Frontline workers: follow-up interviews

A total of 153 frontline workers were contacted an average of three months after the session for a follow-up interview. Their distribution between the three countries is shown in Figure 23. The distribution is similar to the distribution of frontline worker questionnaire respondents, with England slightly higher (85% here compared to 81% of questionnaire responses) and Scotland and Wales with slightly lower proportions.

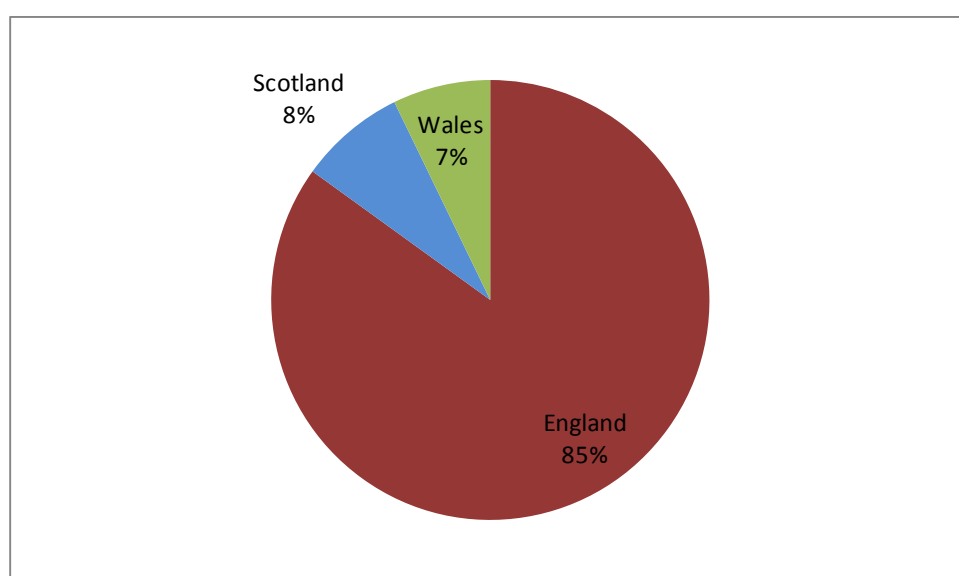


Figure 23: Frontline worker interviews - country

Frequency of prior advice-giving on Energy Best Deal topics

Frontline workers were asked how frequently, before the presentation, they had advised on the topics covered in the presentation. The answers are shown in Figure 24. The majority had given

advice on these topics infrequently, with almost equal proportions having given advice on these topics never, or frequently.

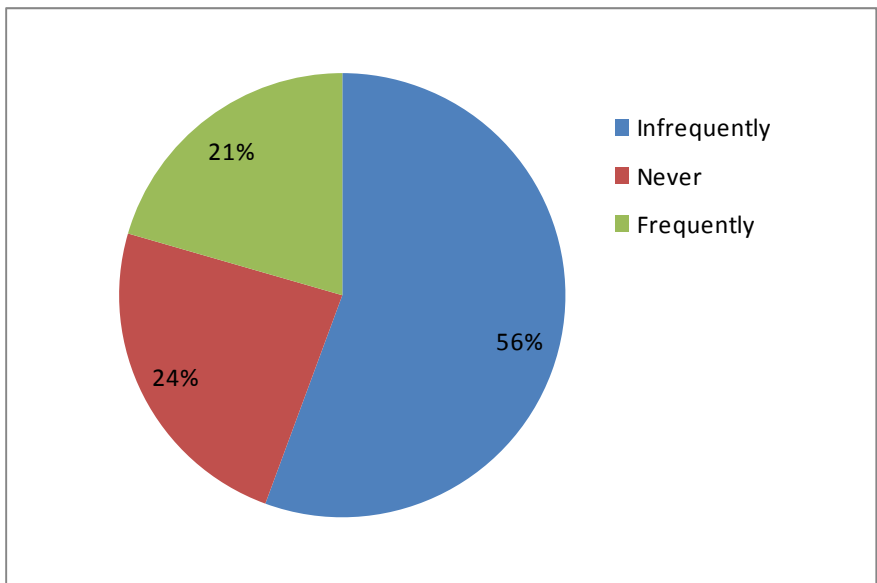


Figure 24: Frequency of advice-giving on Energy Best Deal topics prior to the presentation

Interviewees were asked which topics they had given advice on since the presentation. The answers are shown in Figure 25.

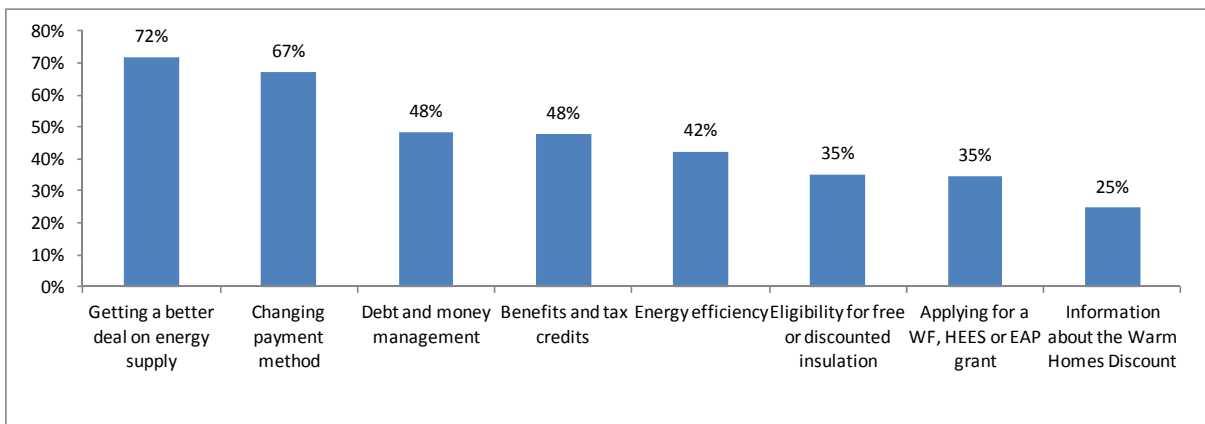


Figure 25: Topics advised on since the presentation

Almost three-quarters had given advice on getting a better deal on energy supply since the session, and over two thirds had advised on changing payment method. These are significantly higher than the responses given for advice-giving prior to the session, as gathered in the questionnaire responses. Advice on getting a better deal on energy supply had increased from 28% to 72%, while advice on changing payment method had increased from 36% to 67%.

Interviewees were asked to estimate how many clients they had provided information to since the session. The total number across interviewees was 8,192, but this was skewed by some large numbers (the largest being 4,300, reached through a newsletter). Twenty-two people had not passed information on to anyone. The median of eight people per frontline worker is a better

indication of the number that each frontline worker will pass information on to in the average three months since the session. The distribution is shown in Figure 26.

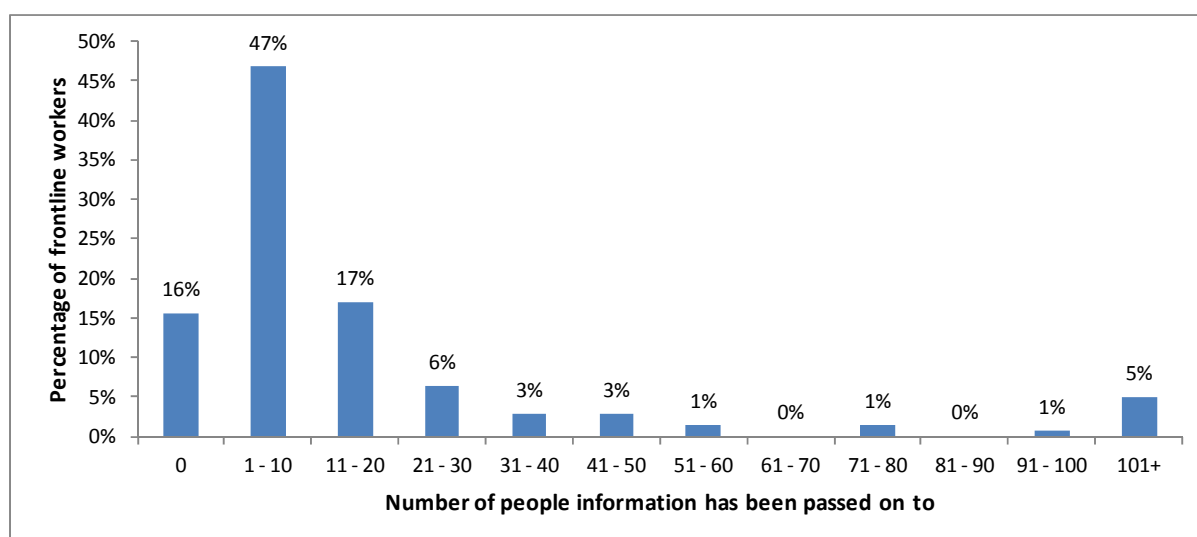


Figure 26: Number of people information has been passed on to since the session

Frontline workers were also asked what percentage this represented of the total number of clients they had seen in this time. The mean was 50% of clients. The distribution is shown in Figure 27.

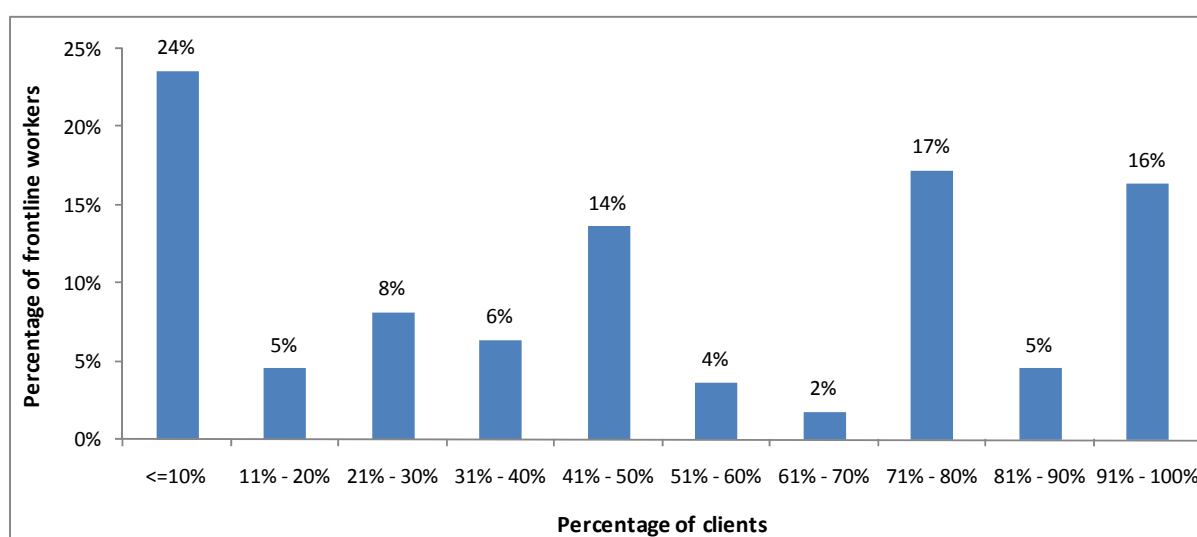


Figure 27: Percentage of clients that information has been passed on to since the session

Seventy-three percent of frontline workers said that they have provided information on the topics covered by Energy Best Deal to clients more frequently since the presentation than before. Eighty percent of interviewees said they expect to use the information from the Energy Best Deal sessions frequently in the future. Forty-three people (28%) said that the presentation helped them with topics they were already advising on, while 46 people (30%) said the presentation helped them with new topics. Fifty-two people said it helped them with both new topics and topics they were already advising on (34%), and nine people said it did not help them with either (6%).

Interviewees were asked if they felt less confident on any topics following the session. Five people (3%) said yes. This is lower than the response in the questionnaires (where 8% of people felt less confident about one or more topics). This could be because they have had time to digest the information; several comments on the questionnaire responses flagged a need to re-read and digest the information in the Energy Best Deal materials.

Frontline workers were asked what the most common energy-related issue was that their clients seek help with. The vast majority said that for their clients this was a struggle with unaffordable bills.

Interviewees were also asked the question 'Are there any energy-related issues your clients seek help with which were not covered in the presentation?' A few responses here mentioned topics which are normally covered in the presentation (fuel debt, use of energy company trust funds to clear debts), which points to a lack of time in specific sessions or variation in the coverage of some sessions. The vast majority of the responses were around renewable energy, central heating controls, cavity wall insulation grants, and alternatives to oil heating. These are likely to be too in-depth to be covered in future Energy Best Deal sessions, but more signposting to information for these kinds of topics could be provided for those who are interested.

Passing information on to colleagues

In the average of three months since attending the session, frontline workers had passed on what they learnt at the session to a median of four colleagues. Thirty-one (20%) had not passed information on to any colleagues (although some commented that all their colleagues were at the presentation), while seven (5%) had passed information on to between 20 and 70 colleagues (presumably the higher numbers are via a newsletter or email circular).

Quality of the presentation and materials

The sessions were delivered by 176 different organisations, and so there were at least 176 different trainers delivering sessions. The materials used were a set of PowerPoint slides (and facilitators' notes, although these would not have been seen by people completing the questionnaire). Individual trainers may have used additional materials. The materials provided to take away comprised a booklet produced by Citizens Advice and Ofgem, with useful information such as how to deal with problems with suppliers, details of grant schemes, and telephone and website details of further sources of information. Again, individual trainers could also hand out their own additional materials.

Both consumers and frontline workers were asked to rate the presentation skills of the trainer, the quality of the materials used and the quality of the materials provided to take away. The responses are shown in Figure 28 to Figure 30. The results are split by consumer and frontline worker, although their responses are almost identical.

The majority of both consumers and frontline workers rated the presentation skills of the trainers as excellent. Many respondents said that the presentation was clear, easy to understand, and well-explained. The vast majority of comments were positive, with only a few saying that the presentation was over-long (many more said it was concise) or that they could not hear properly (others said their trainer had a clear voice).

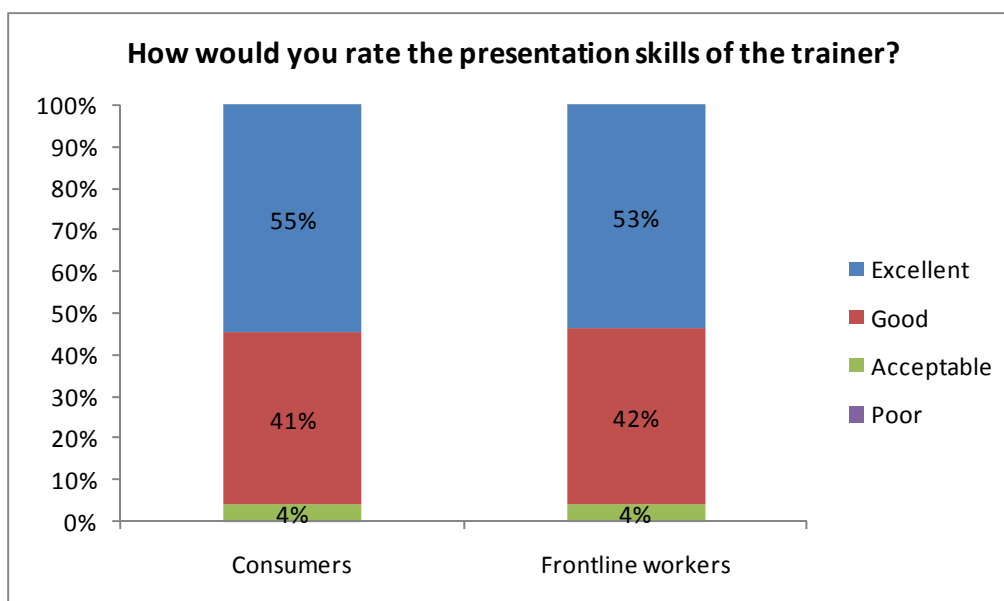


Figure 28: Ratings of the presentation skills of the trainer

The majority of both consumers and frontline workers thought that the materials used during the presentation were good, with over a third saying they were excellent. Again the vast majority of the comments were positive. Several comments mentioned IT problems, probably inevitable considering the large number of sessions taking place in a wide range of different venues. There were also some comments about attendees being partially sighted and therefore not able to read slides and handouts. Two people commented that they would like the materials in large print. One respondent commented, "Loved learning new information through playing pass the parcel", indicating that some delivery partners took some fun approaches to getting information across.

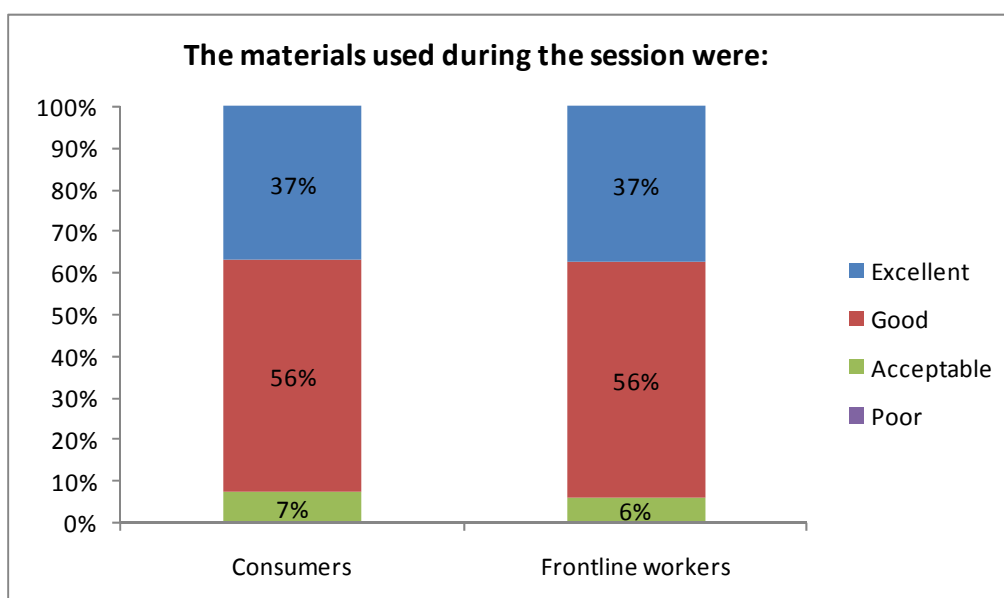


Figure 29: Ratings of the quality of the materials used during the session

The majority of both consumers and frontline workers rated the materials provided to take away as good, with 40% rating them as excellent. Several frontline workers commented that the materials

would be useful for their clients. Several respondents said they needed large print versions. One respondent asked for the information in Chinese, and although other languages were not requested in the comments it would probably be useful to produce the information, or summaries, in several different languages.

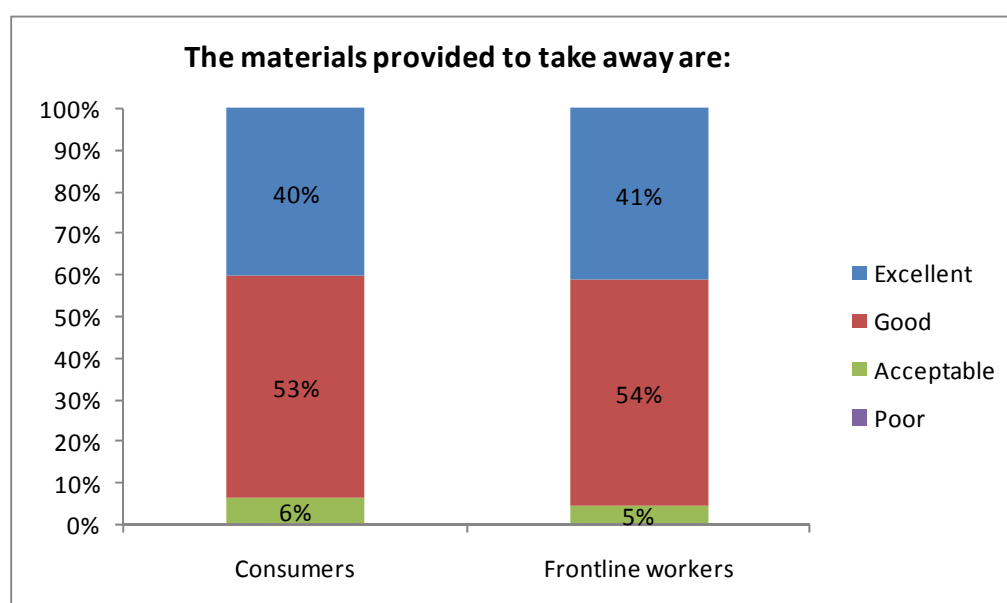


Figure 30: Ratings of the materials provided to take away.

2010/2011 participant interviews – consumers

Ten consumers who had attended Energy Best Deal sessions in 2010/2011 and who had been interviewed for the evaluation of that campaign were contacted again to find out what the ongoing impact of attending the session had been.

Two consumers had switched tariff or supplier when they were interviewed in 2010/2011. A year later, they were still happy with that decision and they found that they had saved money. One of these consumers had already looked for a cheaper deal to switch to as soon as the current fixed period ended, while the other consumer commented that she was happy with the tariff that she was on, although she said that she would perhaps check prices again in the future. When asked if anything had discouraged them, one consumer said that switching had seemed like too much hassle until she had been given details of the switching website, while the other consumer commented that she had previously thought that if she switched the deal would only last a few months.

Five consumers had not switched supplier when they were interviewed in 2010/2011, but they had looked into getting a better deal. A year later, four of them had done something further to get a better deal. Two people had switched to a better deal with their current supplier, while a third had contacted his current supplier about other tariffs and found that his current tariff was the best. A fourth consumer had encountered problems when contacting her existing supplier as she moved house - she was hoping for a better deal but instead she was told she would no longer be eligible for the supplier's social tariff. She is now considering switching supplier.

The two people who found a better deal with their current supplier had also checked prices from other suppliers, using a switching website. These two people found it very easy to work out if they would save money by switching. The consumer who checked with his current supplier but did not check other suppliers' prices found it very difficult to tell if he would save money by switching to another of his current supplier's tariffs.

Two consumers commented that the 'small print' details of different tariffs can make it hard to compare like with like. One of these commented that he felt this was a deliberate strategy on the part of the energy suppliers.

Three consumers had not looked into getting a better deal following the session in 2010/2011. Of these, one had looked for a better deal since the last interview, by contacting her current supplier, who was able to offer her a better deal which she switched to. She did not compare prices from other suppliers and commented 'better the devil you know' - having heard of many people who have problems with their suppliers, she is happy to stick with a supplier who has provided her with a good service. The two other consumers had not looked for a better deal in the year since they were last interviewed. They both commented that they are happy with the service from their current supplier and so do not wish to switch.

None of the consumers interviewed had switched payment method when they were interviewed in 2010/2011, and none of them had switched payment method since then. They all commented that they were happy with the payment method they were using (most were using direct debit, with two who preferred quarterly bills)

2010/2011 participant interviews – frontline workers

Ten frontline workers who attended a session in 2010/2011 were contacted by telephone and interviewed. Four of these had been interviewed for the evaluation of the 2010/2011 programme, and the remaining six had not previously been interviewed.

While all of the interviewees remembered that they attended an Energy Best Deal session, three interviewees could not remember it clearly. One of these works regularly with energy issues and so did not remember the details of this individual session; however he did comment that the session was useful because it crystallised many of the things he already knew, as well as providing some energy saving tips that he did not already know about. The other two found they had not regularly used the Energy Best Deal information in their work. One of these people, despite not using the information frequently, had actually provided information from Energy Best Deal to *all* of her clients, as she supported a small number of people over a long period of time. The other person was a gateway assessor and so did not advise in-depth.

Across all ten frontline workers, the estimated total number of clients that information had been passed on to over the year was 110; however only five people gave answers to this question, with the others being unable to make an estimate. The median number of clients that information was passed on to was 12. The estimated proportion of clients that this represented ranged from 1% to 100%.

The things that frontline workers remembered most clearly from the session were:

- Tips on saving energy
- Options for getting the best deal
- The importance of shopping around
- The number of deals available
- Which websites to use to compare prices
- Price comparison and switching advice

When asked what parts of the session had been particularly useful to them in their work, four people answered 'Information about finding a better deal on energy supply', one person said 'Information about changing payment method' (this person also said that information about finding a better deal was useful), and one person said 'Information about benefits and tax credits' and 'Information about debt and money management'. One person answered that it was not useful because they have not had to use it for their job. Three people answered there was nothing useful because they already knew everything covered in the presentation. However, one of these people subsequently said that the session *was* useful because it crystallised what he already knew.

Three people said the presentation gave them more confidence on issues that they were already advising on; one commented that the session changed her perspective on offering energy debt advice, and another commented that the session made her aware that there are many options, and special deals for elderly or vulnerable people. The same three people also said that the presentation enabled them to help clients with issues on which they had not previously been able to advise. Comments given here were that information about switching while in arrears was useful, as was finding out where to signpost people to, finding out that it was easy to compare and switch, and that there was a wider range of suppliers than previously thought.

Five people had continued to use information from the Energy Best Deal session over the year since the session. Three people were using the information more frequently than they had done immediately following the session, while two were using it less frequently, and one person had been using it with about the same frequency. Four people thought they would use information from Energy Best Deal infrequently in future (one of these because her role had changed since the session and she now had less client contact), one person thought she would use it frequently, and one person thought he would never use it. The remainder did not answer because either they had not used the information, or they knew the subject well and so although they were advising on energy topics they were using their own knowledge rather than Energy Best Deal information specifically.

When asked if there was any way the presentation could be changed to make it more useful, one person flagged up the fact that she had many clients who used oil-fired heating and who were struggling with the cost, so more information on how to deal with this would be useful. Another person said she would like to see more focus on help for the most vulnerable, the elderly and those who do not speak English. A third person said they would like more information on the way the different tariffs are structured and why they are not simplified between companies.

Six people said they felt they would benefit from a refresher session on the same topics. When asked if they thought they would benefit from another session taking the Energy Best Deal topics into more detail, three people said yes, and identified difficulties with arrears, debt in general, and

specialist help for the most vulnerable as the topics on which they would like more in-depth information.

Following the session, three people looked into getting a better deal on their own energy, although as some of these people were already knowledgeable about switching, it is not possible to say if this was a direct result of the session. One person with a 'white meter' (economy 7) believed that she could not change supplier with this type of meter (which is incorrect) and so only contacted her own supplier for a better deal rather than shopping around. This is the kind of misconception that the Energy Best Deal sessions are aiming to dispel – it seems that in this individual case it did not work.

Case studies: 2011/2012 interviewees

The frontline workers who were interviewed were asked to think of a specific case where they had helped a client using information from the Energy Best Deal session. Ten of the most interesting of these cases have been selected to illustrate frontline workers' use of Energy Best Deal information in practice.

Switching supplier as part of debt management

A Family Support Worker at a public sector organisation had a client who was a single mother with a young family. The client had multiple debts. The frontline worker gave the client information about prepayment meters, payment methods, and details of switching websites. The client moved from a prepayment meter to Direct Debit, and was happy with her new deal and the fact that she had gained the knowledge to switch to a better deal again in the future.

Warm Front for a young family

An Early Intervention Family Support worker was supporting a family on benefits who had young children and were finding it hard to keep their home warm during the winter. The frontline worker helped them apply for a Warm Front grant, which they received.

Supporting a young carer

The frontline worker at an organisation which supports young carers had a client who dealt with finances for a family member. They were getting into debt and so needed advice on various matters. In terms of energy, the frontline worker looked at a switching website with the client and went through the different payment methods. The frontline worker also gave advice about saving energy. The result was that the bills were reduced and the young carer feels better equipped to deal with energy bills in the future.

A new central heating system

An AFTAR (Advice for Tenants and Residents) Worker at a Citizens Advice Bureau had a client who did not have any central heating. He referred the client to the Home Heat Helpline, which in turn referred the client to a grant scheme, and as a result the client had a new boiler and radiators installed. The frontline worker knew about the helpline and grant schemes prior to the Energy Best Deal session, but attending the session gave him more confidence in advising on these.

Warm Front and CERT

A frontline worker at a Citizens Advice Bureau had a client who was referred to her by a hospital. The client was elderly and unwell and needed the house to be as warm as possible, as well as needing advice on money management. The frontline worker gave the client information about switching to a cheaper tariff, helped the client to fill out forms for a Warm Front grant, and advised on free cavity wall insulation. The client switched suppliers and saved money, was given a Warm Front grant, and received cavity wall insulation (almost certainly through CERT).

Warm Front for a family with a disabled child

The frontline worker was an administrator at a Children's Centre. The client was a family who had debt management issues and also had a child with a disability. The frontline worker and colleagues looked in detail at the family's income and expenditure, including looking at utility bills. They advised the family to apply for a Warm Front grant and advised on switching supplier, as their current energy tariff was high. The family did not know they could apply for a Warm Front grant and were not familiar with switching websites. The result was that the family applied for the grant and switched energy supplier.

Energy bill credit discovered (1)

The frontline worker is a personal assistant for Mencap. Her client was an older lady who was confused about her energy bills and worried about the amount of money she was spending on bills. The frontline worker looked at her bill and found that it was quite high, so she went on to contact the energy company and found that because there had not been a meter reading for over a year, an estimated bill had been given and the estimated amount was too high. The frontline worker gave the energy company a meter reading, and it was found that the client was actually £200 in credit. As a result the client's bill was adjusted and she will not have to pay a bill for some time.

Energy bill credit discovered (2)

A Community Advice Worker had a client who was a single mother with a large family. The client came to her seeking advice on reducing her fuel bills. The frontline worker provided advice on different payment methods and how to switch supplier. She advised the client to contact her supplier about a lower tariff, and to give a monthly meter reading so she knew how much energy she was using. The client was not aware that she could give a meter reading online. The client saved around £100 per year, and also found out that she was in credit with her energy company, so her bills were much lower for several months while this credit was used up.

Moving meter and changing tariff

A tenant participation officer for a local authority had an elderly client who was unable to read her meter. The frontline worker advised the client to contact her energy supplier and ask them to move the meter. The meter was moved, and the client also switched payment method, which saved her money. Although the frontline worker did not mention the Priority Services Register (PSR), it is likely that the supplier put the client on their Priority Services Register, as moving a meter is a service provided to PSR customers.

Visiting tenants

A Resident Involvement Officer at a housing association said that as a result of the Energy Best Deal session, they had a 'Working Together' day in which the staff visited tenants in their homes and had a look at their bills to see if they were getting the best deal. The frontline worker gave the example of one tenant, a young woman with children, who needed help understanding her bills and was unsure about whether she was on the best deal for her. The frontline worker gave the client information about switching and methods of payment. The client thought (like many people) that if you are loyal to a supplier you will get a better deal. The client ended up switching supplier and saved money. The client is no longer worried about switching and will review her energy tariff more regularly.

Case studies: 2010/2011 interviewees

Frontline workers who attended Energy Best Deal sessions in 2010/2011 were also asked to describe a time that they had used information from the session to help clients.

Fuel debt

The client came to the advice agency as they were in fuel poverty and experiencing unmanageable bills that had pushed them into debt. The frontline worker used information from the Energy Best Deal session to talk the client through different payment options, different ways to reduce and control energy use at home and how to find a better deal in the future. The frontline worker learned that it is a common misconception that suppliers reward loyal customers with lower prices. He has come across many clients that believe this, including the client he helped in this case. He was able to inform the client about the savings that can be made by switching so that the client no longer stays on an expensive tariff in the belief that the supplier will reward loyalty.

Tariff error

The client came to the frontline worker as a result of high bills that seemed out of line with his relatively modest usage. The frontline worker established that the client's property was classed as a business as the records had not been updated following the change of use of the property from a business to a private dwelling. The client had been on a business tariff since he moved in without knowing it, although he was aware his bills seemed higher than they should have been. The frontline worker did not need to use any specific Energy Best Deal materials in this case as it was relatively simple, though time consuming, to resolve. The frontline worker made several calls to the supplier to get the tariff changed to a domestic rate. The frontline worker was surprised at how long it actually took to resolve the situation, and how much negotiating with the supplier was involved. In the end the case was resolved using the supplier's complaint procedure. The client was put on a domestic tariff and was given a refund of the extra money he had paid whilst mistakenly on a business tariff.

Disconnection

The client came to the frontline worker because they had run up a debt and had been disconnected. The client was given advice using the Energy Best Deal materials on reducing usage, getting out of fuel debt and getting the best deal in the future. The frontline worker mediated between the client and supplier to re-establish the energy supply. The client had no phone so had been unable to communicate with the supplier. The frontline worker made a total of three calls to the supplier before the situation was resolved. The client was then given advice on payment methods and energy efficiency so that they could stay on top of their bills in future and avoid disconnection. The client was very happy with the outcome as he now has gas and electricity for the first time in a long time. The frontline worker is continuing to work with the client to make sure he continues to stay on top of his bills. The frontline worker commented that he now knows much more about negotiating with fuel suppliers and will be able to resolve future cases faster, knowing what information to give, and to demand from, the supplier to minimise the time it takes to resolve these issues.

Prepayment meter issues

The client came to the advice centre as he felt his bills were quite high compared to his usage, and he was struggling to manage his bills. He had a prepayment meter and sometimes self-disconnected when he did not have the money available to top up. He was not aware that a weekly standing charge was still being applied even when he did not top up, so that when he did put money on the meter it was going down very fast to repay the arrears to the standing charge. The advisor explained this to him and used Energy Best Deal materials to help him understand prepayment meters and reduce his energy use. The frontline worker also negotiated a repayment plan with the supplier that was manageable for the client so that the client could break the pattern of self-disconnection followed by claw back of the standing charge. The frontline worker has developed a much better understanding of issues around prepayment meters, particularly standing charges, as a result of this case.

Summary and conclusions

Consumers: 2011/2012 sessions

Ninety-seven percent of consumers who attended the sessions said they found the session useful¹². Information about finding the best deal was considered useful by the highest number of respondents (65%), followed by information about how to switch energy supplier (50%) and information about dealing with energy suppliers (41%).

When asked immediately following the session, 76% of respondents said they probably or definitely would do something as a result of the session. Fifty percent of respondents said they would contact their own supplier while 36% said they would look at other companies' prices.

Telephone interviews with 153 consumers were conducted an average of three months after an interviewee had attended a session. In this time, 36% of interviewees had taken some kind of action to get a better deal on their energy bills; 21% had contacted their own supplier and 27% had looked at prices from other suppliers (19 people had done both). As a result, 31 people (20% of interviewees) found a better deal. Twenty-five of these people have already switched or started the process of switching to the better deal, with a further 4 intending to switch soon, making a total of 19% of interviewees who have moved to a better deal.

Interviewees were more likely to find a better deal from their current supplier than when comparing prices from other suppliers; 59% of enquiries to a current supplier led to a better deal, compared to 36% for comparing prices with other suppliers. Consumers preferred to stay with their current supplier if both the current supplier and other suppliers were offering them better deals.

Forty-six percent of interviewees had also taken at least one other action (that is, not directly related to getting a better tariff) since the session, with 25% taking more than one action and 13% taking three or more actions. The most common actions were contacting the supplier for advice (36 people, 24%), seeking advice on energy efficiency (25 people, 16%), and looking into getting free or discounted insulation (21 people, 14%).

In terms of actions specifically related to energy-efficiency, 46% of people had taken some kind of action. Nineteen people (12% of all interviewees) had installed, or were looking into installing, large scale measures such as cavity wall insulation.

Consumers were asked about the benefits they receive. The results indicate that at least 37% of interviewees meet criteria which would entitle them to free or heavily discounted energy efficiency measures under energy company schemes¹³.

Seventy percent of consumers interviewed had passed on information about the Energy Best Deal session to friends and family; the median number of people told was three each in an average of three months¹⁴.

¹² Of those who answered the question: 7% did not answer.

¹³ CERT, which is soon to finish, and ECO, about to start. For more information, see page 15.

Frontline workers: 2011/2012 sessions

Ninety-seven percent of frontline workers said they felt better informed as a result of the session, with 53% better informed 'to a great extent' and 44% better informed 'to some extent.'

Eighty-one percent of frontline workers said that the session had changed their opinion on the importance of fuel poverty to their clients. Following the session, thirty-two percent of frontline workers estimated that between 60% and 80% of their clients were experiencing, or were at risk of, fuel poverty. A further 30% estimated this figure to be 40%-60% of their clients.

Before the presentation, 51% of frontline workers had previously given advice on debt and money management and 28% had previously given advice on finding the best deal on energy costs. For the other topics covered in the presentation, previous advice-giving ranged between 31% and 39% of frontline workers. When asked if they now felt more confident on these topics, 79% said they were now more confident giving advice about switching supplier, and 79% said that they felt more confident advising on finding the best deal on energy costs. The lowest increase in confidence was around debt and money management, with 52% feeling more confident in this topic. Frontline workers were also asked if they felt less confident about any of the topics covered, and for each topic, 3% said they felt less confident. Reasons for feeling less confident tended to be around the frontline worker having a lack of confidence in their own knowledge and skills in this area, feeling that it was beyond their job remit, or feeling anxious about giving the wrong advice and costing clients money rather than saving it.

Follow-up interviews with 153 frontline workers found that 72% had advised on getting a better deal on energy supply since the session (compared to 28% of questionnaire respondents who had given advice on this topic before the session) and 67% had given advice on changing payment method since the session (compared to 36% of questionnaire respondents who had given advice on this topic before the session).

Frontline workers had passed on information on Energy Best Deal to a median of eight clients and a median of four colleagues.

Quality of the presentation and materials: 2011/2012 sessions

The 2011/2012 sessions were delivered by 176 different organisations and so there were at least 176 different trainers giving the presentation. Despite this potential for variation in quality, over half of consumers and frontline workers rated the presentation skills of the trainer as 'excellent'. The vast majority rated the presentation skills of the trainer as either excellent or good (96% for consumers and 95% for frontline workers).

In terms of the materials used during the session, 56% of frontline workers and consumers rated the materials as 'good', with 37% of both groups rating them as 'excellent'. Similar proportions were given for the materials provided to take away, with 53% of consumers and 54% of frontline workers rating them as 'good' and 40% of consumers and 41% of frontline workers rating them as 'excellent'.

¹⁴ This takes into account those consumers who did not pass the information on to anyone. Among only those who passed on information to at least one person, the median is 4.

Consumers: 2010/2011 sessions

Ten consumers who had attended the 2010/2011 sessions were contacted again as part of the current evaluation, to look at the ongoing impact of the session.

Two consumers had switched tariff or supplier when they were interviewed in 2010/2011. A year later, they were still happy with that decision and they found that they had saved money. One of these consumers had already looked for a cheaper deal to switch to as soon as the current fixed period ended, while the other consumer commented that she was happy with the tariff that she was on, although she said that she would perhaps check prices again in the future.

Five consumers had not switched supplier when they were interviewed in 2010/2011, but they had looked into getting a better deal. A year later, two of them had switched to a better deal with their current supplier, while a third had contacted his current supplier about other tariffs and found that his current tariff was the best. The two people who found a better deal with their current supplier had also checked prices from other suppliers, using a switching website.

Three consumers had not looked into getting a better deal following the session in 2010/2011. Of these, one had looked for a better deal since the last interview, by contacting her current supplier, who was able to offer her a better deal which she switched to. The two other consumers had not looked for a better deal in the year since they were last interviewed. They both commented that they are happy with the service from their current supplier and so do not wish to switch. The person who switched to a different tariff with the same supplier also commented that the good customer service of her current supplier was a factor in her decision.

Frontline workers: 2010/2011 sessions

While all of the interviewees remembered that they had attended an Energy Best Deal session, three interviewees could not remember it clearly. One of these people works regularly with energy issues and so could not remember the details of one of many training sessions attended, but did comment that the Energy Best Deal session helped to crystallise details of some things he already knew. The other two found they had not regularly used the Energy Best Deal information in their work. One of these people, despite not using the information frequently, had actually provided information from Energy Best Deal to *all* of her clients, as she supported a small number of people over a long period of time.

The things that frontline workers remembered most clearly from the session were: tips on saving energy; options for getting the best deal; the importance of shopping around; the number of deals available; which websites to use to compare prices; and price comparison and switching advice.

When asked what parts of the session had been particularly useful to them in their work, four people answered 'Information about finding a better deal on energy supply', one person said 'Information about changing payment method' (this person also said that information about finding a better deal was useful), and one person said 'Information about benefits and tax credits' and 'Information about debt and money management'.

Three people said the presentation gave them more confidence on issues that they were already advising on; one commented that the session changed their perspective on offering energy debt advice, and another commented that the session made her aware that there are many options, and

special deals for elderly or vulnerable people. The same three people also said that the presentation enabled them to help clients with issues they had not previously been able to advise on.

Five people had continued to use information from the Energy Best Deal session over the year since the session. Six people said they felt they would benefit from a refresher session on the same topics.

Summary

The impact of the Energy Best Deal sessions on consumers and frontline workers is tangible, with a large proportion of consumers going on to take action as a result of the session, and 20% of all interviewees identifying a better value tariff than their current one. Almost half had taken some kind of action to seek further advice on topics such as debt or benefits. Almost half of consumer interviewees also went on to take some kind of energy efficiency-related action, with 12% of consumer interviewees installing, or taking steps to install, larger measures such as cavity wall insulation.

A large majority of frontline workers changed their opinion on the importance of fuel poverty to their clients following the session, and subsequently increased the attention they gave to the Energy Best Deal topics when helping clients.

Long-term impact is difficult to measure in a small sample, but half of the 2010/2011 sample of frontline workers had continued to use Energy Best Deal information in the year since the session. The consumers who had taken action immediately after the 2010/2011 session were more likely to still be keeping an eye on prices a year later than those who had not taken action immediately after the session.

The presentation skills of the trainer, and the quality of Energy Best Deal materials, were very highly rated by both consumers and frontline workers.