



OFGEM CONSUMER FIRST PANEL
APPENDIX TO PSR REPORT

RESEARCH AND RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

This appendix to the Ofgem Panel PSR report includes the following key documents:

- Discussion guide
- Panel presentation
- Pen portraits
- Stimulus
- Recruitment questionnaire
- Achieved sample breakdown

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Ofgem Consumer First Panel
Workshop 1 – Priority Service Register
FINAL 290113
INTERNAL/CLIENT USE ONLY

The overall objectives for the PSR research are to understand:

- Can the PSR be improved to ensure relevant customers have access to it?
- Does the PSR provide the necessary range of support services for vulnerable customers, and if not how can it best do this?

The research questions that the workshops will seek to answer are:

Who	Citizens / energy consumers
Objective	The purpose of this research is to understand citizens/energy consumers’ broad expectations of the Priority Service Registers held by both suppliers and distribution companies.
Topics to cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer expectations of the energy industry when providing services for vulnerable customers. • Awareness of the PSR specifically. • What services should be provided and to whom? Who might need extra support from their supplier/DNO/GDN and why? • How consumers view the different roles of suppliers and distribution companies when providing Priority Services. • Exploration of the costs of such services, and which are considered priority services and why • Access to the PSR: how can companies best identify who is eligible? Should it be automatic or opt in? Role of sharing data, e.g. with other suppliers if you switch, or telling other utility companies (e.g. water companies) who is on the PSR. • How should such a service be labelled? How helpful or unhelpful is different branding of the PSR across companies? Would consistency across companies be helpful or not?

Timing	Exercises / activities	Comments
10 min	<u>Introduction:</u>	

<p>15 min</p> <p>35 min</p> <p>25 min</p> <p>15 min</p> <p>55 min</p> <p>20 min</p> <p>10 min</p>	<p><i>AIM: Introduce the Ofgem Consumer First Panel and how it will operate throughout the year.</i></p> <p><u>Section 1: Discussion of the energy market</u> <i>AIM: to understand Panellist perceptions and understanding of the current energy market.</i></p> <p><u>Section 2: Spontaneous views on helping vulnerable customers</u> <i>AIM: to understand spontaneous Panellist views of how the energy industry could help different types of customers</i></p> <p><u>Section 3: Background to the energy market and how energy companies provide extra support to certain customers</u> <i>AIM: to introduce Panellists to energy companies, to understand Panellist spontaneous views on how to ensure that extra support is provided to individuals who need it</i></p> <p><u>Break</u></p> <p><u>Section 4: Discussion on the different elements of PSR</u> <i>AIM: to understand views of the different elements of the services provided by energy companies and identify potential gaps or improvements.</i></p> <p><u>Section 5: Cost of ideal PSR system</u> <i>AIM: to understand whether Panellist suggestions for the ideal PSR or changes to the current PSR and what services are already required are seen as essential or simply ‘nice to have’ but not worth paying for.</i></p> <p><u>Section 6: Close</u> <i>AIM: to bring the Panel to a close and allow participants to comment on what they’ve discussed</i></p>	
<p>17.45-18.15</p>	<p><u>Arrival and Registration</u></p> <p><i>Note-takers to collect pre-task. They will have spares for those who did not do the task/forgot it, to ensure that we have collected accurate switching information for all Panellists.</i></p> <p>Pre-workshop poster activity <i>A number of themed posters will be arranged on the walls in the workshop venue and Panellists will be asked to write their thoughts on these posters. Moderators/note-takers keep an eye on what is being written on the posters and ask Panellists to explain/elaborate on anything that is unclear. Moderators draw points during ‘perceptions of the energy market’ discussion.</i></p> <p>Themes for posters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think is good about the energy market? • What do you think is bad about the energy market? • How could the energy market be improved? • What are the future issues in the energy market? • What have you seen/heard in the news about the energy market? 	<p><i>AIM: Introduce the Ofgem Consumer First Panel and</i></p>

<p>18.15-18.25 10 min</p>	<p><u>PLENARY Introduction</u></p> <p><i>Lead moderator to welcome, introduce the team and clients (as applicable), housekeeping.</i></p> <p><i>Introduction from Ipsos MORI chair to the Panel and how it will operate throughout the year. Explain that we will be talking primarily about ‘how best to help customers’ this evening, but everything that they have written on the posters on the walls will be written up in the report and fed back to Ofgem. Explain that change can take a while but that understanding consumer views is really important to Ofgem.</i></p> <p><i>Introduction from Ofgem in first Panel to energy industry, market, Ofgem and its role as regulator (as Panel Year 4 first round of workshops). In addition, 1 slide on how Ofgem uses findings from the Panel and Ofgem’s ongoing work for consumers, particularly around the RMR.</i></p>	<p><i>how it will operate throughout the year.</i></p>
<p>18.25-18.40 15 min</p>	<p><u>Section 1: Perceptions of the energy market</u></p> <p><u>TABLES</u></p> <p>Introductions around the table: First name, household composition, ever switched tariff/supplier</p> <p>Moderator note: prices bound to dominate. Be sure to probe other issues as much as possible, use walls of issues as prompts if necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think is good about the energy market? • What do you think is bad about the energy market? • Tell me a little bit about your personal experience of the energy market? <p><i>NOTE: Probe whether positive and negative views are being driven by attempts at engagement (e.g. good/bad switching experience)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could the energy market be improved? PROBE: Have you done anything to avoid price rises/get better services? Why? Why not? • What are the future issues in the energy market? How might changes to society impact on the energy market? PROBE: ageing population, working from home, energy efficiency <p><i>MODERATOR to explain that the issues discussed above will not be returned to and rest of the evening will be spent talking about how the energy industry can best help customers. Finding out your views about the wider energy market helps Ofgem (the independent regulator of the GB energy industry) work with energy companies to try to improve it, but also advise government where it needs to make changes.</i></p>	<p>MODERATOR NOTE:</p> <p><i>The function is to help Panellists start thinking about the energy market. Use as an opportunity for participants to raise issues with energy pricing, customer service etc, but remind them that this is not the focus of the workshop and we will not be discussing this for the rest of the evening</i></p>
<p>18.40-19.15 35 mins</p>	<p><u>Section 2: Spontaneous views on helping vulnerable customers</u></p> <p>10 MINS</p> <p>FLIPCHART RESPONSES</p> <p>Are you aware of anything that energy companies do to support different types of customer? What? For whom? Where did you see it? Did you take it up? Why/why not? Tell friends/family?</p> <p><i>PROBE for as many examples of non-financial help as possible</i></p> <p>Who do you think might need extra non-financial help from energy companies? Why?</p>	<p><i>AIM: to understand Panellist spontaneous views on customer entitlement</i></p>

	<p><i>IF ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY moderators can prompt Panellists to think about the elderly, those with health problems, those with disabilities, learning difficulties</i></p> <p><i>Are you aware of anything that companies do to support vulnerable customers? Probe who they think vulnerable customers might be and why?</i></p> <p>How does this compare to what other companies do? (e.g. water, mobile phone, banking)?</p> <p>SMALL GROUPS (10 MIN)</p> <p><i>Moderator hand-out note paper and pens. Break table into small groups of three, each group take two of the pen-portraits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pensionable age • Rural • Chronically sick • Learning difficulties • Sight, hearing impaired • Low income family with young children <p><i>Ask Panellists to brainstorm for 5 minute on:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whether and why/why not each of these types of consumer should get extra help from an energy company. • what help/services they think those type of people might need from an energy company and/or in relation to their gas and electricity use. <p><u>NB: Moderator to explain that we are not talking about help with affordable energy e.g. lower bills, special tariffs)</u></p> <p><i>Panellists to write ideas on post-its. Encourage groups to think of as many types of help/services as possible, even if they don't think that some are particularly important. If Panellists struggle then moderator to prompt them to think about</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meter readings • Safety • How suppliers communicate with them in a number of different circumstances • If they made a complaint • Switched supplier • Were contacted by a sales person • Reading paper or email communications • What happens if there is a power cut (planned or otherwise), <p>TABLES (15 MIN)</p> <p><i>Small groups present back to the table, moderator to flipchart all ideas for all types of consumer probing where appropriate. At this stage, remind Panellists that they should be keeping a note of what they think are the best ideas.</i></p> <p>THEN AS GROUP moderator explain Panellists have 3 votes</p>	<p><i>Expect respondents to come up with a mix of 'services' vs more principles-based ideas related to standards of conduct that could apply to everyone but particularly important for more vulnerable people (e.g. being treated sympathetically or with respect, queries being dealt with promptly etc). Record thoughts on both - for the services probe in detail on what would need to be different or additional for the vulnerable person in question.</i></p> <p><i>What is important</i></p>
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	<p>on the most important services energy companies should be supplying vulnerable customers. Moderator to probe on reasons on the least important services.</p> <p>PLENARY (5 MIN) Moderator to ask a Panellist from each table to present their top 3 services for vulnerable people and reasons for shortlisting back to the rest of the room.</p>	<p><i>is not just what remains but what Panellists chose to throw out at what stage, and why.</i></p>
<p>19.15-19.35 20 MINS</p>	<p><u>Section 3 Background to the energy industry and introduce PSR obligations</u></p> <p>TABLES (5 MINS)</p> <p><i>Panellists work in pairs and spend 5 min on short quiz</i> <i>Points to cover include</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Difference between suppliers and distribution companies</i> • <i>Explanation of gas and electricity distribution companies</i> • <i>Costs and how they are passed on to the consumer</i> <p>PLENARY (10 MINS) <i>LEAD MODERATOR to work through answers (using slides SLIDE 11 and 14 to illustrate Q4 and Q5). Explain why each is important (see quiz moderator version)</i></p> <p><i>Ofgem or lead moderator give short presentation (using slides 15-22) on PSR covering:</i></p> <p><i>PSR eligibility</i> <i>Accessibility (information, registering, password)</i> <i>Services (types of support and for whom)</i> <i>The different brand names for PSR across suppliers</i></p> <p><i>Moderator to explain why Ofgem is looking at PSRs and how findings will be used (i.e. part of Ofgem’s licensee review). Also mention another piece of research sits alongside i.e. research with vulnerable customers who are /aren’t eligible under the current criteria.</i></p> <p>TABLES (5 MINS) What immediately came to mind when the PSR was explained? Why?</p> <p>Did it make sense? What things really stood out?</p> <p>What did you think of the fact that different types of energy companies have to provide different services to different types of people?</p> <p>Have you heard of/been offered PSR services? Where did you hear that/get that information? E.g. supplier, distributor, online, word-of mouth.</p> <p>Did you take it up? Why/why not? Tell friends/family?</p> <p>How would you explain PSR to a friend or family member?</p> <p>How would you expect to hear about the PSR?</p>	<p><i>AIM: to introduce Panellists to energy compaines, to understand Panellist spontaneous views on how to ensure that extra support is provided to certain individuals</i></p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE:</p> <p><i>This section is crucial to ensure that participants are thinking about these issues when discussing the range of support provided by energy companies</i></p>
<p>19.35-</p>	<p><u>BREAK</u></p>	

19.50		
<p>19.50-20.45</p> <p>55 MIN</p>	<p><u>Section 4: Discussion on the different elements of PSR</u></p> <p>TABLES Eligibility and Services (40 MINS) <i>(25 MINS)</i> <i>Distribute stimulus on eligibility and services (PSR matrix with info on what each pen portrait plus other types of customer who fall under PSR criteria would be entitled to under current obligations). Remind them to think back to their views on eligibility and services from earlier in the session (refer to flipchart if necessary)</i></p> <p><i>In tables ask them to spend ten minutes reading the matrix and using traffic light stickers to highlight different elements they consider essential/nice-to-have/unnecessary. Ask them to start with the two people that they originally looked at before the break, but they must go through each one (8 in total) in the 10 minutes.</i></p> <p>15 MINS <i>Then as a group, work through the following questions (if they do not arise spontaneously), flipcharting answers for each bullet point</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this the level of service you would expect for these groups of consumers? <i>Moderator to go through each pen-portrait in turn.</i> • Does anything surprise you? What are the best features of PSR? What needs to be improved? <i>(FLIPCHART pros and cons of current system)</i> • Are the right people being helped by these services? <i>(PROBE around different eligibility rules for suppliers and DNO/GDNs, and specifically on eligibility for free gas checks)</i> • Are these the right services? What services did you expect but aren't available? What, if any, difference would that service make (and for whom)? <i>(PROBE separately around the appropriateness of the services that suppliers and gas and electricity distributors are obliged to provide) What, if anything, seems unnecessary or unhelpful?</i> <p>(10 MINS) <i>Other than the kinds of people mentioned here, who else should be eligible to receive these services? Are there other groups of people who might be vulnerable who require different or additional kinds of services? What services should they receive?</i></p> <p>PROBE AND FLIPCHART:</p> <p><i>Ten minutes not enough to elicit any meaningful responses on each of the 11 examples of potentially vulnerable customer (below). Examples grouped and rotated across six locations. In addition to examples below you must ensure Panellists discuss any groups they identified as vulnerable earlier in the discussion (Section 2)</i></p> <p><i>Southampton Group 1</i> <i>Dundee Group 2</i> <i>Morpeth Group 1</i> <i>Birmingham Group 2</i></p>	<p><i>AIM: to understand views of the different elements of the services provided by energy companies and identify gaps/improvements.</i></p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE:</p> <p><i>It's important at this stage of the workshop to revisit the other types of customers that the participants have also identified as vulnerable (i.e. not covered by the pen portraits) to find out what kind of support they think they should get</i></p>

Wrexham Group 1
London Group 2

Moderators to agree amongst themselves how grouped examples split between each table – suggest start at opposite ends of list and work through, doing as many as you can in the ten minutes

Group 1

1. Someone who struggles with English because it's not their first language
2. Someone with literacy/numeracy difficulties
3. Someone with a speech impairment
4. Someone who has recently suffered a bereavement or a relationship breakdown
5. Someone who is unemployed or who has been made redundant
6. Someone who lives with mental health problems (but isn't registered as having a disability)

Group 2

7. Someone with young children in rural area
8. Someone living in poor rented accommodation
9. Someone leaving care for the first time e.g. someone in their late teens now living alone who was previously in the care system
10. Full time carers
11. Lone parents

(5 MINS)

Moderator to encourage Panellists to come to a consensus and then add to flipchart the eligibility and service elements of 'ideal PSR system'.

Accessibility (15 MINS)

Distribute stimulus on current accessibility obligations and examples of supplier communications around the PSR. Break table into three small groups and ask them to spend ten minutes brainstorming:

- Process of getting on PSR
- The pros and cons of data sharing between suppliers, gas and electricity distributors, water companies and other utilities
- What would you call PSRs?
- How should companies communicate them to relevant consumers?

Panellists to write thoughts on post-its.

What immediately came to mind about the process of getting on PSR? Any improvements? What difference would that make? For whom?

Moderator note: customer must ask (or have a person ask on their behalf) to be added.

How would you feel about your energy supplier sharing your data

	<p>with other suppliers/your distribution companies to make sure the list has the right people on it? What about sharing details with other organisations? (e.g. public sector organisation, suppliers in other markets water/mobile/internet etc)</p> <p><i>If Panellists question data sharing</i></p> <p>How should suppliers/distributors work out which customers these are? Should it be down to the customer to inform their gas or electricity distributor of any special needs, or should the distributor proactively seek this information?</p> <p>How should customers be informed about PSR? (E.g. bill, annual statement, online, specific forms of communication etc.) <i>Probe on pros and cons of each channel, including how likely they are to read it, and levels of trust in each potential information supplier – would they trust it more/prefer to receive it from a third party or the energy company itself?</i></p> <p>Most suppliers brand their PSRs differently (distribute examples). Does this matter? Why? Should names be standardised? Why/Why not?</p> <p>Energy companies are obliged to remind their customers about the PSR once a year – is this often enough or too often? What might be better? Would this matter if names for the PSR were standardised? Why?</p> <p><i>Moderator to encourage tables to come to a consensus on these questions and flipchart the accessibility elements of an ‘ideal PSR system’.</i></p>	
<p>20.45-21.05</p> <p>20 MINS</p>	<p>Section 5: The cost of the ‘ideal’ PSR 20 MINS</p> <p>TABLES (10 MINS) <i>Moderators to remind participants that any increase in eligibility/number or services provided/advertising could cost money and thus affect their bills. PLEASE ENSURE THAT ALL PANELLISTS UNDERSTAND THIS POINT BEFORE MOVING ON. If Panellists argue that the government should fund explain that as this would be through tax they would still all be paying, and also that this is not an option for consideration tonight.</i></p> <p><i>INTRODUCE SLIDE 16 (handout). Explain that at one end of the spectrum is a PSR for which either more people are eligible than currently or more services are offered than currently (or both), which would most likely lead to higher bills. At the other end is a pared down version of the current system (i.e. fewer services, fewer people eligible, or both), where the costs of the PSR to customers would be less. Somewhere in the middle of the spectrum is the current system, where the costs of the PSR to customers would remain the same.</i></p> <p><i>Depending on what they have come up with, their ‘ideal’ PSR will be somewhere on this spectrum (probably towards the ‘higher bill’ end), but moderator to point out where it would sit on the spectrum.</i></p> <p><i>Each Panellist to mark preference and reasons separately on stimulus</i></p>	<p><i>AIM: to test whether the suggestions for improvement are seen as essential or simply ‘nice to have’ but not worth paying for</i></p>

	<p><i>then discuss cost trade-offs as a group and try to come to a consensus. Facilitator to look out for obvious examples of high cost vs low cost services so we can break the discussion down a bit to consider different elements of their ideal PSR.</i></p> <p><u>PLENARY (10 MINS)</u></p> <p>A Panellist from each group to feed back their key thoughts on accessibility, eligibility services and cost to the rest of the room.</p>	
<p>21.10-21.15</p>	<p><u>WIND DOWN</u></p> <p>Lead moderator explain findings from this round of workshops will help inform Ofgem’s decisions around ensuring services reflect the different needs of vulnerable customers.</p> <p>Thanks and reminder of the next workshops and between event contact from Ipsos MORI.</p> <p>Circulate evaluation questionnaire – what can we improve next time?</p>	<p><i>AIM: to bring the Panel to a close and allow participants to comment on what they’ve discussed</i></p>

PANEL PRESENTATION



WELCOME!

Ofgem Consumer First Panel – Session 1

Ipsos MORI
Social Research Institute



Welcome



Thank you for being a part of the **Ofgem
Consumer First Panel**

We look forward to working with you
over the rest of the year!

What is the Ofgem Consumer First Panel?



- It is 100 people (Panellists) from different background across GB taking part in a series of events to think about and discuss GB's energy issues
- Your membership of the Panel for the full year will help Ofgem to better understand the views of energy consumers in Great Britain
- We look forward to seeing you at each event and hearing what you have to say!



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During this year, you will...



- Participate in three or four interesting and engaging events throughout the course of the year
- Have your say on policies impacting on Great Britain's energy market
- Gain a better understanding of how the energy market works
- Hear what your fellow Panellists across Great Britain are saying
- Be paid for your time

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What will happen this evening?



- Discussions on
 - your thoughts about Great Britain's energy market
 - **how energy companies could help different people**
 - **your thoughts on the help that energy companies currently provide**

- We'll be doing this through...
 - presenting information
 - table discussions
 - quiz
 - group and pair work



Who is Ofgem?



- The **Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem)** is the independent economic regulator of Britain's gas and electricity industries

- Its principal duty is to **protect the interests of existing and future consumers**

- Ofgem is funded by the licensed companies it regulates. All licensees are obliged by law to pay an annual licence fee

- **Ofgem is independent of the companies it regulates and also of Government**

What does Ofgem do?



- Ofgem keeps an eye on energy companies to make sure they comply with their **rules (i.e. licence conditions)**
- If companies are found to be breaking the rules, Ofgem can take action
- For example, Ofgem can serve a **warning** to make sure that companies follow the rules
- It can also **fine** the energy companies – this can be up to 10 per cent of the energy company’s turnover

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Consumer representation



Citizens Advice consumer service is responsible for providing advice to consumers



Consumer Focus is the consumer advocate and deals with vulnerable customers



The **Energy Ombudsman** can investigate complaints that cannot be resolved by the companies themselves

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How does the Panel help Ofgem?



- Previous Consumer First Panels have helped Ofgem understand the **views of energy customers on:**
 - What energy suppliers should do to make the energy market simpler, clearer and fairer for all consumers
 - Priorities for the companies that deliver electricity to your home
- **Your input is important.** It helps Ofgem to ensure that the views of consumers (like you) are included in their policy making decisions. **Last year's Panellists told Ofgem about their views on:**
 - The need for fewer, easier to understand tariffs
 - Better ways to compare your tariff to make sure you can work out the best deal for you
 - Simpler information from your supplier

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**Help offered by
energy companies
for their customers**



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Help for energy customers



- Energy companies are obliged to offer extra help to their most vulnerable customers, through their **Priority Service Registers (PSRs)**. The scheme is **free to join** for customers and is available from **energy suppliers and distribution companies**.
- Domestic gas and electricity consumers **are eligible for extra support** if one or more of the following applies to them:
 - Of pensionable age
 - Have a disability
 - Have a hearing and/or visual impairment
 - Have long-term ill health
- In addition, there are some free services that people can get if they are receiving a means tested or income tested benefit e.g. income support

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Help for energy customers



- Some suppliers use different names for their PSRs

<p>Priority Service Register</p>	<p>Carefree</p>	<p>Careline</p>	<p>Warm Response</p>
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PSR services offered by suppliers



- **Bill nominee scheme** – if the person would like their bills or a copy of their bills, to be sent to a friend, relative, or carer’s address so the person can read and check their bill, the supplier will arrange this on request
- **Meter reading** – if the customer is unable to read their meter, their supplier can arrange for it to be read every quarter and bills sent to them based on these readings
- **Moving meters** – if it’s difficult for the person to reach or read their meter, their supplier may consider moving the meter to a more convenient position
- **Provide information** about any bill or service offered by the supplier, free of charge



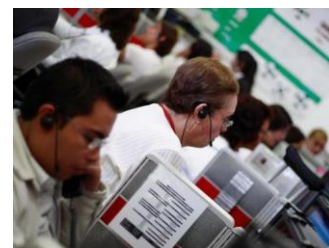
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PSR services offered by distribution companies



- **Advance notice if energy supply has to be interrupted** – if the person relies on energy to power vital medical equipment in their home, they can get advance notice if their supply has to be interrupted for planned work
- The distribution company will also **give advice** on what to do during a power cut and **confirm when power will come back on**



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PSR services offered by suppliers and distribution companies



- **Password protection scheme** – to make sure a person knows a caller is genuine, they can agree a unique password with their supplier and distribution company that will be used whenever their staff visit the person’s home or contact them by phone
- **Service for visually impaired, or hearing impaired consumers** – the person’s supplier and distribution company can provide consumer information, including meter reading and bills, in a format suited to that person
- They must also provide **suitable facilities** to allow customers to make a **complaint or enquiry**



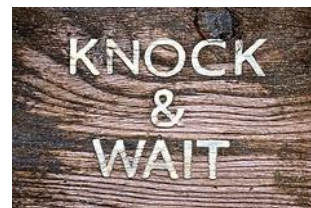
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Other help offered by energy suppliers



- **Free gas safety check** – a customer is entitled to a free annual safety check of gas appliance if meet eligibility criteria
- **Special controls and adaptors** – the supplier can provide and fit, free of charge. For example, easier to use plugs
- **‘Knock and wait’ service** for any home visit (a representative from an energy company will allow longer time than would be normal for a customer to get to and open their front door)



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Joining the priority service register



- At least once per year suppliers must inform all of their customers that PSR exists and what services offered
- Suppliers and distribution companies have their own PSRs
- To join the supplier's PSR the customer contacts (by phone, online or post) their supplier to request that they are added, or a **relative or carer** can also do this for them
- The supplier must then pass on the customer's details to the distribution company who should add them to their PSR
- The customer, **or a relative or carer**, can also contact their distribution company direct to request to be added to their PSR

Why your views on PSR are important



- Ofgem has to make sure that the needs of vulnerable customers are met by energy companies (i.e. licensees). Ofgem is currently conducting two pieces of research to make sure this happens
- The **Consumer First Panel** helps Ofgem understand from energy consumers (like you) what the public think PSRs should look like in the future
- Alongside this Ofgem is speaking with vulnerable consumers about what they think PSRs should look like in future
- The reports from the two pieces of research will help Ofgem make decisions about what support energy companies must provide to vulnerable customers as part of their licence obligations

PEN PORTRAITS

Pensionable age



- Angela is 75 and depends on her state pension to get by
- She lives alone in a flat that she has lived in for the last ten years
- Although her family live close-by and visit at least once a week, she doesn't like leaving the house and is wary about opening her door to strangers



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Rural



- George lives in a small village in the country, having retired early
- He is 55 years old and has mental health problems, although he is not registered as having a long term illness or condition
- His children live abroad and he doesn't have any neighbours that live close by
- He does not have mains gas and relies on oil for his heating
- Due to living in a remote area, their electricity supply can sometimes fail in bad weather and can take time for repairs to be made



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Chronically sick



- Sanjeed is 50
- He has an acute kidney condition
- While waiting for a kidney transplant
- Sanjeed spends several hours per day three times a week having dialysis treatment in his home
- This requires electricity to power the machine
- Because of his condition he is not very mobile
- His girlfriend Mandy is his main carer – she lives a few streets away



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Learning difficulties



- Bob has learning difficulties and finds reading and writing and understanding numbers difficult
- He lives in a city with family close by, but he is still responsible for paying his utility bills
- He sometimes gets confused by the information he receives from energy companies but is unsure how to get extra help
- Bob also struggles to get suppliers to understand his questions on the phone and understand their explanations to his queries



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Sight/hearing impaired



- Rita is 35
- She is blind and has problems with her hearing
- She lives as independently as possible
- She spends most of her time volunteering at a local charity
- When she's not working, she spends time with her friends and family
- Whilst she is responsible for her own welfare, she lives in rented sheltered accommodation with a warden who she can call using an emergency button



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Low income family with young children



- Nigel is married to Tanya and they recently became parents for the first time
- Unfortunately Nigel was made redundant last year and has been out of work for the last six months and claims Jobseeker's Allowance
- They have a mortgage on their home and are struggling to make the payments
- He has been actively looking for work, but hasn't been offered anything so far
- Although he receives benefits he and his family find it a real struggle to cope with less money coming in each month and rising food and energy costs



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STIMULUS

What companies do now...



	Supplier services under current PSR system			Other support offered by suppliers	Distribution company services under current PSR system	Supplier and distribution company under current PSR system		
	Bill nominee scheme – send bill to nominated person	Move meters to more convenient position (free of charge) Meter reading every quarter	Provide information about any bill or service offered by supplier	Annual free gas safety check	Prior notice of interruption Be kept informed when supply restored/available	Agree password with customer	Provide suitable facilities (e.g. braille/large print) to allow customers to make complaint or enquiry	At least once a year inform customers (in suitable format) that PSR exists and services offered
Pensionable age (Angela)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rural (George)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓
Chronically sick (Sanjeed)	✓	✓	✓	X (not on means tested benefit)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Learning difficulties (Bob)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓
Sight/hearing impaired (Rita)	✓	✓	✓	X (lives in rented accomm)	✓	✓	✓	✓ (e.g. braille / large print)
Low income family with young children (Nigel)	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	✓
Disabled	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Person whose first language is not English	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓



What companies do now...



- **Free gas safety checks** – a customer is entitled to a free annual safety check **as long as they meet additional eligibility criteria:**
 - where someone in the household is under five years old, or
 - are of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick and live alone or with others who are all of pensionable age, disabled, chronically sick or under 18.
- **The customer must also meet the following criteria:**
 - is not living in rented accommodation (in which case a landlord is responsible for arranging a gas safety check)
 - is in receipt of a means tested benefit
 - has asked for a gas safety check to be carried out (i.e. it is opt-in), and
 - has not had a gas safety check at the premises in the last 12 months.



The cost of the Priority Service Register



Bills **increase** at this end of the spectrum...

Bills **decrease** at this end of the spectrum...

The PSR changes, so that either **more people are eligible** for help from energy companies, or **more services are available** to those who are eligible, or both.

PSR remains broadly the same. The proportion of your bill that goes towards funding PSR requirements remains the same

The PSR changes, so that either **fewer people are eligible** for help from energy companies, or **fewer services are available** to those who are eligible, or both.

...where is the limit?

...what might be the consequences?



RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

**OFGEM CONSUMER FIRST PANEL RESEARCH
Recruitment Questionnaire FINAL
21.12.12**

Good morning/afternoon/evening, my name is from Ipsos MORI, the research organisation.

We are currently asking 100 people from different backgrounds across England, Scotland and Wales to take part in a series of events to think about and discuss ‘issues affecting energy consumers both now and in the future’. The research is being conducted on behalf of Ofgem, the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets, which is the independent regulator in Great Britain for the energy sector with a key aim of empowering and protecting consumers. The research will help Ofgem to better understand the views of energy consumers on a range of key issues and by taking part you will gain a better understanding of how the energy market works. Would you be willing to take part?

NB: Please check recruitment instruction for information on Wrexham workshop composition.

The research will be ongoing over the course of a year, and there will be a minimum of three evening events, these will be from 6.15pm – 9.15pm, in a central location (NB: London events will be from 6.30pm – 9.30pm). There may also be other research activities involved throughout the year.

To say thank you for your time and cover any expenses incurred we would like to offer £XX for attending the first event, £XX for the second, £XX for the third. (RECRUITER NOTE: THE INCENTIVE OFFERED REPRESENTS COMPENSATION FOR THEIR TIME, TRAVEL EXPENSES AND ANY CHILDCARE). Upon signing up to the research you are making a commitment that you will endeavour to attend all three workshops over the course of the year.

Before the first event, we would like you to complete a short task which should take no more than fifteen minutes. The purpose of this is to find out a bit more about who has supplied your gas and electricity in the past get you thinking about some of the issues we will be discussing.

We are looking for particular groups of people; therefore I would like to ask you some questions about yourself. All information collected will be anonymised.

ASK ALL

Q1

Would you be interested in taking part in this Panel (attending at least 3 discussions over the next 12 months)?

	Yes	1	CONTINUE
	No	2	CLOSE

ASK ALL

Q2

Can I ask if you are available on the date and time of the first event? (INSERT DATE AS APPROPRIATE)?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	CLOSE

ASK ALL

Q3 SHOWCARD A Do you or any members of your immediate family or close friends work in any of the following areas, either in a paid or unpaid capacity? Have you ever worked in ever worked in any of these areas?

READ OUT AND SINGLE CODE ONLY

Journalism/the media	1	THANK AND CLOSE
Market Research	2	
Elected politician (e.g. local councillor)	3	
Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)	4	
Ofgem	5	
A gas or electricity supplier	6	
A gas or electricity network company	7	
No, none of these	8	CONTINUE
Don't know	9	

ASK ALL

Q4 Have you participated in a group discussion for an opinion or market research company in the last 24 months, or are you on any kind of consumer panel?

Yes	1	THANK AND CLOSE
No	2	CONTINUE

ASK ALL

Q5 Are you mainly or jointly responsible for making decisions about the energy bills for your household? For example the method by which you pay, which supplier you use

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE

ASK ALL

Q6 Who is your current energy supplier?

READ OUT AND WRITE-IN ✓

	1. Both	2. Gas	3. Electricity
British Gas			
Scottish Power			
EDF			

Eon / Powergen			
NPower			
Scottish and Southern Energy (includes Southern Electric and SWALEC)			
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)			

RECRUIT TO QUOTA AND CONTINUE

ASK ALL

Q7 Do you live in an urban/suburban (e.g. in a city, town or surrounding suburban area), or rural area (e.g. in a village, hamlet or in the countryside)?

Urban/suburban 1
Rural 2 RECRUIT TO QUOTA

ASK ALL

Q8 Do you have and use mains gas (i.e. you're connected to the gas network)?

Yes 1
No 2 RECRUIT TO QUOTA

ASK ALL EXCLUDING ELECTRICITY ONLY (I.E.OFF GAS NETWORK) CUSTOMERS

Q9 How do you currently pay your gas bill?

SHOWCARD B SINGLE CODE ONLY

Direct Debit 1
Pre payment meter (PPM, or card or key meter) 2 RECRUIT TO QUOTA (NB SEE RECRUITMENT INSTRUCTION)
Quarterly payment on receipt of bill (payment on demand) 3
Other 4

ASK ALL

Q10 How do you currently pay your electricity bill?

SHOWCARD B SINGLE CODE ONLY

Direct Debit 1
Pre payment meter (PPM, or card or key meter) 2 RECRUIT TO QUOTA (NB SEE RECRUITMENT INSTRUCTION)
Quarterly payment on receipt of bill (payment on demand) 3
Other 4

ASK ALL

Q12 Do you have internet access at home or elsewhere?

- Yes at home 1
- Yes but not at home 2
- No 3 RECORD BUT NOT TO QUOTA

ASK ALL

Q13 What is your average cost of your yearly energy bill? (NB IF UNKNOWN PLEASE TAKE DETAILS FOR WEEKLY/ MONTHLY /QUARTERLY BILLS AND MULTIPLY TO CALCULATE APPROXIMATE ANNUAL AMOUNT, SEE OVERLEAF FOR GUIDANCE AND USE THIS WHEN CALCULATING FUEL POVERTY IN Q.14

WEEKLY AMOUNT £ _____ X 52 = YEARLY AMOUNT £ _____

MONTHLY AMOUNT £ _____ X 12 = YEARLY AMOUNT £ _____

QUARTERLY AMOUNT £ _____ X 4 = YEARLY AMOUNT £ _____

Q14. Which of the following bands does your household income fall into?

SHOWCARD C SINGLE CODE ONLY

Less than £10,000 per annum	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTA
£10,000 - £14,999 per annum	2	
£15,000 - £19,999 per annum	3	
£20,000 - £34,999 per annum	4	
£35,000 - £60,000	5	
More than £60,000	6	
Refused	7	GO TO Q.15

ASK IF CODES 1 TO 6 AT Q.14

CODE FUEL POVERTY FROM ABOVE (DO NOT ASK)

(NB IF 10% OR MORE OF ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME IS SPENT ON ENERGY COSTS THEN MARK AS FUEL POVERTY)

Fuel poverty

Yes	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTA
No	2	

ASK IF CODE 7 AT Q.14

Q15. Thinking about your annual household income, would you spend more or less than 10 per cent of your household income on energy costs?

More than 10%	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTA AND CONTINUE TO Q. 16
Less than 10%	2	

ASK

ALL

Q16 Which of the following best describes your household?

SHOWCARD D SINGLE CODE ONLY

Married /cohabiting with dependent children	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTA
Married cohabiting with no dependent children or no children	2	
Lone parent with dependent children	3	
Living alone	4	
Unrelated adults	5	
Not stated	6	CLOSE

Q17 Which of these best describes your current situation?

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE ONLY

Employed	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTA
Unemployed	2	
Retired	5	
Student	6	
Other	7	

Q18 Which of these best describes your current living situation? (NB: TENURE)

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE ONLY

I live in and own my own home (with or without a mortgage) (Owner occupied)	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTA
I rent from council/ housing authority/ other (Social rented)	2	
I rent from private landlord/ estate agency (Private rented)	3	
Other (e.g. living with parents)	4	

ASK ALL

Q18b Occupation of Chief Income Earner in your household

Position/rank/grade

Industry/type of company

Quals/degree/apprenticeship

Number of staff responsible for

PROBE FULLY CODE FROM ABOVE

Social grade

AB	1
C1	2
C2	3
D	4
E	5

RECRUIT TO QUOTA

CODE FOR ALL

Q19 Code sex (do not ask)

Male	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTA
Female	2	

ASK ALL

Q20 Write In & Code Exact Age

Exact Age

18-24	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTA
25-44	2	
45-64	3	
Above 65	4	

ASK ALL

Q.21

Do you have an illness (long term condition) or disability? By disability I mean a physical or sensory (e.g. partially sighted or hard of hearing) or some other impairment.

Yes (PLEASE WRITE IN)	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTA
No	2	

Q.22 ASK ALL. SHOWCARD E SINGLE CODE ONLY **To which one of the groups I read out do you consider you belong?** INTERVIEWER: PLEASE BE SURE TO WRITE IN ANY 'OTHER' INFORMATION FULLY AND CLEARLY. SINGLE CODE ONLY.

WHITE	A	BRITISH	1
	B	IRISH	2
	C	ANY OTHER WHITE BACKGROUND: WRITE IN:	3
MIXED	D	WHITE AND BLACK CARIBBEAN	4
	E	WHITE AND BLACK AFRICAN	5
	F	WHITE AND ASIAN	6

CHECK QUOTAS,
CONTINUE

	G	ANY OTHER MIXED BACKGROUND: WRITE IN:	7
ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITAIN	H	INDIAN	8
	I	PAKISTANI	9
	J	BANGLADESHI	10
	K	ANY OTHER ASIAN BACKGROUND: WRITE IN:	11
BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH	L	CARIBBEAN	12
	M	AFRICAN	13
	N	ANY OTHER BLACK BACKGROUND: WRITE IN:	14
CHINESE OR OTHER ETHNIC GROUP	O	CHINESE	15
	P	ANY OTHER BACKGROUND: WRITE IN:	16
		REFUSED	17

I'd now like to ask you a question about your attitude towards bills/statements that you might get from an electricity/telephone company

ASK ALL

Q23

Companies such as electricity/telephone companies are often criticised because their statements/bills are often confusing and unclear. How easy do you find it to read/understand your bills/statements? SHOWCARD F

Very easy	1	RECORD
Fairly easy	2	
Not very easy	3	
Not at all easy	4	

ASK ALL

Q24

This is true for a lot of people, and a lot of people also struggle with reading/writing and understanding figures. Does this apply to you?

No	1	RECORD
Yes, struggle with reading/writing	2	
Yes, struggle with figures	3	

ASK ONLY IF RECRUITING IN WREXHAM

Q25

Can you speak Welsh?

No	1	RECORD
Yes	2	CONTINUE TO Q26

Q26

Would you be happy to participate in a discussion group through English, in order to allow others who do not speak Welsh to participate?

Yes	1	RECORD
No	2	RECORD AND INFORM OFFICE IMMEDIATELY

ACHIEVED SAMPLE BREAKDOWN

Gender	Quota	Achieved
Male	60	62
Female	60	61
Total	120	123
Age		
18-24	21	18
25-44	40	44
45-64	36	42
65+	23	19
Total	120	123
Ethnicity		
White British	86	94
White Other	8	3
Black or Minority Ethnic	26	26
Total	120	123
SEG		
AB	32	25
C1	35	46
C2	25	25
DE	28	27
Total	120	123
Rural vs. Urban		
Urban	91	90
Rural	29	33
Total	120	123
Electricity Only		
Electricity Only	24	23
Electricity and gas	96	100
Total	120	123
Tenure		
Owner Occupied	66	59
Social Rented	28	31
Private Rented	26	33
Total	120	123
Fuel Poverty		
Yes	32	33
No	88	90

Total	120	123
Employment status		
Employed	73	79
Unemployed	8	11
Student	11	10
Retired	15	16
Other	13	7
Total	120	123
Long-term condition or disability		
Yes	27	29
No	93	94
Total	120	123
Payment type		
Prepayment	20	33
Quarterly payment on receipt of bill (standard credit)	35	26
Direct debit	65	64
Total	120	123
Family status		
Married / cohabitating with dependent children	26	27
Married / cohabitating with no dependent children	37	36
Lone parent with dependent children	10	17
Living alone	37	29
Unrelated adults	10	14
Total	120	123