



Communications Service

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Secretary for Communications

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Ref: hh

Mr Jonathan Blagrove,
Senior Manager Consumer Vulnerability Strategy,
OFGEM,
9, Millbank,
LONDON.
SW1P 3GE.

Dear Mr Blagrove,

Ofgem Consultation: Priority Services Register Review

Following publication of the Priority Services Register review, The Salvation Army welcomes proposals set out by Ofgem to improve and extend the provision of priority services by energy companies to its vulnerable consumers. In particular we commend the intention to place the burden of responsibility on energy companies to take all reasonable steps to identify those consumers in vulnerable circumstances who would benefit from priority services, and the broadening of eligibility in determining those circumstances. Furthermore, we are encouraged by moves towards a more flexible and principles-based approach to delivering priority services.

The Salvation Army is a Christian church and registered charity working in approximately 700 communities in the UK amongst some of the poorest in society. Our frontline services regularly receive requests for energy supply top-ups from vulnerable groups, despite this not being a service that we advertise. Whilst this is in the immediate-term often related to issues of affordability - particularly the comparatively higher pre-payment tariffs that many vulnerable consumers are faced with - it also raises, and is combined with, important issues connected to the addressing of priority services such as access and communication. Efforts, therefore, to tackle existing low take-up of priority services are to be warmly greeted.

Effective awareness-raising of priority services is rightly identified as key to improving outcomes for vulnerable consumers, and The Salvation Army would be glad to work with the energy companies and other third party groups in developing appropriate information and materials for the people that turn to us for help. Equally we would be keen to discuss solutions on how organisations like ours can raise concerns about individuals we come across not deemed vulnerable by the energy companies, or where we have concerns that not all reasonable steps have been taken to identify them as such.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of any assistance; I wish you every success going forward.

Yours sincerely,

Lieut-Colonel Melvin Fincham

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