

WPD

Social Obligations workshop report

Bristol: 25th February 2013



1. Contents

1.	Contents.....	2
2.	Introduction	4
2.1.	Date and location.....	4
2.2.	Attendees:.....	4
3.	Executive summary.....	6
3.1.	Feedback from participants	6
3.2.	Topics for discussion	6
3.3.	Summary of comments.....	6
4.	Introduction to vulnerability.....	8
4.1.	Q1. What is your experience of working on behalf of vulnerable customers and of working with WPD?	8
4.2.	Any other comments?.....	9
5.	Data	10
5.1.	Q2. What do you think of what WPD is proposing to do to improve its data?.....	10
5.2.	Q3. Do you agree that WPD needs a dedicated team to keep records as up to date as possible?.....	11
5.3.	Q4. Do you think it's reasonable that WPD will contact registered customers every two years to check their details?.....	12
5.4.	Q5. How could WPD work better to promote its Priority Service Register and identify vulnerable people?	12
5.5.	Q6. How could WPD work with other public service or voluntary agencies to share data on vulnerability, whilst adhering to data protection requirements?.....	14
5.6.	Q7. Is there anything else WPD should be doing?	15
5.7.	Any other comments?.....	15
6.	Power cut support.....	16
6.1.	Q8. What do you think of WPD's proposals with regard to power cut support?	16
6.2.	Q9. What type of support do you think WPD should offer?.....	16
6.3.	Q10. Do you agree that WPD should continue to target resources to provide information to vulnerable customers so that they can help themselves?.....	17
6.4.	Q11. How long is it acceptable for a vulnerable customer to be without power before we provide assistance?.....	17
6.5.	Q12. How else could WPD work with public service or voluntary agencies to make a difference to help vulnerable customers during a power cut?.....	18
6.6.	Q13. WPD is proposing to spend £500k on this each year across the regions. Is this about right or should we spend more or less?.....	19
6.7.	Any other comments?.....	19
7.	Fuel Poverty and Cold Homes.....	21
7.1.	Q14. Should WPD Contact Centre staff be trained to be able to identify vulnerable customers and refer them to sources of advice and assistance in relation to energy efficiency and debt advice?	21

7.2.	Q15. Which type of agencies should WPD make referrals to, to provide advice on fuel poverty and energy efficiency?.....	22
7.3.	Q16. How can WPD get involved in multi-agency partnerships tackling fuel poverty and social exclusion?	23
7.4.	Q17. How far should WPD go to help tackle these issues?	24
7.5.	Q18. We are proposing £500k each year across our regions on fuel poverty. Is this about right or should we spend more or less?.....	26
7.6.	Any other comments?.....	27
8.	Stakeholder feedback.....	29
8.1.	Q1. Did you find the workshop to be 'very useful'; 'useful'; or 'not useful'	29
8.2.	Q2. Was the venue conveniently located for you?	29
8.3.	Q3. Did we provide you with enough information at the workshop?.....	30
8.4.	Q4. Did you feel you had sufficient opportunity to express your views today?.....	30
8.5.	Written feedback.....	31

2. Introduction

2.1. Date and location

The future bill payer's workshop took place on 25th February 2013 at @Bristol (Science Centre), Anchor Road, Harbourside, Bristol, BS1 5DB

2.2. Attendees:

20 stakeholders attended the workshop. The details of all attendees are shown below:

- Clare Thomas - Head of Business Development, Groundwork Wales
- D C Jones - Priority Consumer Consultant
- Danielle Royce - Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Wales & West Utilities
- David Forbes - Compliance Research Officer, Good Energy Group PLC
- Denise Cox - Individual Empowerment Officer, Knightstone Housing
- Donna Poole - Money Advice Casework/Supervisor, South Bristol Advice Service
- Esther Tallent - Advice Centre Manager, Energy Saving Trust
- Jane Emanuel - Project Worker, Advice Network
- Julian Scott - Sustainability Manager, Yarlinton Housing Group
- Justin Sargent - Chief Executive, Somerset Community Foundation
- Kate Thomas - Home Energy Services Senior Project Manager, Centre for Sustainable Energy
- Kim Herivel - North Somerset District Council
- Lindsey Kearton - Policy Manager, Consumer Focus Wales
- Louise Croot - Environment and Climate Change Officer, Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)
- Natalie Rees - Secretariat Officer for Climate Change, Commission for Wales
- Paul Fitzgerald - SSEPD Performance Manager, Emergency Service Centre
- Simon Vicary - Non Energy Costs Manager, EDF Energy
- Susan Purnell - Customer Relations Manager/Fuel Poverty, SWALEC

- Ted Taziveyi - BME Support Co-ordinator, Terrence Higgins Trust
- William Baker - Head of Fuel Poverty Policy, Consumer Focus

Western Power Distribution

- Alison Sleightholm - Regulation and Government Affairs Manager
- Alex Wilkes - Stakeholder Engagement Regulatory & Government Affairs
- Natasha Richardson - Regulatory & Government Affairs Adviser

Green Issues Communiqué

- James Garland - Director (workshop facilitator)
- Emma Webster - Associate Director (workshop facilitator)
- Nick Osborne - Consultant (workshop facilitator)
- Emma Heesom – Consultant (scribe)
- Laura Edwards - Account Executive (scribe)
- Alex Coleman - Account Executive (scribe)

3. Executive summary

3.1. Feedback from participants

- All of the attendees found the workshop to be either 'very useful' or 'useful'. No one told us that the workshop was 'not useful'
- Everyone who attended the workshop told us that they felt they had sufficient opportunity to express their views

3.2. Topics for discussion

- Data
- Power cut support
- Fuel poverty and cold homes

3.3. Summary of comments

- It was noted that there are already a number of organisations, including local authorities, housing associations and energy suppliers who have their own data on vulnerable customers. It was widely felt that it would be beneficial if these organisations could share information. It was also commented that a single agency to manage this data would be a good thing
- Most stakeholders were of the view that updating data every two years was too long and that this information should be updated more regularly
- It was noted that certain people may not wish to be on the Priority Services Register, even if they are eligible. A number of stakeholders felt that by working in partnership with trusted organisations such as Age UK, WPD could better promote the PSR and ensure that those people who are eligible are included
- It was agreed that early contact to give reassurance to vulnerable customers in the event of a power cut was vitally important. It was also commented that for some people there is no substitute for a visit
- There was support for the distribution of crisis packs to vulnerable customers and a number of suggestions were made of other items which ought to be included. These included thermal clothing and thermos flasks
- There was a good deal of support for WPD working more effectively with trusted organisations who operate at a local level, particularly in rural areas

- There was no agreement on the length of time for which it is acceptable for vulnerable customers to be without power before assistance is given. It was noted that for very vulnerable customers an hour is too long
- Stakeholders did not feel they were in a position to comment on the exact amount of money that should be spent on power cut support. It was broadly agreed that the important thing was how the money is spent rather than how much money is allocated
- It was widely felt that fuel poverty is an issue that is growing in importance. All stakeholders were of the view that things would only get worse as energy prices increase and grants to organisations who provide support are cut
- There was broad agreement that WPD contact centre staff should be trained to identify vulnerable customers and refer them to sources of assistance in relation to energy efficiency and debt advice
- There were a number of suggestions of organisations that WPD should work with to help to address fuel poverty. It was, however, commented that WPD should not duplicate the work already being carried out by the 'big six' energy companies
- Not everyone was in agreement that it is WPD's responsibility to tackle issues relating to fuel poverty through outreach initiatives. It was commented that the role of WPD should be to identify those people who are having difficulties and refer them to bodies who specialise in providing assistance

4. Introduction to vulnerability

4.1. Q1. What is your experience of working on behalf of vulnerable customers and of working with WPD?

Table 1

- An advisory service representative said that s/he is also a county councillor. S/he is also a former Energy Watch employee who has worked with WPD for many years. In his / her role as county councillor, for the most deprived area in the county, more and more people are coming to him / her with energy concerns
- An advisory service representative stated that s/he was there to learn how his / her organisation *'can help WPD with their social obligations'*
- An energy representative employee commented that s/he was there to see how energy companies can help WPD with their plans
- A community association representative said that his / her organisation *'recent work has been with people who are off grid. So there has been no involvement with DNOs so far and I am keen to learn more'*
- An energy representative employee disclosed that s/he been looking at his / her company's strategy for social obligations and was *'looking forward to sharing views today'*
- An advisory service representative stated that his / her organisation gives grants to people in WPD' region

Table 2

- An advisory service representative *'had experience of working with WPD'*. His / her agency had received funding from WPD for energy monitors and accessed community funding

Table 3

- A council representative only had *'experience with working with vulnerable customers'* through his / her role of working in a local authority. S/he stated *'there is a set of vulnerability criteria which includes those who are over 60 on a low income or individuals who have a disability'*. S/he said s/he is *'trying to work with other organisations to identify all vulnerable customers'*. S/he stated *'it would be beneficial to have more awareness of other agencies'*. S/he went on to say *'WPD needs to broaden its definition of vulnerability so it ties in with other organisations and local authorities'*
- A council representative said WPD have worked with his / her council in the past which has *'resulted in others being aware of what WPD do and what they can offer'*. S/he was

of the view *'in order to move forward and for WPD to expand its plans it would be good for them to build on past actions and become more involved with other councils and organisations'*

- A community association representative stated s/he was *'not aware of WPD's existence and therefore had never worked with them'*. S/he felt *'older people have been missed out of the vulnerability criteria and so had people who suffer with cancer'*. Overall s/he was of the opinion *'individuals who are not permanently vulnerable are missed'*. S/he went on to comment *'in times of a power cut the supplier would be the first point of call and not WPD'*
- A council representative said *'there is low awareness of WPD'*
- A community association representative commented *'people need to become more aware of WPD's existence'*

4.2. Any other comments?

Table 1

- An advisory service representative said that *'every utility company has to hold a priority services register'*. Companies, such as WPD, have to provide *'a safety net service for the people on the register'*

Table 2

- An energy representative employee was the only delegate who knew of the priority service register
- An advisory service representative disagreed with the national definition of *'vulnerability'*, for example *'old'* is anyone over 60, irrespective of fragility or age-related illnesses. *'Frail'* is another level, not covered by the definition. S/he suggested that some of the 700,000 on the register could include over 60s who don't need support
- A housing association representative highlighted that *'mental health issues were not on the list'*
- An advisory service representative commented that *'a person could be living with Alzheimer's but may not flag as vulnerable. Someone with mental health issues may not disclose those readily or consider themselves as disabled'*
- An advisory service representative thought that *'a direct call or letter from WPD could confuse vulnerable people as they would never normally come into contact with WPD as a service provider'*
- An advisory service representative stated people may be concerned to know why or how they were *'on a list'*

5. Data

5.1. Q2. What do you think of what WPD is proposing to do to improve its data?

Table 1

- An energy representative employee said that it is *'not necessarily about more resources. It is about making every contact count. Every contact with customers should result in improving your data'*
- An advisory service representative queried *'how many people here today know of the PSR? How many people have an eligible relative, who isn't on it?'*

Table 2

- An energy representative employee thought the suggested two-year contact plan *'is a good proposal'*
- An energy representative employee strongly advised that they *'wouldn't write to people but would phone'*
- A housing association representative was concerned *about 'how the data could be improved but not get bogged down in permissions and data protection.'* S/he commented in his / her workplace *'a flag system for client needs such as oxygen use but was unsure about procedure to share this intelligence'*
- An advisory service representative requested that *'the internet and email should not be a first point of dissemination and contact with the vulnerable or those in fuel poverty'*

Table 3

- A community association representative was of the view *'social housing companies and councils are more aware of vulnerable customers than WPD'*. S/he would like to see *'WPD being more proactive as customers won't contact them or their energy suppliers and inform them of problems'*
- A council representative pointed out *'energy suppliers have their own register'*
- An advisory service representative suggested *'energy suppliers should have information on the back of the bill telling customers they have the option to join the register'*
- A community association representative disagreed, stating *'no one reads the bills'*
- An advisory service representative commented his / her company *'have a list of around seven thousand customers; there is an obligation for the energy supplier to have their own list'*. S/he said *'the creation of the list/register is not proactive and does not target'*

the right market'. S/he would like to see 'hospital visits being carried out so patients are informed and given the choice to join the register'. S/he stated 'at the moment it is simply a ticking box exercise being carried out'

5.2. Q3. Do you agree that WPD needs a dedicated team to keep records as up to date as possible?

Table 1

- An energy representative employee queried if WPD are going to go about contacting their customers, asking 'is this the most appropriate way of doing it?' *Surely it is better to fund one group and contact them once and not by multiple agencies'*

Table 2

- An energy representative employee commented that *'a dedicated team would bring consistent level of service and expertise'*
- A community association representative said in his / her experience *'a separate team would help identify the vulnerable'*
- An advisory service representative requested that *'WPD ensure proper integration between the specialist and the contact centre with KPI and data flows/same computer systems so no matter where a customer comes into contact with WPD their data is accurate and they get the correct support'*
- An energy representative employee was apprehensive that the contact team think *'this isn't my job, it's someone else's, meaning they are 'not on the ball' and don't give the right support*

Table 3

- A housing association representative commented in his / her company as a social landlord s/he deals with *'1,500 elderly residents who are over 60 and disabled'. S/he has 'a database of these customers and went on to question the accuracy of WPD's database of vulnerable customers'. S/he would like to add his / her clients to the database. S/he said 'WPD are unknown' and therefore his / her 'clients will ring the supplier or their social landlord'. S/he felt 'it would be good for WPD to visit social landlords so they can be connected to the other agencies and tell them who WPD are and what they do'*
- An energy representative employee pointed out s/he has his / her own register in his / her role as a supplier. S/he commented in terms of sharing data s/he is *'uneasy about handling information on customers such as medical details and that data protection is a problem'. S/he felt 'councils and those of the medical profession need to take more of a lead in identifying vulnerable customers'*
- A council representative stated *'the key is finding vulnerable customers'*
- All stakeholders agreed *'WPD should put together a dedicated team'*

5.3. Q4. Do you think it's reasonable that WPD will contact registered customers every two years to check their details?

Table 1

- All stakeholders agreed the register needs to be regularly checked and two years is too long

Table 2

- An advisory service representative commented that a two year target was *'ambitious'*; s/he was really interested in *'how WPD would cope as there were possibly 700,000 people to contact if there was a sustained and significant power failure'*
- An advisory service representative asked *'has the list had details such as a vulnerable person having oil or gas heating, thus knowing, level of need in detail'*
- An advisory service representative asked *'what moving supplier meant on data flow between suppliers and staying on the vulnerable list?'*

Table 3

- All stakeholders agreed two years to check the register is too long
- A housing association representative felt *'every six months would be better as people move and circumstances can quickly change, e.g. illnesses can occur quickly'*
- An energy representative employee questioned *'the extent in which a person is classed as being vulnerable'*. S/he felt *'those with a medical problem are highly vulnerable and should be contacted more regularly than those who are less vulnerable'*
- A council representative was of the view *'WPD should set up a unit to help those who leave home aged 16+'. S/he pointed out 'they may not be vulnerable in terms of being old or ill but they are vulnerable as they need to be educated as they are unaware of many things'*
- A council representative felt *'WPD need to take into account all groups and improve its definition of vulnerability'*
- An advisory service representative agreed and stated *'the definition of vulnerability should be taken in a wide context but also they should look at those who will become vulnerable if the power is turned off'*

5.4. Q5. How could WPD work better to promote its Priority Service Register and identify vulnerable people?

Table 1

- An advisory service representative stated that it's *'about trying to encourage people to be more open about it'*
- An energy representative employee agreed, *'there is currently an element of pride of people not wanting to go on the PRS'*
- An advisory service representative made the point that when s/he worked on *'the phones there was a rule that if they picked up someone was of pensionable age, they would send them a leaflet about the PRS'*

Table 2

- An advisory service representative stated that s/he *'identifies vulnerable people on a daily basis and refer to relevant agencies in the surrounding area'*
- An advisory service representative gave a current example of working in partnership with *'Advice Centres for Avon'*
- An advisory service representative commented that their agency currently notify the supplier and *'it would be helpful to raise awareness that it can be direct to WPD'*
- An advisory service representative said *'WPD should focus its efforts on regional specific charities and supported housing associations as they already have clear systems of working'*
- An advisory service representative commented that *'lots of national agencies give great top down buy-in but they either don't have local links or messages get lost in translation as they are not targeted to local needs'*
- An advisory service representative stated that *'Age UK would be good agency for WPD to engage, to succeed WPD needs a good national/local model'*

Table 3

- An energy representative employee pointed out *'a key problem is when a person is vulnerable but is reluctant to admit they need help'. S/he stated 'WPD need to ask probing questions to get to the issues and identify the situation'*
- A council representative agreed and stated *'no one volunteers the fact they are fuel poor and therefore it is a need to find them and staff should be trained to be aware of clues to identify the issue'*
- An advisory service representative commented *'people are good at coping with their situation as they learn how to adapt but they are still vulnerable'. S/he felt 'a person may not class themselves as being vulnerable if they have adapted to their circumstances'*

5.5. Q6. How could WPD work with other public service or voluntary agencies to share data on vulnerability, whilst adhering to data protection requirements?

Table 1

- An energy representative employee commented *'as an industry it would be useful to have one joined-up database'*
- An advisory service representative said that when s/he was involved with Energy Watch, it was trying to set up a system where you only have to sign up a customer to the PSR and then information is supplied across the other bodies
- An energy representative employee questioned whether WPD would be *'happy to share their information with a supplier? Is it appropriate? It does sound sensible'*
- An advisory service representative said that his / her organisation used a small local network to prevent the issue of vulnerable customers *'not trusting people'* when those people are asking for information. S/he added that *'a small local network can explain in detail and gain their trust'*
- An advisory service representative made the point that *'data protection laws do get in the way'*
- An advisory service representative said the local fire brigade contacted his / her council asking for their single occupancy stats so they knew that there was only one person in a property. However, there was an issue with data protection
- An advisory service representative asked *'what discussions have there been with the NHS to get information from them?'*
- An advisory service representative stated that when *'someone was discharged from hospital they used to be given a PSR leaflet from Consumer Focus. This did result in WPD fixing a problem with a power failure for a freshly discharged patient'*

Table 2

- A housing association representative said that s/he visits vulnerable people daily and said *'putting myself in their shoes, I'd ask: why do you want my information and what are you going to do with it? I wouldn't want my info sharing if it was for a torch and some hand warmers'*
- An advisory service representative commented that *'WPD would have to overcome a general issue around health disclosure. Housing association clients are very worried about information creep; same is true of those with mental health issues'*
- An advisory service representative said their clients would initially ask *'what are they going to do for me?'*

Table 3

- An advisory service representative pointed out that *'housing associations have monthly newsletters and WPD could publish some information and adverts'*

5.6. Q7. Is there anything else WPD should be doing?

Table 1

- An advisory service representative stated that WPD need to make sure *'that coverage is there and their information is up to date. A data cleansing exercise is required because we need to ensure help is where it's needed'*
- An energy representative was of the opinion that WPD's *'proposals are the right way to go for their business plan'*. However, the possibility of only having *'one database is something that should be looked into'*

Table 2

- An advisory service representative thought that *'a dedicated emergency number is a good idea'*
- Another advisory service representative agreed, stating *'if there is a large outage then you should rightly jump the system'*
- An advisory service representative asked *'how easy is it for a vulnerable person to contact you and get specific information?'*
- A community association representative commented that it isn't all about putting people on a register but giving all relevant agencies *'something like a sticker to put in the phonebook of people they already see in their day-to-day work; the sticker would say who to call if you need assistance in a power cut'*

Table 3

- A housing association representative was impressed with the WPD newsletter that had recently been sent out and *'found it to be very helpful'*

5.7. Any other comments?

Table 1

- A community association representative queried *'do people have to refer themselves or can someone else register someone on their behalf?'*

6. Power cut support

6.1. Q8. What do you think of WPD's proposals with regard to power cut support?

Table 1

- An energy representative employee asked *'how much does WPD think this will cost? Is it value for money if all consumers will be paying for it?'*
- WPD explained it is £500k every year over the eight year business plan
- An energy representative employee made the point that *'people may still have power and gas but maybe their phone line is down. Is there a PSR for phone customers?'*

Table 2

- An advisory service representative suggested *'WPD work with relevant agencies and regulators to reclassify the category of elderly as this is evolving'*

Table 3

- An advisory service representative pointed out *'those vulnerable customers on the agencies' register are contacted by volunteers in times of a power cut; this action goes a long way'. S/he commented 'the types of dialogue from call centre is key'*
- A council representative asked *'in times of a large-scale power cut is there more contact being made with local authorities?'*
- An advisory service representative highlighted that mental health was a category that was particularly difficult to record

6.2. Q9. What type of support do you think WPD should offer?

Table 1

- An advisory service representative commented that the advantage of WPD phoning is that *'they are in a position to know if it is an energy problem'*
- An advisory service representative stated that there is *'no substitute for sending someone round'*

Table 2

- There was broad consensus around the table that the role of WPD should be to direct people and provide assistance, whilst working alongside organisation who provide care for vulnerable customers

Table 3

- A housing association representative commented *'contact should be made to reassure customers and give them information as to what is happening and the expected duration of the power cut'*
- A council representative agreed and stated *'regular contact is key'*
- An advisory service representative pointed out *'those customers who only have electricity and no gas will have a harder experience than those who have gas as well'. S/he asked 'are these customers identified as being vulnerable in times of a power cut?'*
- A community association representative agreed and said *'those with no gas are more vulnerable than those with'*
- An advisory service representative stated *'in Wales and the west country there is a list of those who are on the gas grid and those who are not'*
- A housing association representative asked *'what is the difference between Wales & West and WPD?'*
- A council representative commented *'having access to the list of those who do not have a gas supply is worth having'* as his / her council have funding for those *'to connect to gas'*

6.3. **Q10. Do you agree that WPD should continue to target resources to provide information to vulnerable customers so that they can help themselves?**

Table 1

- All stakeholders stated *'yes, crisis packs should be widely available'*

Table 2

- There was agreement that WPD should target resources to local networks and not rely on a vulnerable person to *'self-refer'*

Table 3

- A council representative stated *'a crisis pack should contain winter warmth bags with thermal gloves, a hat, socks and thermos flasks as well as boxes of cuppa soup, a fleecy blanket and hot water'. S/he felt 'the key issue is that in times of a power cut the heating is off and people do not want to be in a cold home'*

6.4. **Q11. How long is it acceptable for a vulnerable customer to be without power before we provide assistance?**

Table 1

A council representative was of the opinion *'an hour or more is too long'*

Table 2

- An advisory service representative said *'WPD should consider if an outage starts at 4pm on a winter afternoon as this has different implications to 9am on a summer's day; four hours would be fine in the latter case'*. S/he went on to say *'WPD should consider that calling the elderly or disabled after 8pm may cause stress'*

Table 3

- A council representative said *'it depends on where they are'*
- A housing association representative answered *'one hour'*
- An advisory service representative disagreed and felt *'an hour is too ambitious'*. S/he stated that *'the most vulnerable customers should be contacted first'*

6.5. Q12. How else could WPD work with public service or voluntary agencies to make a difference to help vulnerable customers during a power cut?

Table 1

- An advisory service representative said that it *'used to be that if someone was vulnerable, either the Red Cross or WRVS would assist them'*
- An energy representative stated that it should be a *'multi-agency approach as each case is different'*
- An energy representative made a suggestion that *'WPD could hold a contact for someone that could pop round during a power cut. This could be a neighbour or relatives and could get to them sooner than WPD ever could'*
- An advisory service representative queried whether or not *'the Red Cross and WRVS have enough coverage? Is there a Red Cross or WRVS in the remote parts of Exmoor for example?'*
- An advisory service representative said that there are too many agencies and *'WPD should work with as few as possible to make it easier'*
- A community association representative admitted that patchy coverage does inhibit his / her organisation from helping
- An advisory service representative commented that there *'needs to be more working together between all the agencies'*

Table 2

- An advisory service representative highlighted that lots of people have forgotten or not experienced long term power cuts. S/he said *'clocks, TV, alarms etc restart and that is what the vulnerable are affected by more than a ten minute power cut'*

- An advisory service representative commended WPD on work with the *'two national agencies it currently works with'*

Table 3

- A council representative pointed out that *'in rural areas, parish councils could be a point of contact for WPD'*. S/he then said *'the parish council could then send out all the information to local residents'*
- An energy representative employee was of the opinion *'a customer being contacted via text or just phone was sufficient'*
- A housing association representative pointed out in times of a power cut his / her organisation visit customers in social housing. S/he suggested it would be beneficial if his / her organisation *'received a phone call from WPD giving them information so they can pass this on to tenants'*
- An advisory service representative said a *'text option could work well and pointed out lots of elderly residents have a mobile phone'*

6.6. Q13. WPD is proposing to spend £500k on this each year across the regions. Is this about right or should we spend more or less?

Table 1

- An energy representative employee made the point that money is not the real issue: *"The real issue is how the money is being spent"*

Table 2

- An advisory service representative said that *'we are looking at it from the wrong end. It's not what we are putting in, but what are we getting out? What are the changes that are going to happen? The thing to do is look back in 12 months time and see what improvements have been made. Was it worth that £500k? Set up some criteria to measure success. If we are doing much better than expected, money can be cut back'*

Table 3

- An energy representative stated that s/he was *'not quibbling about the money at all'*. However, s/he *'would like to see in the business plan an emphasis on working with partners. I do not want to hear that all this hard work is not shared with partners to drive something better for the future'*

6.7. Any other comments?

Table 1

- An energy representative said that *'in an ideal world, WPD would do things differently but with what you've got at the moment this work seems appropriate'*

- An advisory service representative said s/he used to do outreach with *'pretty polo shirts with Energy Watch on it'*. S/he stated *'people used to stay away from them as they thought we were selling something. When they added the words watchdog to the polo shirt, people flocked to them'*
- An advisory service representative said that this is *'crying out for some kind of pilot of bringing all the arms to crack it in a small area'* and that there are *'surely efficiency savings to be made by pouring the money in to one register'*
- An advisory service representative stated that s/he had *'been trying for years to get access to Southern Electric's register through my council. A lot of silo thinking that needs to be broken down'*

7. Fuel Poverty and Cold Homes

7.1. Q14. Should WPD Contact Centre staff be trained to be able to identify vulnerable customers and refer them to sources of advice and assistance in relation to energy efficiency and debt advice?

Table 1

- An advisory service representative said that s/he has a tremendous feeling of *'déjà vu as this is what WPD were doing with Energy Watch ten years ago'*
- An advisory service representative stated that *'the key is to be proactive, not ask them to contact you, contact them. Push yourself on to them. Tell them that you are there'*
- An energy representative commented that it is *'right that staff be taught how to pick up on the tell-tale signs. They can then flag the issue to the supplier'. S/he went on to say that suppliers 'need to know earlier before they get in to trouble. They may just be on the wrong tariff, and the supplier can move them on to a more suitable one'*
- An advisory service representative made the point that *'there is help out there and WPD needs to be able to pass their concerns on'*
- An advisory service representative was of the view that *'if someone is in trouble they will talk. It's about being able to pick up on this'*
- An energy representative employee stated that *'there is often a feeling of helplessness and the consumer is often not forthcoming with the information'*
- An advisory service representative commented that *'the help is there, it's getting it that is the problem'*
- An advisory service representative was of the opinion that *'advice on energy efficiency is patchy'*
- Another advisory service representative responded, saying that his / her organisation did *'train some agencies up to pick up on the warning signs, but they did not know what to do once they had spotted them'*
- An energy representative declared that the *'big hurdle is getting people to act and act early'*

Table 2

- An advisory service representative said that WPD should put people in defined teams to build expertise but should *'ensure that team is not a silo and ensure knowledge and skills are shared with contact centres'*

- An advisory service representative also suggested *'all engineers and staff out in the field should know how to identify someone so they can ask if a customer would like to be referred to a local agency'*

Table 3

- A housing association representative said *'debt is a big issue and will carry on getting worse, especially as the prices are continuing to increase'*
- A council representative agreed and stated *'prices are going up and help and solutions are decreasing as the amount of grants are in decline'. S/he felt 'the country has gone back to where we were ten years ago in relation to energy'*
- A council representative answered 'yes' in answer to the question
- A housing association representative said *'yes to referrals'*
- An advisory service representative also said 'yes'
- An advisory service representative commented *'WPD should not duplicate existing schemes but instead should create a different scheme that fits in and links current schemes'*
- An advisory service representative asked *'who do WPD refer vulnerable customers to? Is it one agency?'*
- A community association representative was of the opinion *'that even after a customer has taken all the money advice they can the main problem is they only have so much money'. S/he stated 'energy companies need to reduce their prices'*
- An advisory service representative stated *'what can help customers is being energy efficient'. S/he asked 'if it was worth WPD spending money on telling the customer how to be energy efficient? Should some of the money be spent on that?'*
- An advisory service representative asked *'in terms of data do WPD know about people's energy use?'*
- An advisory service representative pointed out *'across the UK, the Government has shut down funding schemes'. S/he went onto point out that 'new schemes include eco offers and the green deal'. S/he added, the 'Energy Saving Trust have an obligation to meet customers and advise them'*
- An advisory service representative commented *'there are still local agencies in force who can do home visits and community outreach. S/he would like 'to see WPD having a centralised one-stop shop for referrals'*

7.2. Q15. Which type of agencies should WPD make referrals to, to provide advice on fuel poverty and energy efficiency?

Table 1

- An advisory service representative said that *'EDF sponsor BDAC (Bristol Deaf Advice Centre) and this is a good move'*

Table 2

- An advisory service representative suggested that *'WPD should refer people to local agencies who are already familiar in people's locality'*
- An advisory service representative commented that *'in Bristol once you get into local links, the various agencies cross-refer and they do this to a very high standard'*
- An advisory service representative said that *'WPD needs a single or main link in the local area, as there are established networks'*

Table 3

- An advisory service representative said *'there are a number of organisations already out there'*
- A housing association representative commented s/he *'would not like to see WPD duplicating what the big six do'. S/he stated 'instead they should help to address the problems through working with agencies'*
- An advisory service representative was of the view that *'the supply and demand market is changing which means bills will go up'. S/he was of the opinion 'fuel poverty is a social obligation which needs to be addressed'*

7.3. Q16. How can WPD get involved in multi-agency partnerships tackling fuel poverty and social exclusion?

Table 1

- A community association representative stated that working with front-line workers from carer groups has been helpful to his / her organisation. S/he added *'training them up to let people know about the options would help'*
- An advisory service representative was of the opinion that *'the route to these people is through the people they already trust'. S/he suggested clubs, churches and children's groups as examples*
- An advisory service representative agreed, saying that there has been *'a lot of work in Birmingham with mosques. If the Imam says that this a good guy, then they will listen'*

Table 2

- A housing association representative suggested that *'one agency/charity could train a number of different partners' staff and supply kit, such as emergency packs and fliers for dissemination locally'*
- An advisory service representative highlighted *'a possible link for WPD with Department of Health and events that already happen'*

- An advisory service representative commented that, *'unfortunately, some areas do not have the links and clear lines of who does what that South West does'*
- An advisory service representative suggested that WPD works with agencies that already train volunteers who meet the vulnerable face-to-face and give associated training budgets
- A housing association representative said *'a fund could work for small charities to access, such as a crisis fund alongside the partner approach shown as an example of WPD's current work (Derbyshire)'*
- An advisory service representative highlighted that *'there are direct agencies such as energy companies that already fund projects such as the one in Derbyshire, but what works in Derbyshire may not work in Wales as every area is different'*
- An advisory service representative said that *'some areas will already have some initiatives WPD might want to roll-out so check what is on the ground locally to avoid duplication'*
- An advisory service representative commented that volunteers can be transient; they often opt-in *'for something to do and out when something else comes along'*. Investment in two full-time people may be less of a financial investment than *'in 16 volunteers to go through City and Guilds'*
- An advisory service representative said that *'what we really need is the funding behind the project - for the person to plan, roll out and engage people to use the smaller pots of funding and volunteers or things smaller charities who will want to give food or duvets etc'*

Table 3

- An advisory service representative was of the view *'there are too many different groups and offers available and WPD need a simple solution such as a matrix to guide and advise customers'*
- An advisory service representative felt that *'WPD should actively refer customers rather than signpost them'*

7.4. Q17. How far should WPD go to help tackle these issues?

Table 1

- An advisory service representative was of the view that it is *'important to have integrated advice and support'*
- An energy representative stated that WPD's role should be identification and referral. However, its proposed *'outreach initiatives go a step beyond and perhaps other agencies are better placed to do them'*
- An advisory service representative said *'surely the question is 'do Ofgem see this as a worthwhile thing doing? WPD need to put this to Ofgem'*

- An energy representative employee agreed, saying *'what is Ofgem's view? Are they just pushing this issue in all directions and hoping it will get done?'*
- An advisory service representative commented that if WPD *'see it as a good thing, they should do it'*
- An advisory service representative remarked that it is a *'case of going back to Ofgem and asking them as the policy maker to say if it's the right thing to do'*
- An energy representative said that is the same as the debate over whether or not suppliers should give customers carbon monoxide detectors. *'Yes it's a good thing to give everyone one, but it's not good as part of a business plan'*
- An energy representative employee suggested that *'supporting outreach may be a good idea, but you're better off using other groups for this'*
- An advisory service representative declared that it *'makes no sense now for WPD to set up its own outreach programme'*
- An energy representative agreed that doing these things is a good idea. S/he just queried as to whether WPD is the best organisation to do this
- An energy representative employee stated that *'vulnerable customers are worthwhile spending money on to help. There is potentially a big overlap with other agencies with regard to outreach though'*

Table 2

- An advisory service representative asked WPD to look at employing people or volunteers as it *'can be more cost-effective to fund agencies to have employees rather than manage and train volunteers'*
- An energy representative employee was of the opinion that it is *'about bespoke solutions to vulnerable communities'*
- An advisory service representative responded, saying that *'more of a house-by-house solution is probably required'*

Table 3

- An advisory service representative was of the view *'that more money needs to be put into schemes'*
- A council representative asked *'are big energy companies providing energy efficiency information?'* S/he felt *'energy companies are not proactive and do not go out into local communities'*
- A housing association representative stated s/he *'would like to see WPD investing in small specific projects'*

- A community association representative pointed out *'for a customer, gas and electric payments are their last priority'*. S/he commented *'people cannot afford to pay for energy and I have to put people forward for help with energy payments'*
- A community association representative said *'grants are needed rather than energy efficiency schemes'*. S/he commented on *'the escalation of debts and therefore people need grants to control them'*
- A housing association representative was of the view that *'welfare reforms will have a big impact and fuel poverty will go up'*
- A housing association representative commented *'WPD can do a lot to avoid fuel poverty'*. S/he felt *'WPD should contact those in need and refer them to get help and to the fuel provider and landlord'*
- An advisory service representative said *'WPD need to think what the most effective way to help customers would be'*

7.5. Q18. We are proposing £500k each year across our regions on fuel poverty. Is this about right or should we spend more or less?

Table 1

- An advisory service representative made the point that *'in terms of controlling cost, there is already a lot of pressure on people's bill. If spending more increases bills, therefore bringing more into fuel poverty, it's a real catch 22'*

Table 2

- An advisory service representative thought *'£500k is a relatively small amount of money in reality. It is relatively easy to access money for the elderly. What is very difficult is to access support for families and disabled working-age'*
- An advisory service representative said that working with *'the old and frail seems to tick shareholder boxes'*
- An advisory service representative stated that if it is *'heating or eating, will people self-refer? That level of indebtedness means people are not in control, there is a fear and issues are hidden'*
- An advisory service representative said *'there are people who do pay their bills but maybe are not eating or only heating to 12 degrees, but won't show up on any system'*
- An advisory service representative commented that in some areas in Wales they only have oil heating so the customer *'won't know they are officially in fuel poverty'*. *10% of income is spent on fuel but they are not in debt, they just don't use their heating and use one electric heater in one room'*
- An advisory service representative stated that WPD's messaging needs to be tailored; *'Elderly - turn it up. Families - how to save on your bills'*

- A housing association representative added that Bristol has large Somali and Polish communities so their needs are different; again they need to know *'how stuff works and how to cope with British winters or what condensation is'*
- An advisory service representative said that right now we are in a *'perfect storm as benefits go down, rent and bills go up and advice support is being cut. People are shoplifting to eat. Support agencies are at breaking point'*
- An advisory service representative confirmed that *'most grants are three-year cycles and these include grants from the Lottery and Comic Relief'*
- A housing association representative commented that s/he feels there is often *'a lot of pressure on funded agencies to provide a disproportionate amount of data back to the funding partner'*

Table 3

- An advisory service representative asked *'is the 500k WPD's money or the customers?'*
- An advisory service representative stated *'in Scotland and Wales it would be easy to answer the question as there are more national schemes in place'. S/he compared this to England and commented 'there are none and therefore it is difficult to answer the question'*
- A housing association representative said *'providing a service to go out and help others is not great idea as it is duplicating other organisations' work'. S/he felt it would be 'more beneficial to sign post and refer customers in order to avoid over-shadowing or be overshadowed by the green deal'*
- An advisory service representative agreed and stated *'WPD should link in with existing services'*

7.6. Any other comments?

Table 1

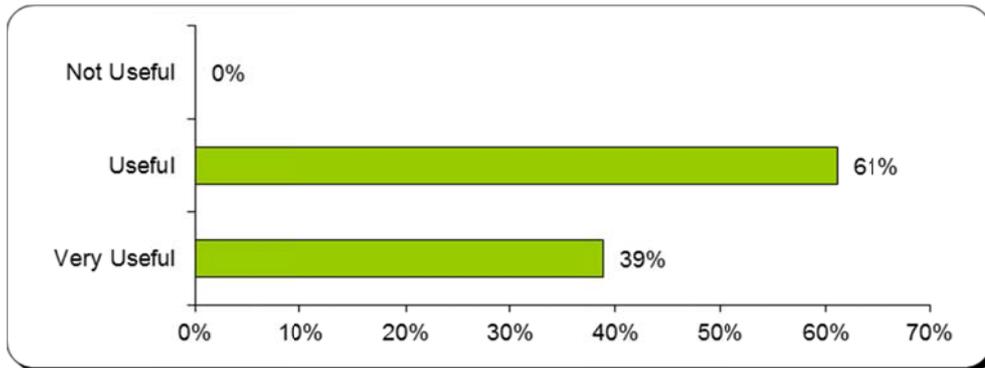
- An advisory service representative stated that s/he would suggest saying *'I will get someone who knows about these things to talk to you rather than saying the advice service will talk to you'*
- An advisory service representative made the point that *'not everyone in fuel poverty will also be in debt. Older people for example do not like being in debt'*
- An advisory service representative said *'1 in 3 households in Wales is currently in fuel poverty'*
- An advisory service representative stated that *'people are often living on the edge. Just making ends meet. The problems happen when the edge is moved'*
- An advisory service representative said the *'best thing the Government could do is lower green taxes'*

- An advisory service representative stated that *'there is a link between those who are most vulnerable to power cuts and those who are most vulnerable to fuel poverty. It might be a good idea to focus WPD's efforts on this issue'*

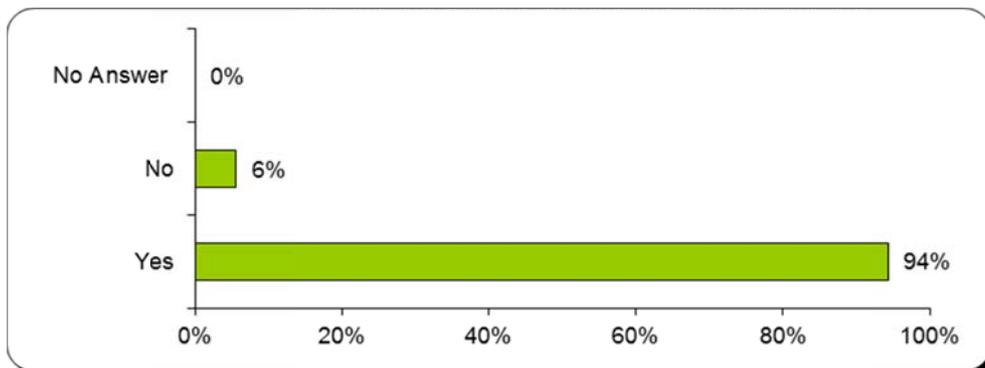
- An advisory service representative commented that during the presentation his overriding thought was *'what has an organisation that has no contact with customers got to do with this issue?'*

8. Stakeholder feedback

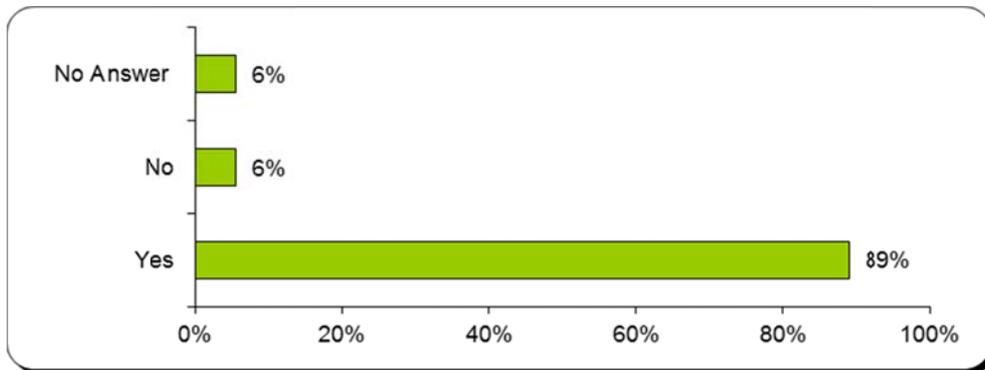
8.1. Q1. Did you find the workshop to be 'very useful'; 'useful'; or 'not useful'



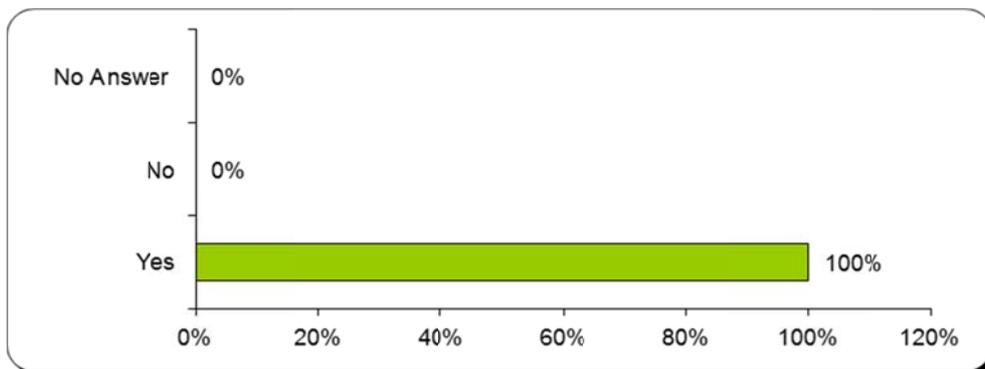
8.2. Q2. Was the venue conveniently located for you?



8.3. Q3. Did we provide you with enough information at the workshop?



8.4. Q4. Did you feel you had sufficient opportunity to express your views today?



8.5. Written feedback

A number of stakeholders left written comments on their feedback forms. A selection of these comments is shown below:

- *'Round table discussion was very good opportunity to discuss views'*
- *'Information was very clear'*
- *'I would have preferred a bit more background material before the event as a new stakeholder for WPD'*
- *'Unaware of WPD before this event-I have learnt more about the role of DNO's'*
- *'Excellent facilitation'*
- *'Good to focus on specific area with stakeholders who share an interest in the subject. Enabled group to get into the detail'*
- *'It raised my awareness of WPD, what it does and its social responsibility'*
- *'Productive discussions. Enjoyed hearing from representatives of different organisations'*
- *'Good to know WPD-have these plans in mind. They can only benefit consumers who are potentially vulnerable'*
- *'Would have been nice to see the full Business Plan just to understand WPD's wider direction'*
- *'I'm sure Local Authorities would be very keen to work with WPD to help identify vulnerable groups and support/develop local projects'*
- *'Well facilitated and a calm open forum for discussion'*