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Laura Nell
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11 May 2007

Dear Laura

Customer Service Reward Scheme 2007

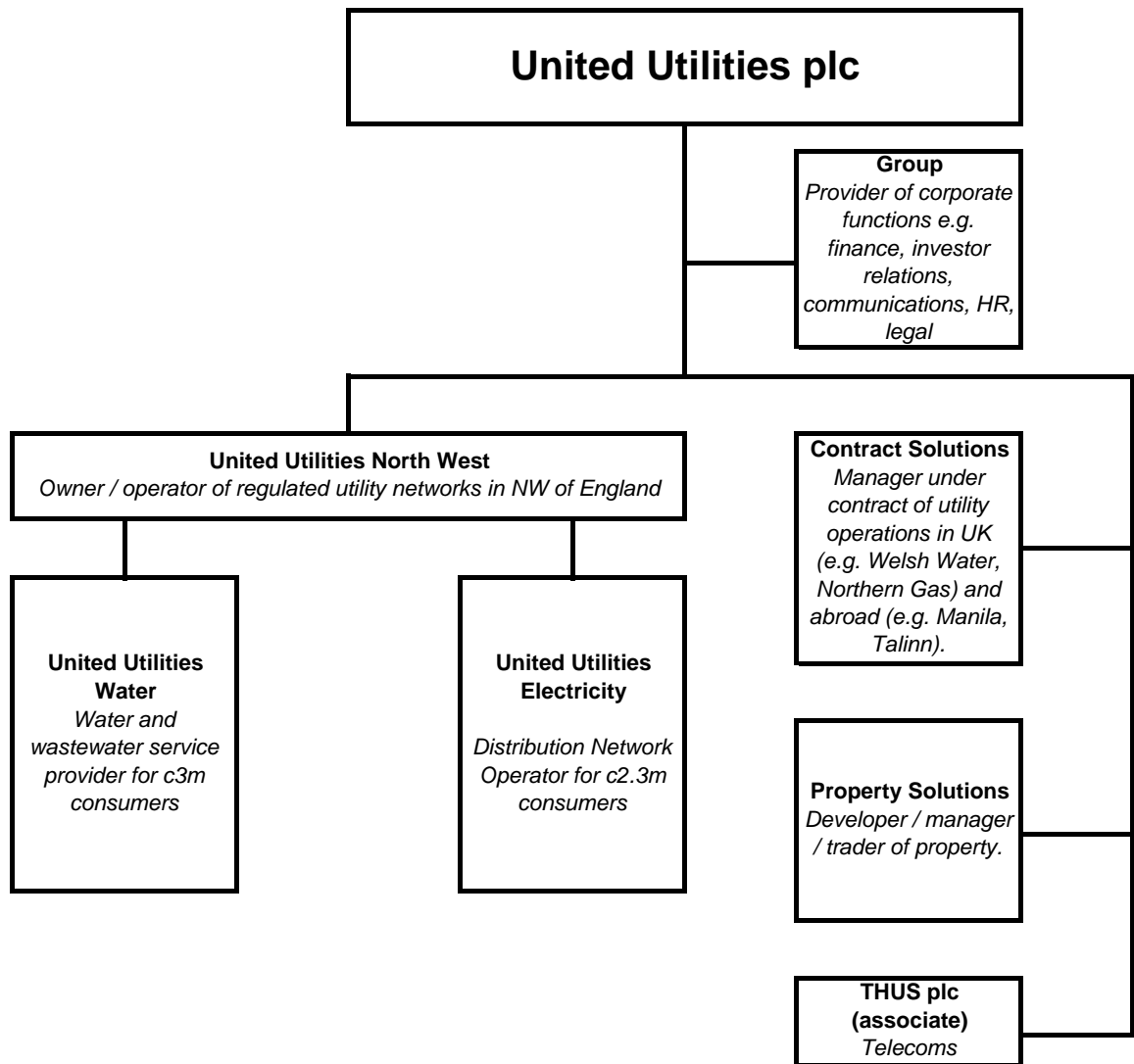
I attach United Utilities Electricity's (UUE) application for the above.

As required, this covering letter explains the corporate structure. Please find attached a diagram showing the United Utilities (UU) structure.

UU owns and operates the electricity distribution network in the North-West of England and UUE is the licensed entity. The initiatives in our application are the responsibility of UUE staff and we also operate a call centre that supports the customer care policies of UUE that are covered by the attached application.

Yours sincerely

Mike Boxall
Electricity Regulation Director



PRIORITY CUSTOMER CARE INITIATIVES



**ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION CUSTOMER SERVICE REWARD
DISTRIBUTION NETWORK OPERATORS
ENTRY FORM**

Please note that the deadline for receipt of applications is 5pm, 11 May 2007.

DNO DETAILS: (please complete)	CONTACT DETAILS: (please complete)
Company: United Utilities Licensee(s): United Utilities Electricity Address: Haweswater House Lingley Green Avenue Warrington Postcode: WA5 3LP	Name: Sally Ainsworth Title: Customer Service Manager - Electricity Telephone: 07836717495 Email: Sally.ainsworth@uuplc.co.uk

THE RULES

1. Refer to the accompanying guidance notes for the 2006/07 Electricity Distribution Customer Service Reward.
2. Attach your application to this covering entry form.
3. Entry forms must be received at Ofgem by no later than **5pm on 11 May 2007**. Entry forms should be sent to laura.nell@ofgem.gov.uk electronically, with a hard copy sent to: **Laura Nell, Quality of Service Manager, Ofgem, 9 Millbank, London SW1P 3GE.**

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS			
Please indicate by checking the appropriate boxes whether your company has met the minimum criteria for each reward.	Yes	No	Relevant legislation
DNOs are proactive in ensuring that details of their priority customers are up-to-date and accurate and that customers are aware of the priority register	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SLC ¹ 17
DNOs have effective and efficient procedures and processes in place to ensure that information on customers eligible for inclusion on the priority register is transferred readily between themselves and suppliers' priority services register (and vice versa)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SLC 17
DNOs have procedures and standards for staff on contact with priority customers and monitor performance against these standards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DDA ²
DNOs have procedures and standards for staff on contact with priority customers and monitor performance against these standards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DDA
DNOs seek feedback from their priority customers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DDA

• _____

¹ Standard licence condition of the Electricity Distribution Licence
² The Disability Discrimination Act, 1995

BEST PRACTICE FROM 2005/06 SCHEME

Please indicate which of the following best practice initiatives from the 2005/06 scheme your business does and what year they were first implemented. Space is provided for supporting commentary (maximum 250 characters per requirement)	Initiative adopted (select from drop down list)	Year first implemented (Please fill)
Partnership work with voluntary groups or parish councils to offer services and support during planned and unplanned interruptions	No	
Initiatives to ensure priority customers are kept informed of progress or offered assistance during unplanned interruptions	Yes	2007
Customers receiving proactive telephone calls to update them on the status of the fault		
Use of customer support vehicles and winter packs to provide assistance to priority customers during interruptions	No	
Active promotion of the priority services register	Yes	2007
Customer leaflet produced identifying what to do if you have a power outage and how to register as a priority service customer.		
Initiatives to ensure information on the priority register is up to date and accurate	No	
Undertaking customer research to better identify the needs of priority customers	Yes	2007
In depth research completed with 4 charities and with 15 priority service customers.		

DECLARATION AND CONSENT

I declare that the information contained in this application is correct and true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I give consent for Ofgem to use the information and contact details provided when publishing the Best Practice Register.

Signature: Sally Ainsworth

Date: 10/05/07

Priority Services United Utilities Submission

Overview

Our objective is to improve our service to the priority customer group. As we receive very little correspondence from this customer sector, we didn't want to take this "silence" as satisfaction. We recognise that this group of customers has very different needs from the wider group that we serve. Before making any changes we thought it essential to carry out research amongst the group to see what we needed to do to improve.

The research highlighted a number of key priorities which in the main focus on enhanced communications – awareness of the register, awareness of who to contact if there is no power and proactive communication from the DNO about the duration of the interruption.

As a result we have

- Produced two new customer leaflets,
 - "Top tips for what to do if you lose your power supply" Aimed at existing customers on the register, this leaflet has initially been mailed to customers dependant on electricity for health purposes
 - "Helpful hints for dealing with a power disruption" A more general leaflet for all customers which includes information on the priority services register.
- We have started making proactive call backs to customers to update them in the event of a supply interruption.
- We have developed an action plan for 2007/08 which will enhance the service we provide to these customers.

Scope, Influence – target audience

The research had two elements - individual face to face interviews with 15 customers on the priority services register and research with four charity groups representing those customers. We wanted to get a range of views and as such targeted customers with different reasons for being on the register.

	Experienced a fault	Not experienced a fault
Elderly	2	2
Deaf/Blind	1	2
Disabled	3	2
Serious Illness	3	
Total	9	6

The charities that we conducted research with were:

Charity	Groups represented
Help the Aged	Pensioners
Sense	Blind / Deaf
British Lung Foundation	Those reliant on medical equipment for health purposes
The Together Trust	Learning difficulties

All respondents were given £35 donation for their charity. The research was conducted by DJS research on our behalf.

The areas covered by the research were:

- Impact of interruptions on these customers, developing our understanding of what a power outage might mean
- Telephone service: expectations and performance
- Estimated Time of Restoration: expectations and performance
- Communication: information needed; priority service register; telephone numbers; general information
- Restoration: expectation and performance
- Planned shut downs: expectations and communication

We received the results of the research on 29th March 2007. Following the results an action plan has been agreed. A number of the areas have been improved immediately, the others targeted over the year 2007/08. The action plan is included in the supplementary information.

Actions taken

Communication: feedback very clearly told us that the **telephone number to ring** in event of a power interruption should be communicated to vulnerable customers. It was also suggested that a **top tips of what to do** would be useful. We have combined these two actions and developed a specific leaflet. We asked the charity groups to review it and we incorporated their comments. For a first phase we have sent the leaflet to 1800 homes, those customers on the register as reliant on electricity for health. Phase 2 will be our deaf customers, planned June 07 and phase 3 will be our blind customers – having changed the print to either Braille or large print, this is targeted for August 07.

We update our priority service records every two weeks taking a download from suppliers databases the accuracy of this is dependant on customers keeping the information up to date. The customer leaflet was sent with a covering letter asking if their **records need to be updated** and if so, how to do it. We have re briefed our customer agents on the priority service scheme and how to assist customers in registering on it. We have also completed extensive customer service training over 2006/07 covering our approach for priority service customers.

The charities were keen for us to **raise the general awareness of the register** therefore we have produced a leaflet aimed at all our customers which explains how to register, as well as giving helpful tips on what to do if we have a power cut. Our field staff will give these leaflets out when they meet customers. We have approached charity groups to issue them to customers on our behalf (the Together Trust charity were keen to help with this). The leaflet is also available on our web site.

Our customers told us they would welcome **proactive updates on how a fault is progressing**. We implemented this change in our call centre on 1st April. Stage 1 of this initiative targets priority service customers who contact us. By 1st June 07 this will be rolled out to all priority service customers impacted by a fault. To date we are getting a very positive response from customers who appreciate the personal touch and receiving a fault update.

Example below of the Top Tips leaflet



What to do if you lose your electricity supply

United Utilities owns and operates the electricity distribution network in the North West. We look after the safe delivery of electricity through our network to your home 24 hours a day, every day.

United Utilities does not sell electricity but ensures it is delivered to you in a safe and efficient manner. The companies that sell electricity are known as suppliers. Your bill will be sent from your electricity supplier and they are also responsible for your meter.

This card contains important information on what to do in the event of a loss of electricity supply.

How do I report a loss of electricity supply?

If you wish to report a loss of electricity supply or if you are concerned about the safety of our equipment, please call us on our **emergency helpline:**

0800 195 4141

You can ring this number at any time of the day. If you are deaf or your hearing is impaired you can call:

0800 458 9767 using a minicom.

What if I need to contact my electricity supplier?

You will find your supplier's telephone number on your electricity bill.

If you don't have a bill and don't know the name of your electricity supplier you can ring the number below to find out who your electricity supplier is.

MPAS (Meter point administration) helpline: 0870 751 0093

Helpful hints for dealing with a loss of electricity supply

1. It is useful to keep a torch handy in the event of a power loss.
2. If some of your appliances and lights are still working you may have a problem with your own electrical installation. To confirm this, check to see if any trip switches have operated in your electrical fuse box. If this is the case you may need to seek advice from a qualified electrician.
3. Leave at least one light switched on so you will know when your power is restored.
4. We will make every effort to restore supplies as soon as we can, however if you are reliant on electricity for health you need to consider how long you can manage.
5. If you have medical support equipment you will need to plan in advance another source of power in case of power cuts and you should know how long this source of power will last. You should also make arrangements for alternative medical care if the supply is off for a long time. Your local hospital or GP should be able to help you do this.
6. Keeping warm is particularly important. It is recommended that to trap warm air, you wear several layers of warm clothing rather than one, and wear a hat.
7. Where possible, keeping active will also help to stimulate the circulation and keep you warm.
8. Please make sure your neighbours know how you are managing. They may be able to offer some help.

Information regarding domestic appliances

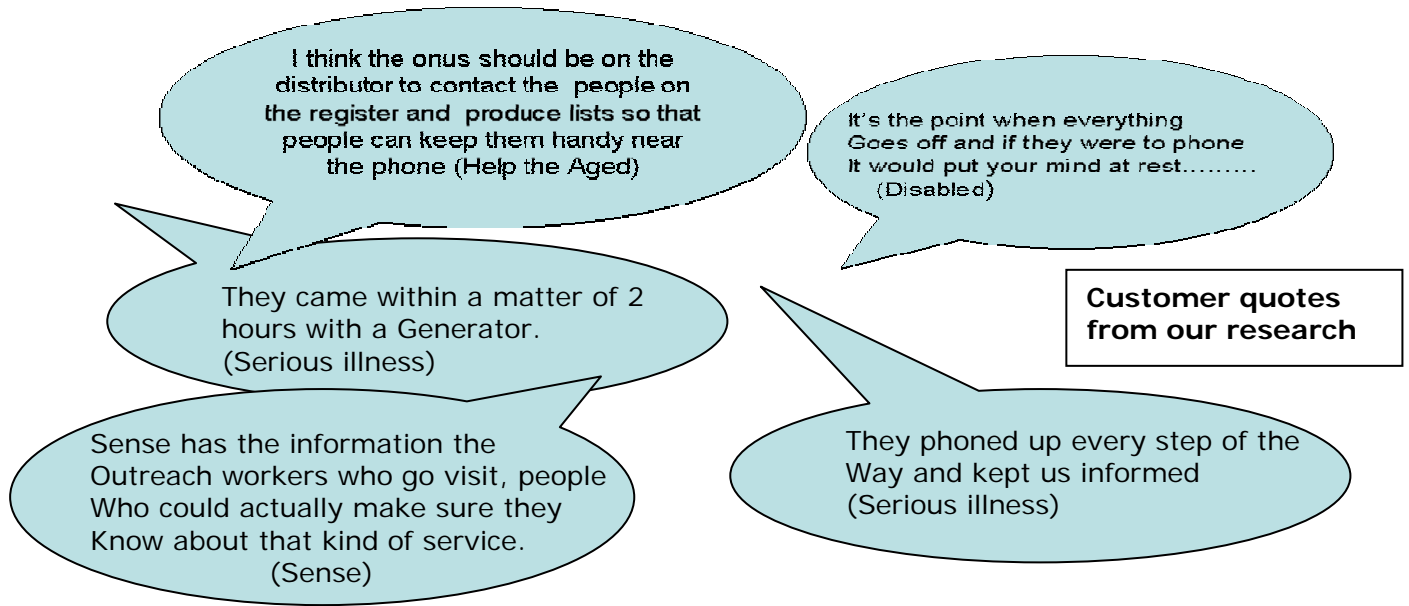
FRIDGES Leave the door closed if possible until the supply is restored. Chilled products should remain safe for a number of hours. Frozen food in the small freezer compartment at the top of the fridge should remain safe for several hours.

FREEZERS These should remain sufficiently cold to protect food for a number of hours without electricity. Open the door as little as possible. Cover the freezer with blankets while the supply is off to give extra insulation.

PERSONAL COMPUTERS If your personal computer is in use when your supply is interrupted information may be lost. Installation of an Uninterruptible Power Supply device (UPS) will safeguard information. These are available from suppliers of computer equipment.



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Lingley Green Avenue, Great Sankey, Warrington WA5 3LP
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Priority Service Customer Action plan 2007/08

Customer Request	Actions	Target completion
Clear guide lines on customer service approach for employees and customers.	Update, reissue and brief the Electricity Customer Service Code of Practice	March 07
Make customer policy available to those customers who do not speak English	Translate Code of Practice into most popular 6 languages used in the North West Excluding English – publish on Web Site	March 07
Regular updates if the fault continues beyond the original ETR – via either telephone call or SMS.	Implement process in call centre for proactive telephone call backs.	April 07
Widen awareness across whole customer base of priority customer scheme	Agree content, print and issue "helpful hints when dealing with power disruption" leaflet includes this information.	April 07
Communication on awareness of the priority services register and how to register on it	Letter and top tips leaflet to be sent to customers on priority care register.	May 07
Communication on the telephone number to ring in the event of a power cut. Top tips for how to deal with no power.		
SMS service for deaf customers to get updates	1. Scope initiative to use proactive text messaging 2. Identify if we have deaf customers mobile telephone numbers establish method to obtain this information.	June 07
Proactive telephone call in the event of a power interruption – 20 – 60 minutes into the fault.	Implement process in SFIC	August 07
Agent training – understand issues for priority customers / able to handle the call empathetically and efficiently	1. Agree approach 2. Training package to be developed	Sept 07
Priority transfer to agent. To reduce need to use automated messaging system.	Build into Functional design spec for new customer messaging system. Priority customer telephone numbers to be built into customer line identification (CLI)	Nov 07
Long supply interruptions – provision of hot drinks, meals <i>"emergency response you get WRVS and tea trolleys – that would be really good to see" " even if its only a hot drink basically its reassurance that something is going on and somebody cares"</i>	Customer care vehicles / emergency customer response – specific project in 2007/08 plan Scope, cost, evaluate, trial.....review implement.	Mar 08
Work with charities to help people register – its often those who need to be on the register that don't know how to register	1. Scope approach and implement	Mar 08

Supplementary Information – Priority Customer Care

WIDER COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES



ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION CUSTOMER SERVICE REWARD DISTRIBUTION NETWORK OPERATORS ENTRY FORM

Please note that the deadline for receipt of applications is 5pm, 11 May 2007.

DNO DETAILS: (please complete)	CONTACT DETAILS: (please complete)
Company: United Utilities Licensee(s): United Utilities Electricity	Name: Sally Ainsworth
Address: Haweswater House Lingley Green Avenue Warrington	Title: Customer Service Manager Electricity
Postcode: WA5 3LP	Telephone: 07836 717495
	Email: Sally.ainsworth@uuplc.co.uk

THE RULES

1. Refer to the accompanying guidance notes for the 2006/07 Electricity Distribution Customer Service Reward.
2. Attach your application to this covering entry form.
3. Entry forms must be received at Ofgem by no later than **5pm on 11 May 2007**. Entry forms should be sent to laura.nell@ofgem.gov.uk electronically, with a hard copy sent to:

Laura Nell, Quality of Service Manager, Ofgem, 9 Millbank, London SW1P 3GE.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Please indicate by checking the appropriate boxes whether your company has met the minimum criteria for each reward.	Yes	No	Relevant legislation
DNOs have a range of communication strategies which effectively reach their target audiences and are regularly monitored to ensure they are meeting customers needs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SLC ¹ 18, DDA ²
DNOs have different versions of customer information available such as easy-to-read, audio and Braille formats.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DDA
DNOs seek feedback from customers, stakeholders, partners and staff regarding their wider communication initiatives and their effectiveness. DNOs use this feedback to improve their communication strategies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DDA

¹ Standard licence condition of the electricity distribution licence

² The Disability Discrimination Act, 1995

BEST PRACTICE FROM 2005/06 SCHEME		
Please indicate which of the following best practice initiatives from the 2005/06 scheme your business does and what year they were first implemented. Space is provided for supporting commentary (maximum 250 characters per requirement)	Initiative adopted (select from drop down list)	Year first implemented (Please fill)
Proactive use of a range of materials and communication techniques.	Yes	2006
We have increased the range of communication methods we use, proactive letter drops, text messages for fault updates, customer information cards, our code of practice is translated into 7 languages		
Partnership work with the community	No	
Proactive use of customer complaints and customer research	Yes	2005
We review customer complaints and comments in our monthly customer research to understand the root cause of customer dissatisfaction. We hold focus groups to explore key issues. This enables us to develop improvement plans.		
Media training for key staff members	Yes	2006
In 2006 we completed refresher training for key operational staff to ensure if they are required to use the media they are confident and have the skills to ensure the key messages are provided to our customers.		
DECLARATION AND CONSENT		
I declare that the information contained in this application is correct and true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I give consent for Ofgem to use the information and contact details provided when publishing the Best Practice Register.		
Signature: Sally Ainsworth	Date: 10/05/07	

Wider Communications United Utilities Submission Service Charter, Good Customer Service Guide and Heartbeat Training

Overview

During 2006/07 we have trained face to face 848 electricity employees on how to interact with customers, provide good customer service and our new service charter. Over 1000 electricity employees received a good customer service guide with helpful hints and tips on how to provide great customer service.

This major communications exercise was aimed at building and developing an environment where everyone understands what good customer service is, what behaviours are expected of them and how to deliver great service.

Background – research, how, why, objectives

Through consultation with our employees and partners we developed a service charter outlining what we felt were the critical service elements to build into our everyday actions.

We also developed a good service guide – a booklet with helpful advice on how to interact with customers; recognising customers have different needs and how to identify these; company expectations and even telephone numbers of different departments to get employees talking to each other to resolve customer issues (probably the most welcomed part of the guide)

The consultation took the form of one to one interviews; 5 focus groups with customer facing employees and partners; an Online and Paper based survey and a desk top benchmarking exercise to see what other companies do. The feedback we received from employees was 90% agreed with content of the charter, 91% believed that the customer service guide, a cohesive communications plan and strong leadership was an effective way to reinforce the right customer focused behaviours within the business.

More than 55% said they had not received any specific customer service training before. When asked how the guide should be introduced – workshops and training emerged as clear preference with live examples of best practice and how not to do it and information on policies and processes.

The objectives of the project were to create an environment that supports and promotes excellent customer service by providing clear guidance, guidelines, training and leadership to our people.

Scope, Influence – target audience

The target audience was our own employees and those working on our behalf. For electricity this was 1020 electricity employees and 730 people employed by our partners from Balfour Beatty and Morgan Est who support the water, wastewater and electricity businesses.

Whilst it was a UU wide programme the training was electricity specific and tailored to meet the needs of our electricity customers and their associated issues. We included all roles in our scope - customer facing front office and field people, back office support, our designers, planners and asset strategy people and our leaders. Training was targeted and fit for purpose with each employee group having discrete training courses differing in duration, format and content.

Communications

The training was designed by external consultants working with our people to ensure the content was applicable and appropriate. We used real case studies so that employees could recognise the issues and relate them to their own role in the organisation. The training was led by customer champions who were electricity employees, supported by professional trainers. The electricity customer champions were a key factor in the success of the training. We asked for volunteers and we were delighted to get 7 enthusiastic role models. The champions attended a three day training course to help them deliver the material.

The messages within the training for our field staff were:

- Company Image: Being an advocate of UU through what and how we say things, how we look, what we do etc.

- ❑ Proactivity: Keep customers informed
- ❑ Empathy: Putting yourself in the customer's shoes, listening, understanding and communicating in a positive and professional manner
- ❑ Ownership: Taking action to find out when we do not know the answer, not passing the buck or blaming the company or other departments.
- ❑ Team Work: Helping each other within Electricity and across UU and understanding our part in the service chain and the impact we have, even indirectly, with customers.

At the end of the course attendees were asked what they will do differently as a result of the service charter and the training, to gain some ownership. In return employees either received a squashy light bulb or a heart as reminder of the training – we are here to keep the lights on and keep customers close to our hearts.

For the small group who could not attend the training, we provided a communications pack, outlining the course content, the need to live the service charter and the good customer service guide.

How Monitored / Success measured / benefits

Our target for attendance was 90%, we achieved 97% for leaders and 90% for our customer facing people. We had very positive feedback from our people after attending the training, and many people individually commented they had learned new things and will think about things from a customer perspective in the future.

At the end of the training:

73% of attendees rated their understanding of the charter as good or excellent

73% of attendees rated their confidence in adopting the skills as good or excellent.

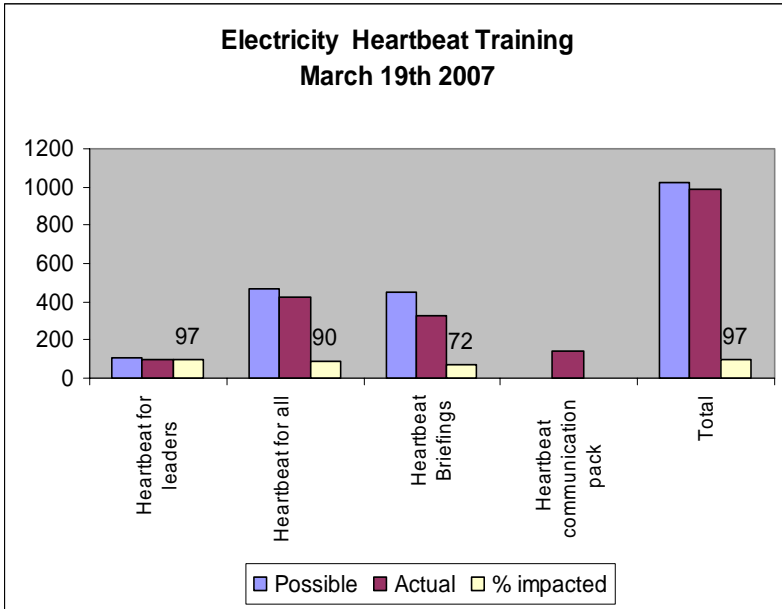
During the training we asked employees to identify areas where we could improve customer service. As a result we have a programme of activities to implement the employee ideas. Examples of these are:

- Information cards for customers: When we carry out work and the customer is not in, we should leave a note updating the customer on what we have done and next steps. This is currently being printed and then will be issued to 450 of our people in May 07.
- Customer Care Packs One idea was to develop a customer care pack of leaflets for field people to give to customers to help communicate general information, job specific actions or helpful tips of what do if you have a power cut. This action has been followed up and will be rolled out to 450 of our people in Mid June.
- Proactive updates for customers on restoration times – we felt this was an excellent idea and this was implemented in April 07. As a result we have increased the number of proactive call backs from 31 in March to 508 in April. We have received very positive feedback from customers who are pleased to be kept updated, our people also feel that they are providing better service.

In a recent annual employee survey we asked our people to rate if they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements, two specifically related to customer service, the results against these are very positive.

I am encouraged to understand the needs of our customers. In 2005 68% employees agreed with this statement, this rose to 70% in 2006 and in our latest survey in 2007 it has increased to 73%

I take ownership of and find solutions to customer problems. In 2005 85% of electricity employees agreed, in 2006 this dropped 1% to 84% and in 2007 95% of electricity employees agreed. We believe the customer training has been a major contributing factor to the 11% increase in this score in the year.



Supporting Evidence:

- graphs,
- illustrations from guide,
- employee comments.

I will listen to feedback so I can improve the quality of service

I will double check all information for accuracy before passing it to customers and colleagues

The course gave me real insight into how I could provide better customer service

A QUICK GUIDE TO FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

"...oh yes, the whole team were smart, friendly and efficient throughout."

Paula Ribbar

90% of our customers believe that appearance is important of all employees in your business.

A QUICK GUIDE TO FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

BECAUSE HOW YOU LOOK MATTERS




THE PROBLEM
Paula Ribbar is a Smart Office customer and has problems, and when she asks people to help solve her problems, she says 'No, we can't help you'.

OUR SOLUTION
A face-to-face meeting with Paula Ribbar, who introduced her problem and when she asked people to help solve her problems, she says 'No, we can't help you'.

FACE TO FACE CHECKLIST

- 1 Explain why you are there
- 2 Explain what you are going to do
- 3 Be polite and professional in all dealings with the customer
- 4 Apologise if appropriate
- 5 Do your best to fix the problem while you are there
- 6 If you can't explain what will happen next and when, but be realistic in setting the customer's expectations.
- 7 Only make promises you know you can keep
- 8 Take ownership. If you can you will do something, do it or make sure a colleague carries out the promise on your behalf.

"Hello Mrs Walsh, I'm June Spencer from United Utilities"



Customers at the heart

OUR SERVICE CHARTER

Customers are important. Everyone in the organisation has a role to play in delivering good customer service. Remember 'Customers are our business'.

Our customer charter supports our goals and illustrates the standard of service we are striving to deliver to our customers.

1. I will get it **right first time**
2. I will **make promises and keep them**
3. I will **pro-actively** keep the customer **informed**
4. I will **take ownership and find solutions** to meet customer needs
5. I will **act upon feedback** to improve the quality of customer service I provide
6. I will take every opportunity to make sure customer information is **accurate and up to date** on the relevant systems
7. I will not be afraid to **challenge** the status quo

84058LAW001102

A QUICK GUIDE TO FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

THE FACE TO FACE CODE

By following the face to face code, you can make the best impression every time. These key factors make up the face to face code:

- 1: The way you look
- 2: How you listen
- 3: What you say and do


A QUICK GUIDE TO FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

1

How you look

It is important to show that you are listening. You do this by using simple, positive body language. The little things you do, often without thinking, can have a big impact.

- Smile
- Make eye contact
- Nod your head to show you are listening
- Use things like 'mhm', 'yes', 'I see'
- Let the customer explain their story
- Let them know what they have to say - don't interrupt



2

How you listen

It is important to show that you are listening. You do this by using simple, positive body language. The little things you do, often without thinking, can have a big impact.

- **Know their name** - If you don't already know a customer's name, ask them for it.
- **Ask open questions** - Ask open questions that can't be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer. This shows you are interested in what the customer has to say, and will help understand the problem.
- **Show understanding** - Avoid saying anything that shows you understand the customer's point of view, such as 'I understand your problem'.
- **Just the facts** - Explain the facts and what you can do.
- **Friendly and professional** - Be honest, courteous, and friendly. Explain to the customer so you would want to be spoken to yourself.
- **Remember what they say** - This is important as it shows you have understood their concerns and shows that you are not treating them as a number.
- **Be sensitive to their needs** - A customer may be requesting a service that is not a standard service, or they may be requesting a service that is not a standard service. Be sensitive to their needs and offer them the best possible solution.
- **Be happy to help** - If you can't help a customer, offer them the best possible solution.