

REF 503 GAS AND ELECTRICITY DEREGULATION

The Government has introduced competition into the energy markets to give customers more choice about who they buy their gas and electricity from. **Gas & Electricity** suppliers are now seeking to encourage you to switch from your current supplier to a new supplier. You may receive leaflets through the post, be contacted by telephone, or someone may call at your door.

REMEMBER: Always ask to see the salesperson's identification. If you are not sure about them do not let them into your home.

Things you need to know:

You may be able to buy cheaper fuel from a new supplier, however you should be cautious of claims made by sales representatives about the savings you will make by switching supplier. Don't rush, you may be able to get a better deal elsewhere.

Ensure that the savings they are **claiming** you will make are **comparing like with like** payment methods, because changing your method of payment with your existing supplier may also make savings on your bill (Monthly direct debit payments are usually the most economical method of paying). For more information on methods of paying your bills, see our Fact sheet on Paying for Fuel, or contact SCARF Energy Advice Team on FREEPHONE 0800 512 012.

- Ask the new supplier to apply their prices **to your actual bills** using the same payment method and / or the payment method of your choice. To get a truer comparison we recommend that this should be done with your bills over the **past year**.
- To switch energy supplier you do not need to sign a contract with the new supplier, a request over the phone is enough. The new supplier will read your meter and pass this to your current supplier who will send you a final bill. However, **you must** contact your bank to cancel any direct debit or standing order arrangements to your current supplier after you have paid the final bill.
- You **do not** need to change supplier if you do not wish to do so. If you want to continue to purchase gas or electricity from your existing supplier you can - **they will continue to supply you**.
- Telephone and doorstep salespeople can be persuasive. You may be asked to sign on the spot to buy something. Because of this, the law allows you a **seven-day 'cooling off' period** during which you can cancel the contract without a penalty. This also applies if you agree to a visit by a sales representative following a telephone call you did not request.
- Be careful that you **do not** sign anything to confirm a salesperson has called, or when participating in a street survey, a prize draws, or an advertisement inviting you to seek further information etc.

If you do agree a contract during a visit make sure that the salesperson leaves you a copy and a written notice of your cancellation rights.

Mission Statement

SCARF aims to work through partnership to promote sustainable use of energy, eradicate fuel poverty and create sustainable employment and training opportunities.

Core Objectives

- + To provide free impartial and accessible energy efficiency advice and information services to help save energy, save cash and help save the environment.
- + To encourage investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy measures and grant take up for property improvements to achieve affordable warmth.
- + To create sustainable employment and training opportunities.

SCARF Provides

One Stop Energy Advice Shop offers free impartial advice and information:

- + Energy efficiency in the home, business and the community
- + Renewable energy in the home, business and the community
- + Grants for loft and cavity wall insulation
- + Grants for draughtproofing
- + Grants for central heating
- + Grants for renewable energy installations
- + Paying for fuel and fuel suppliers
- + Choice and operation of heating and hot water systems

SCARF also offers:

- + Home visits
- + Home energy checks
- + Presentations and informal training
- + NVQ and City & Guilds Qualifications



SCARF is a company limited by guarantee (No 94819) and a registered charity (No: SCO 006901)

Fact Sheet

You are advised to make sure you are clear about how much you will be charged and the quality of service you will receive from the new supplier. These are some questions you could ask before signing a contract to change supplier: -

- How much does the gas/electricity cost (per kWh)?
- How much is the standing/basic charge?
- How long are these prices guaranteed for?
- Do these prices include VAT?
- How often will I receive a gas/electricity bill?
- How long is the contract for, and is there a charge if I want to end the contract?
- How do different payment methods affect the price I pay, for example, if I use a prepayment meter?
- Where can I pay my bills?
- Is there a charge for paying my bill?
- What happens if I have difficulty in paying my bills, will I be cut off?
- What services do you offer older and disabled people?

If you are in debt your current supplier can prevent you changing to another supplier, however they may agree for the debt to be transferred.

Comparing Energy Prices

Information sheets, which will assist you in comparing the prices offered for gas and electricity by the different fuel suppliers, are available from SCARF.

Green Energy

Many Energy Suppliers are now offering options for you to support electricity from renewable sources. Future Energy is an accreditation scheme that will give you confidence in your electricity suppliers claims about their renewable tariffs.

**For more information on this contact the SCARF Energy Advice Team on:
FREEPHONE 0800 512012**

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