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ENERGY FEARS OF OLDER PEOPLE REVEALED BY USWITCH.COM

- **Rising number of customer concerns: Calls to uSwitch.com's customer call centre have increased by a third (33%) year on year^[1]**
- **Older people do not go online for help: Up to three quarters (75%) of customers who call for help rather than go online are over 60 years old^[2]**
- **Price rises are the nation's number one concern^[2].**

As part of Big Energy Week^[3], uSwitch.com, the independent price comparison and switching service, reveals the biggest energy concerns that are keeping Britain's consumers awake at night and are prompting them to call up the experts to seek advice. After a year of price hikes, where energy bills rocketed by £224 or 21% taking the average household bill to an eye-watering £1,293 a year^[4], calls to the comparison service's customer contact team soared by a third (33%) year-on-year^[1]. Figures from customer service staff have revealed that the majority of callers are concerned about the impact of price rises^[2].

The second biggest reason for people calling up for help is following a bad experience with their current supplier, accounting for an estimated 25% of calls. Concerns about not receiving credit owed by their provider and difficulties in contacting their supplier come in at third and fourth, while problems with bill payment is the fifth biggest reason for calling^[2].

While only 10% of customers that go online to get help are aged over 60^[5], uSwitch.com estimates that up to three quarters (75%) of calls coming through to them are from people aged 60 or over^[2]. This demonstrates that while older people are unlikely to go online to get the help they need, many are taking action on their energy bills by picking up the phone instead.

Another popular service with the over 60's is uSwitch.com's unique 'Send us your bill' option. All householders need to do is pop a copy of their most recent energy bill with their name and contact number and post it for free to 'Freepost uSwitch'. uSwitch.com's customer services

team will run a full comparison for you and then call you back to discuss your options. The service puts those who struggle to understand their bills or who have problems using the internet on a level footing with the internet savvy, allowing them to save much needed money off their energy bills too.

Ann Robinson, Director of Consumer Policy at uSwitch.com says: “Big Energy Week will put energy issues on the map, raising awareness of the issues facing consumers and their energy bills. But it’s vital that we also ensure that all consumers are able to benefit from switching and energy efficiency measures, and not just the internet savvy.

“I would urge older and vulnerable people or those who simply need a bit of hand holding while they switch to give us a call and find out how much they could save. I think many of those who haven’t considered it previously will be shocked to know that they can save up to a third off their energy bill just by moving to a competitive plan. If this is supplemented by simple energy efficiency measures, such as turning TVs off standby, and by information on getting free insulation in your home, 2012 could see a lot more people feeling slightly happier about their energy bills.”

For more information visit www.uSwitch.com or call 0800 093 06 07

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Notes to editors:

1. Based on volume of calls to uSwitch.com customer call centre in 2011
2. Based on analysis of calls to uSwitch.com customer call centre in 2011
3. Big Energy Week, co-ordinated by Citizens Advice Bureau, Monday 16th – Saturday 21st January 2011: www.bigenergyweek.org.uk
4. Based on a medium user customer using 3,300 kWh of electricity and 16,500 kWh of gas, on a British Gas standard Dual Fuel plan, paying quarterly by cash or cheque with bill sizes averaged across all regions.
5. Based on analysis of customers switching via the uSwitch.com website in 2011

About us

uSwitch.com is a free, impartial, online and telephone-based comparison and switching service, helping consumers compare prices on gas, electricity, water, heating cover, home telephone, broadband, digital television, mobile phones and personal finance products including mortgages, credit cards, current accounts and insurance. In 2010 uSwitch.com celebrated ten years of saving customers money.

uSwitch.com is the first comparison website to achieve the Plain English Campaign’s Internet Crystal Mark, which is recognised as a standard that a website has clear language, is accessible and easy to use, and has been tested on a sample of its users.

uSwitch.com is dedicated to helping consumers save money whether they have internet access or not. It offers a dedicated call centre, manned by uSwitch customer service representatives, as well as a freepost ‘Send us your bill’ service, whereby customers can post their latest energy bills with their telephone number to FREEPOST USWITCH,

to get a free call back from a dedicated customer services representative. The service is also available via fax, email and post. Consumers should fax 0203 214 8417, email CustomerServices@uswitch.com or write to Customer Services, uSwitch.com, Centro 3, 19 Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DU with their postcode and usage details.

uSwitch.com is owned by Forward Internet Group Limited, a privately funded collection of internet-based businesses focused on consumer engagement and innovation.