

# Participant Information Sheet

**Access to justice for energy consumers in vulnerable circumstances**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

**What is the research about?**

The purpose of this study is to find out about how energy consumers go about dealing with problems they have with their energy suppliers. We are particularly interested in speaking with people who may be in vulnerable circumstances (for example, because they belong to a particular group, or because they are going through a tough time at work, at home, or with their health, or because the problem with the energy supplier was very complicated and hard to resolve). The aim of the research is to improve the support that energy consumers receive when they experience a problem. Overall, we hope to contribute to making it easier for people to access justice when something goes wrong with an energy supplier.

There will not be any immediate benefits to you from taking part in this research. If you have ongoing problems, we will not be in a position to help you resolve them. However, we hope the research will contribute to making things better for people in future. We hope the project will do this by ensuring that people who have problems with energy suppliers are better supported and better able to access help.

**Who should take part?**

We are contacting you because we are interested in your experiences with your energy supplier, whether you have had any problems, and what you did about them. We are interested in speaking with people who feel that any of the following applies:

* You belong to a group that may find accessing services more difficult (for example, older people and people with long term health conditions often find this harder)
* You are going through – or have recently been through – a particularly tough time (for example, you have lost a job, been feeling unwell, or been subject to a lot of stress)
* You found the problem you had with your energy supplier was particularly difficult to resolve (for example, some people may find understanding their energy bills challenging)

To take part in the research you should be over 18 and have the legal capacity to agree to take part. If you are unsure about this, please talk to us prior to agreeing to take part.

**What will the research involve?**

If you would like to participate in this research, we are asking that you:

* Take part in a 20 minute telephone interview.

The questions we intend to ask you are attached.

You will be free to stop taking part at any point if you feel uncomfortable or distressed. You do not need to give a reason for stopping taking part. If you feel that you might get uncomfortable or distressed, you are welcome to have a friend or relative sitting with you.

The interview will be recorded on a digital recorder. The recording will then be transcribed. The recording will be deleted after transcription and the transcripts will be kept for 10 years, in line with the University’s policy. All data will be stored on password protected computers and be deleted in line with the University’s procedures. You will not be named in any report that is made of the research – instead we will refer to you by another name (e.g. Participant 1). Reports of the research will include conference presentations and journal articles. If you would like to see these reports, please let me know when we speak.

Please note that confidentiality will be maintained as far as it possible, unless during our conversation I hear anything which makes me worried that someone might be in danger of harm, we might have to inform relevant agencies of this. This will be the only situation in which we will share personal information.

The research is being funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and has been considered and approved by the University of Glasgow’s College Research Ethics Committee.

If you would like further information about the research, please contact Dr Chris Gill, [chris.gill@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:chris.gill@glasgow.ac.uk) or 0141 330 4174.

If you have any concerns about this research or wish to pursue a complaint, please contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: [Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk).