

Annual Plan 2011/12

**Consumer Focus Wales is
Wales' Consumer Champion**



**A strong independent voice
standing up for Wales' citizens**

To find out more about any of
these pieces of work, contact
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Foreword by

Viv Sugar

Chair of
Consumer Focus
Wales



In turbulent economic times, the need for a strong voice for consumers in Wales has never been greater.

While the future of Consumer Focus Wales remains a subject of much discussion, we are not distracted. Shrinking budgets mean there are fewer of us, but we remain passionate about using our powers and expertise for the benefit of consumers in Wales.

Following a consultation across a wide range of stakeholders and consumers, I'm confident that the thorough, effective and significant work we have delivered since our creation will continue for the next 12 months and maybe beyond.

This year's work will be strong in our areas of statutory responsibility: energy and post. But we will also remain active in other areas where we feel we can make a difference.

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These include food hygiene – where we will continue to campaign for mandatory display of food hygiene certificates. We will also continue to champion our calls on financial and digital inclusion, and to work with our partners in the Fuel Poverty Coalition towards the eradication of this scourge on our society.

We also have unfinished business ensuring that new Welsh Language laws reflect the needs and wants of consumers – who are often overlooked in the debate between language campaigners and service providers.

Where vulnerable consumers and citizens need a champion, we will be there.

Overleaf we set out 15 priority projects for 2011/12, however, circumstances can change, and our work will adapt as necessary.

Energy

Consumers off the gas network II: We will provide Wales-specific evidence for the Office of Fair Trading's market study; following our Off Gas report published last year.

Switching suppliers in Wales: We will publish a report collating intelligence about switching energy suppliers, and why parts of South Wales have such low switching rates.

Top tips for buying oil: We will empower consumers by publicising top tips, and produce a detailed leaflet advising heating oil consumers how to get a better deal through bulk buying.

Private rented sector: We will look at energy issues in a sector where a higher proportion of consumers are living in fuel poverty to see what can be done to assist and empower them.

Children in fuel poverty: Building on previous work with Children in Wales, we will distribute bilingual posters to all schools in Wales featuring children's own top tips to stay warm this winter.

Post

Post office accessibility: Working with RNIB and RNID, our research will look at the barriers faced by people with sensory impairments when trying to access services through the post office.

Government services & Post Offices: This project will map local authority use of the trusted Post Office network to deliver services, sharing best practice and understanding of the benefits to provider and consumer.

A network fit for consumers: This work will look at the new stripped-down Post Office Local model, and its implications for consumers in Wales, and how well the present network works.

Parcel delivery: A big issue in our consumer focus groups. Our research will look at how people receive parcels, what happens when they're not home, and the difficulties of arranging collections.

Royal Mail complaints: How do you complain? And will you get satisfaction if you do? These are the questions we will be addressing in this project, working with colleagues across Britain.

Empowered consumers

Park homes: We will work to protect the rights of park home residents, and to improve the understanding of those rights among residents and park owners.

Housing association complaints: Our focus groups showed high levels of dissatisfaction with complaints processes. We will work to empower tenants and improve procedures.

Food safety: We will continue to champion safer food in Wales, including the mandatory display of food hygiene ratings.

Welsh language: We will continue our work to ensure the new Commissioner, and the standards they uphold, reflect consumer needs and wants.

Shoppers rights cards: Working with Trading Standards Wales we will promote awareness of consumers' rights by distributing wallet-sized information cards.