



**“ACTIVELY  
MANAGING  
ENERGY IN VOID  
PROPERTIES CAN  
DRAMATICALLY  
REDUCE COSTS  
AND LOWER VOID  
TIMES”**

## Putting Energy in to Social Housing

Welcome to our first newsletter. We have been up and running for a while now so we thought we would start to tell people what we have been up to.

The good news is we've been doing what we always we wanted to do – working with social housing providers to make housing better. But you don't want to hear about us: you want to know if what we have been working on is of any use to you, your organisation and your customers.

So in this first newsletter we're going to outline the work we've doing with a range of housing providers – big and small - across the country to develop a new energy supply product for the social housing sector. This came out of a discussion with Spark Energy, a relatively new entrant to the market, and our own experiences of trying to do energy supply in social housing over the last 15 years.

It's been fascinating for us and we hope it's useful to you too! Have a look over the page at the “Five things to think about when supplying energy to customers” and let us know what you think.

If you want to catch up with us, drop us a line or pop and see us at the [Homes](#) conference in November, [NHMF Conference](#) in January or [Eco-build](#) in March.

**“DON'T JUST READ THE  
BROCHURE, RING THE CALL  
CENTRE”**

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## Energy Matters in Social Housing

In all our years in social housing, we tried on a number of occasions to develop an energy supply service that worked for us. It didn't seem to matter how big the social housing provider was - and we were employed by some pretty big ones - we simply weren't big enough for the Big Six to change their systems to the way we worked as a landlord. This time we were given a blank sheet of paper and an instruction to 'make something that works for social housing providers'. So that's what we've been doing and quite a few people seem to like it.

So what does social housing want from an energy supply? What has become clear is there are two things that really matter – doing the right thing for customers, and improving efficiency and reducing costs.

When it came to customers, social housing providers confirmed to us that prepay meters and tariffs were a big problem. They felt their customers are paying over the odds for being able to budget their energy costs. So we created an offer to match or beat the Big Six on standard prepay and then track that tariff to ensure it remains competitive.

On improving efficiency and reducing costs, people told us they have to have energy in voids, but they were spending lots of time and money sorting it out: from people spending time calling energy companies, sorting out bills, paying invoices and running round charging key cards. Mostly people just did this to keep void times down. Those who had managed to tot up all the costs could see that it was costing them thousands. So we've created a simple process that writes-off energy void energy bills and speeds up the void process.

Housing providers also want to do more on energy supply. But with the decline in ECO, the failure of Green Deal and the constant changes to the Feed in Tariff, fingers had been burned and there was simply no certainty on which to plan. So we have developed a model to generate an income for providers. This is not going to make people rich, but it provides an annual income for landlords who are using it to create an energy fund to do things like provide energy advice.

If you want to find out more or want to talk through the options click [here](#)

## Five things to think about when supplying energy to customers

1. **Get it right for customers** – People in social housing are currently paying more for their energy than they should do. Ask what your customers pay.
2. **Focus on what your organisation needs** – Energy supply is a service. It should work for landlords: not landlords working for energy suppliers. Get it right and you could save hundreds of thousands of pounds for you and your customers. Find out if your supplier is working for you or if you are working for them.
3. **Good customer service takes real investment not just words** – The real – big - money is spent on backroom services, staff and infrastructure that is built directly in response to customer feedback that makes the difference. Don't read the brochure, ring the call centre.
4. **It's the little things that matter** - Like so much in life, making small changes makes all the difference and that is particularly true for systems in social housing. Find out what your service provider has changed to make your life better.
5. **You can get most of the benefits of being an energy supplier without most of the cost or risk of becoming one.** Social housing should become more active in their energy supply choices, but this has to be balanced with an eyes wide open understanding of what it entails. Decide what you want to achieve and focus on getting it right for customers and what your organisation needs.



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