Research Proposal

Monitoring the benefits of the Big Energy Savings Network (BESN)

Prepared for: Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)

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1.1 Understanding requirements

1.1.1 Background

The Big Energy Savings Network (BESN) is a £1m grant funded outreach programme with c£750,000 allocated in grants to community and third sector organisations who will provide support to vulnerable consumers which is intended to help them to reduce their energy costs and consumption. This could be via a variety of routes:

- Engagement with energy markets;
- Improved understanding of tariffs;
- Switching supplier;
- Uptake of Warm Home Discount;
- Registration with the Priority Service Register;
- Measures provided through suppliers' Energy Company Obligations.

The programme will be led by individuals (Champions) representing the successful grant funded organisations, which are made up of a broad range of groups such as housing associations, Citizens Advice Bureaux and community energy initiatives.

These organisations coordinate and deliver training to volunteers and frontline workers and deliver outreach events to vulnerable consumers. The expectation is that 16,900 consumers will be engaged via outreach events which will continue until March 2016.

The BESN programme is intended to reach consumers who may be regarded as vulnerable for a number of reasons, either relating to financial, health or disability issues, or for other reasons such as geography, literacy-level, age etc.

The types of support available are:

- Bespoke outreach events coordinated by the Champions/volunteers[1];
- One-to-one outreach from Champions which consumers can request when attending an outreach event;
- Bespoke training sessions run by Champions/volunteers for frontline workers to build capacity in the third sector to enable them to cascade support to their clients.

Consumers attending workshops will also receive a freepost envelope which they can use to send a copy of their energy bill and receive bespoke advice on the energy deals that are available. These freepost envelopes will have one of two messages printed on the outside[2]:

- A message highlighting the savings that could be achieved from switching supplier (***money condition***);
- A message highlighting the proportion of people that took action as part of the scheme previously and a testimonial from someone who had a good experience of doing so (***social condition***).

The 2013/14 evaluation of the BESN programme, undertaken by Britain Thinks, found the following:

- At 16,000, the number of participants reached via workshops exceeded the target of 15,000.
- The workshops were particularly successful at empowering consumers to get the best energy deal, with the majority going on to take some form of action (from installing new light bulbs to application for an ECO assessment).

[1] We note that those receiving support only from frontline workers will not be included within the scope of the research.

[2] We note that these envelopes are currently in development.

- Certain organisations were particularly effective in engaging more of certain types of vulnerable customers.
- The workshops were successful in reaching a range of vulnerable groups, but less so in reaching some specific groups within this wider definition.
- Benefits were also felt by those delivering BESN in terms of their ability to provide a better service to clients as a result of their involvement.

1.1.2 Aims and objectives

The overarching aim of this project is to quantify the benefits to participants (particularly estimated cost savings) and to test how delivery might be improved by switching messages delivered in a variety of ways, and the option to post off a bill and receive follow up advice.

The ITT recognises that the quantitative data collected is likely to be quite high level, and is unlikely to be able to attribute changes exclusively to BESN. However it is intended that the project will build upon the original evaluation of the programme undertaken in 2013/14, the findings of which are briefly summarised above, and the evidence collected from funded organisations as to their successful delivery against objectives (through continued assessment of monthly and other reporting requirements, together with sample checks of sign-in sheets and feedback forms).

The ITT clearly lays out the research aims and objectives:

- To monitor the benefits of BESN in encouraging vulnerable consumers to reduce their energy costs through assisted action on tariffs, switching and the take up of energy efficiency offers.
- To review whether the content of the switching message (***money*** or ***social*** condition) can influence consumer engagement.

The ITT also lays out the expected research questions:

- To what extent do those who attend energy advice workshops as part of BESN engage in the energy market, reduce their energy costs by switching supplier, changing tariff or applying for energy efficiency offers?
    - How many consumers took action either to explore options on provider or switch (within workshop, U-switch, or independently)?
    - What were the estimated savings made by participants?
    - How many took up WHD, the PSR or made an ECO application?
    - Are there sub-group differences?
    - Do consumers report any softer benefits of their involvement in BESN e.g. confidence, well-being, changes in practices?
- Are particular delivery routes associated with greater action?
    - Action of those who had one to one appointment following the workshop compared to workshop attendance alone.
    - Comparison of message and envelope conditions
    - What do consumers perceive as barriers/facilitators of action/inaction?

1.2 Addressing challenges and risks

The ITT identifies a number of potential challenges, and each of these is discussed below:

1.2.1 Timescales

The timescales for the project are challenging, but we believe that the systems and processes we put in place, both as part of our QMS, and bespoke to this project, will mitigate against this risk.

Timescales might be challenged by delays to the commencement of data collection, either by a failure to finalise questionnaire content, sampling approach, or another issue. By setting out a detailed project plan, and by ensuring we build in sufficient time for the relevant sign-offs, and for each of the stages involved to be completed, we are confident that we can mitigate against this risk.

BMG manages many research projects which involve the timely processing of respondent details, the deduplication of contact lists, and the secure storage of contact information, including on behalf of a number of police forces, for whom we undertake monthly user satisfaction surveys among victims of various types of crime (Merseyside, Surrey, Sussex and Cleveland Police forces), so we have all of the procedures and processes in place to ensure timescales are met in this respect.

There could be a possibility of data collection being prolonged, either due to survey length, or the impact this might have on cooperation rates, and this could have the knock-on effect of diminishing the representativeness of the data, or its quality due to respondent fatigue.

By ensuring the survey is thoroughly piloted and timed prior to fieldwork we would aim to minimise this possibility, making sure that the survey is routed effectively, and providing accurate indications of the likely survey length. We would also monitor the average survey length throughout the fieldwork period, but particularly in the early stages, taking section timings which will inform our regular project reviews.

A pilot phase would also allow us to ensure that the survey content is entirely correct, and the routing and response options are as they should be, and also to test the data outputs are as required.

1.2.2 Quality of contact data and sampling constraints

Ultimately the final sample structure will depend to a large extent on the quality and quantity of the contact information supplied, but we understand the potential difficulties in this respect given the collection of information by Champions at events and later follow-ups, the inconsistencies this is likely to engender, and the extent of consumer permission for re-contact for research purposes[3].

To address this as far as possible, at the inception phase we would work with DECC to understand any weaknesses within the sampling frame and to develop a sampling strategy that maximises our ability to achieve the sample structure discussed in later sections of this proposal.

On the first point – relating to the quality of the contact information – we have a specialist database team who are highly skilled in cleansing and optimising contact lists, using secondary sources of information for matching purposes where available.

In terms of the quantity of contact information available, and the extent of coverage within each of the key sub-samples (i.e. workshop only, workshop plus one-to-one, envelope messaging etc.), this is something over which we have little control, but we can do our best to mitigate the impact this will have on the final sample. This might mean sampling disproportionately (e.g. drawing all contacts within a particular group, e.g. those who have had a one-to-one), but will equally rely on the quality of our interviewers and our ability to maximise the response among the contacts that are available.

We also need to bear in mind that the target sample will necessarily consist of more vulnerable customers, and those traditionally most disengaged with the energy market, which the Competition and Markets Authority identified were more likely to be *'those aged 65 and over; those in social accommodation; those with no qualifications; and those on lower incomes'* in their energy market investigation published in February of this year. DECC's own Public Attitudes Tracker supports this, indicating that those in social grades DE are more likely to be concerned about their energy bills but also more likely to rule out switching.

Consequently it will be important to ensure that we put in place a wide variety of strategies to maximise response as far as possible:

[3] We understand that the information provided for the 2014 evaluation captured approximately 18% of workshop participants, i.e. 2,625 participants, from which a sample of 400 interviews was completed.

- All numbers identified will be called a minimum of eight times before being discarded as non-response. All outcomes are logged to industry standards i.e. successful, refused, no reply, ring backs but unsuccessful, appointments etc., but customised outcome codes can be created if required;
- The introduction to the survey will stress its long-term significance, instilling in respondents a belief that their contribution to the survey really does matter;
- Respondents will be reassured as to the confidentiality of any information they provide, and told why the information is being collected, and how it will be used;
- All interviewers will be fully trained and experienced telephone researchers and they are able to deal with any queries in a confident and reassuring manner;
- BMG's call management software manages and automatically schedules all call backs and appointments, ensuring we maximise the opportunity of making contact. This system also allows interviewers to leave detailed notes on previous contacts, ensuring later approaches for interview are as seamless as possible;
- Call outcomes will be monitored on a regular basis using the call logging systems installed in our call centre. This will allow us to highlight early in the process any issues over refusals/non-response and take corrective action (before the contact numbers have been spent);
- Interviewers will be required to make a declaration at the end of the interview stating their professional conduct and accuracy of the data recorded. This provides a continuous reminder to the field teams of the importance of their role in the process;
- All interviewers are fully briefed by the BMG project researchers. They will have a thorough grasp and understanding of the terms used, and therefore be able to deal with any queries in a confident and reassuring manner;
- Our telephone call centre will be open from 08.00 to 21:00 weekdays, 10:00 to 21:00 on Saturdays and 10:00 to 16:00 on Sundays, giving respondents choice and flexibility over the time they complete the interview. However, first approaches will only be made between 16.30 and 20.30 on weekdays, between 10.00 and 20.30 on Saturday, and 10.00 to 15:30 on Sundays;
- If potential respondents are unsure if BMG Research is a valid research organisation they will be offered the Market Research Society's free-phone number, to call and check with. This number is also given to respondents at the end of each interview;
- Respondents are also given the direct number of a BMG executive if they wish to find out more about the research and confirm its validity.

We are also able to ensure that the survey is inclusive in terms of language, as the profile of our interviewing team is diverse, with interviewers speaking a wide range of languages such as Bengali, Gujerati, Hindi, Punjabi, Spanish, German, French and Urdu. BMG also observes bilingual best practice in all its fieldwork carried out within Wales, as bilingualism is central to promoting diversity and ensuring equal opportunities. We are familiar with the guidance provided in the 'Welsh Language Scheme for the Welsh Assembly Government' and work within the letter and spirit of this guidance. We employ a small team of interviewers in our call centre who are bilingual and we would allocate this resource to the project so that respondents have the choice of conducting the interview in Welsh or English.

Experience across a wide variety of surveys shows that it is very uncommon for individuals to request a survey in an alternative language, so at this stage we would not propose to create translated versions of the script, since in most instances any language difficulties can be addressed over the phone by an interviewer who speaks the appropriate language. There would be no cost for adopting this approach.

1.2.3 Social desirability of survey responses

In considering this point, it is important to recognise that there is the potential for social desirability bias in all research studies, and particularly those where there is a requirement to explore the extent to which a behavioural outcome is observed in the absence of any 'hard' data to evidence the extent of response.

In this instance, unless we were able to access accurate details on respondents' energy supplier/usage/behaviours, we necessarily have to rely on participants' survey responses, and assess their reported behaviour in this context.

While this might advocate for a data collection approach that avoids the mediation of interviewers (i.e. paper or online self-completion) we feel that the disadvantages of such approaches outweigh any benefits they might provide. While we might to some extent avoid overstatement of participants' actions as the result of workshop attendance, we would almost certainly exclude large proportions of the sample from participation, likely to be those in most need of support in this area (i.e. those with low/no literacy, those without internet access etc.), and so minimise the extent to which the data can be viewed as representative of the universe under investigation.

While we might advocate using a social desirability scale such as the Marlowe-Crowe scale[4], we believe the additional burden on the respondent would advocate against this approach. Consequently we believe that we will need to adopt a range of other approaches to minimise the extent to which a social desirability bias might be introduced into the research:

- Consider how the research is introduced to respondents and avoid making explicit references to 'energy savings' or 'energy efficiency', but rather talk in general terms about the workshop and things they might or might not have done since;
- Avoid any sense of judgement in designing the survey questions and response options;
- Emphasise the fact that there are no right or wrong answers, and that it is their opinion we are interested in;
- Focus on behavioural rather than attitudinal measures, as the latter are where there tends to be the most significant divergence between what is said and what is actually done.

1.2.4 Other risks

Over and above this, there are a number of other potential risks to the project, and our approaches to mitigating those risks, and for brevity these are set out in the table below.

RISK	ASSESSMENT	COUNTER MEASURES/ CONTINGENCIES
Insufficient conceptual understanding of the study's context and purpose	Likelihood: Low Impact: High Weaknesses in understanding study requirements	Thorough inception process and project plan Involvement of BMG Research – strong background in undertaking research amongst service users and hard to reach groups
Reputational risk given high profile survey	Likelihood: Low Impact: High Credibility of survey compromised	Involvement of BMG Research – strong background in undertaking research amongst service users and hard to reach groups Experienced and dedicated project team
Key personnel on the project team are ill or leave	Likelihood: Low Impact: Medium Knowledge needs to be passed over	Keep/maintain records at all stages of the project, including tasks Regular team meetings and project reviews, close team-working using 'Prince2 project management' approach Transfer of knowledge and new team members brought onto the project

[4] In 1960, Crowne and Marlowe attempted to identify a set of behaviours that are perceived by society to be exemplary, but enacted only infrequently, and developed a suite of measures to assess this propensity within individuals.

		Robust staff training
Areas/questions within the questionnaire missed/ or misinterpreted	Likelihood: Low Impact: High Would cause issues / potential bias	Ensure full pilot and testing to examine reactions to questions and identify any areas where misunderstandings are occurring Interviewer feedback will be sought on a regular basis
Respondent complaint	Likelihood: Low Impact: Medium	Detailed consultation with client to understand any relevant sensitivities Pilot learning will be incorporated into questionnaire and methodology design to avoid issues which emerged in the pilot BMG abides by the MRS Code of Conduct and the strict ethical guidelines of the Social Research Association BMG also has a policy in place for complaint handling Full call recording in CATI unit so all interviews will be recorded if complaints arise to assist with investigation
Error or bias in data processing	Likelihood: Low Impact: High Would cause issues / potential bias	BMG accountable for all data processing Dedicated DP executive working on the project BMG has a dedicated validation unit for this purpose
Technical problems with Server or CATI system	Likelihood: Low Impact: Medium Would require some re-scheduling	Technical support on hand from BMG Systems Pull in additional resource by briefing more interviewers from the pool to make up any lost time
Data corruption through viruses etc.	Likelihood: Low Impact: High Would impact on time schedule	Full back up in data handling and storage; daily system virus checks
Report production delayed through drafting process	Likelihood: Low Impact: High Would impact on time schedule	Report structure and style agreed in advance of production of first draft Experienced personnel allocated to report writing with back up if required

1.3 Management and delivery

1.3.1 Our Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) resources

The basis of much of BMG's work is the delivery of surveys of varying scale, involving respondent numbers from a few dozen or hundreds, up to over thirty-five thousand (in the case of the National Employer Skills Survey). Respondents are usually employers or households/individuals but other respondent groups include employees and workforces, stakeholders in different policy or operational areas, children and young people, and so on. To deliver primary research of this kind, BMG maintains a large Computer Assisted Telephone Interview ('CATI') facility, with over a hundred operators.

In summary:

- BMG has a contact centre with more than 100 CATI units. We employ state of the art Confirmit technology in our contact centre, which is open as standard from 8.00am to 8.30 pm, Monday to Saturday, and 10.00am to 4.00pm on Sunday.
- This means that we will not sub-contract any part of the project, and that we take full contractual responsibility for the performance of all obligations under the contract.
- Our use of Confirmit technology allows us to provide client access to real-time updates via a portal on number of completed interviews, call outcomes etc.
- We have extensive experience of undertaking telephone surveys with residents. We are listed on a number of major framework contracts and have built a solid reputation for rigorous and value-added work among the many government departments and organisations that we work with.
- We have quality systems that match or exceed industry standards which are based on a fully documented Quality Management System (QMS). All work would be undertaken within the parameters of the QMS, which has been created from a number of industry recognized standards.

1.3.2 Our Quality Management Systems

We have a number of procedures and policies in place to ensure we deliver research of the highest quality, to budget and on time. The overarching tool to ensuring quality is our Quality Management System (QMS), which is designed to support the delivery of our products and services, and which is founded upon a range of industry-recognised standards:

- **ISO 9001:2008**: This is an internationally recognised standard for organisational quality, designed to look at what our customers think of us and the products we deliver. It provides the means to review organisational quality and to audit that, as well as the opportunity for continuous review of everything we do.
- **ISO 20252:2012**: This is the international standard for Market Research companies, effectively the Research Process Management System for the market research industry.
- **ISO 27001: 2013**: This is the international standard describing best practise for an Information Security Management System (ISMS).
- **IQCS**: This is a standard that addresses the training, skills and quality of our interviewing teams.
- **Investors in People**: This is a standard related exclusively to the development and support of our employees, ensuring that we invest in and communicate with them as an integral part of our business operations.
- **The Data Protection Act**: This is a key piece of legislation for all organisations dealing with data of any kind.
- **The Market Research Society Code of Conduct**: A code of operation set out by our industry regulator that we have willingly signed up to and supported.

1.3.3 Ethics

It is importance to stress given the topics covered, and the vulnerable consumers the research aims to reach, that BMG works to the strict ethical guidelines of the Social Research Association (see http://www.the-sra.org.uk/documents/pdfs/ethics03.pdf) and the Market Research Association as well as to relevant Quality Standards. In essence, this means conducting all of our work responsibly, at a high scientific moral and legal standard and in an impartial way, at all times maintaining our own professional integrity as well as that of the social research world as a whole.

In practice, for this proposed evaluation, this means operating within an ethical 'good practice' framework. For example:

- ***Informed consent*** *is obtained from all respondents prior to an interview or discussion. This is to ensure that participants fully understand what they are agreeing to, the purpose of the research and how the material from their interview will be used. It also ensures that respondents understand that they may withdraw from the research process at any time, without having to give a reason.*
- ***Avoiding undue intrusion*** *– even when the subject of study may be relatively unobtrusive, researchers are always mindful of the potential for intrusion. Researchers will at all times endeavour to ensure that the information collected is limited to that which informs the study aims and objectives.*
- ***Enabling participation in research*** *by ensuring that our methods and approaches are as inclusive as far as is reasonably possible. We would seek to ensure that people are not discouraged from participating because of access, communication, disability, comprehension or expense. Ways in which these barriers can be addressed are through providing clear explanations of what the research is about, by ensuring that we are able to offer information in alternative media/methods.*
- ***Maintaining confidentiality of records –*** *as well as being registered with the Data Protection Commission as a Data Controller, BMG Research adheres to all of the requirements of the Data Protection Act. All aspects of data transfer will be made in accordance with the Data Protection Act and MRS Code of Conduct and no data transferred from BMG Research to the client will be attributable to an individual or household address, unless specific permission was granted by the respondent. Rule B8 of the MRS Code of Conduct states that the anonymity of respondents must be preserved unless they have given their informed consent for their details to be passed on. For your reference our data handling procedures will also be in line with our MRS Fair Data Accreditation. Fair Data is a quality process standard developed by the Market Research Society (MRS) which is awarded to organisations that meet the Fair Data principles. The accreditation shows which companies handle their customers' personal data fairly. A Fair Data company must meet the 10 Fair Data principles. By engaging with organisations that carry the Fair Data mark, customers can be assured that their personal data will be treated with respect, and only used for purposes which customers agree to and will be collected and retained in a transparent, legal and ethical manner." This is the Fair Data statement to consumers: "As a Fair Data organisation, you can trust that we will manage and treat your personal data with respect. We will collect, store and manage it in an unbiased and secure way. We will only use your personal data for purposes that we have informed you about and sought your consent for. We will always be transparent about the personal data we collect and how we use it."*

1.3.4 Project management

With our entire resource, including the research and interviewing teams, based in a central location, BMG is ideally placed to work with DECC to deliver this important piece of work, and to ensure the smooth and effective progress of the survey to deadline and within budget. As a full-service agency, we will not sub-contract any element of the project, and would undertake all activities from our Birmingham base.

BMG successfully runs many large and small scale research and evaluation studies in any one year – with an average of between 50 and 100 'live' projects at any one time, ranging from £10,000 to over £500,000 in value. BMG is therefore fully dependent on high standards of project management to ensure that the projects run smoothly and efficiently, and deliver a high quality end 'product' for its many clients. To facilitate this, BMG works towards the Prince2 (Projects in Controlled Environments) project management approach, adopting a number of key features including:

- A focus on clear aims and objectives;
- A defined structure for project management;
- A task based planning approach;
- Dividing the project into tasks, stages and milestones.

Our project management includes:

- Project inception phase, involving a post-tender inception meeting with the client, a familiarisation phase for the BMG team and a Project Inception Document (PID) for the client;
- Project planning, involving the identification of tasks, stages and milestones and the allocation of resources across the business (for example, researchers, sampling specialists, interviewers, data processing, analysts etc);
- Risk assessment (and associated actions);
- Monitoring and controlling the different stages of the project through project meetings (internally as well as with the client), reviewing project plans and monitoring progress;
- Managing successful delivery of research reports;
- Ensuring final completion of projects, including end of project reviews and final client 'sign-off'.

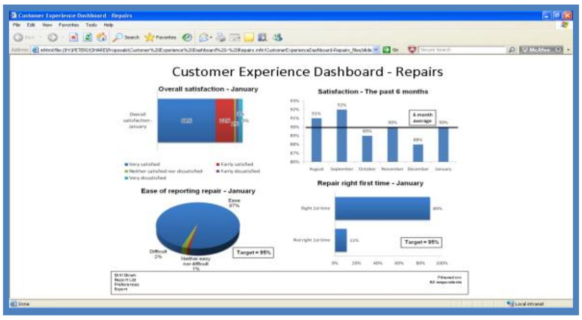
The Principal Researcher for the project (that is, a Board Director or Research Director) has the ultimate responsibility for this process, supported by the Research Manager who takes day to day responsibility for projects. We can confirm that all employees will at all time follow the Market Research Society code of conduct and guidelines.

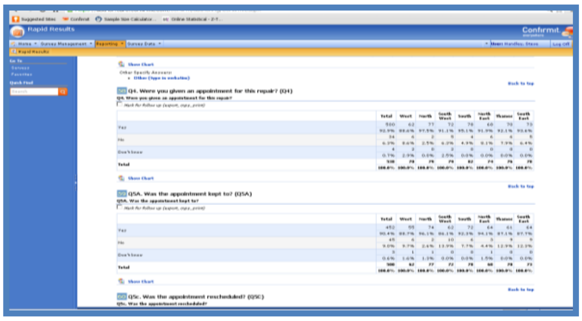
At BMG, we believe that good communication between client and contractor is key to the success of any project. We would provide regular client updates and written confirmation of key decisions, as well as Project Progress Reports on *at least* a fortnightly basis by email.

Project team members can be reached by post, phone, fax and e-mail and we make ourselves available to our clients at all possible times, and certainly within the hours of 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday. BMG offices are open between 7.30am and 9.30pm during the week and typically between 9.00am and 3.00pm at weekends to handle out of normal office hour enquires. Requests received from clients are usually fed back through to the client on the day they are received by BMG.

For quantitative survey work, we are also able to offer (at no extra cost) a web-based project portal, which can provide the client with *secure* instant online access to project information such as fieldwork progress, response rate information, and project schedules. The portal would be tailored to the client's needs and is supported by BMG's in-house team of research and systems specialists to provide a valuable management tool.

Within Confirmit it is also possible to set up live dashboards showing key information in more graphical form, and these dashboards are bespoke-designed to meet the requirements of each project. Again, an example is provided below. BMG would work closely with DECC to develop dashboards that allow members of the client team, and the wider organisation, to access the results in a simple and easy to understand format.





1.3.5 Contingency planning

BMG is a large, full service agency, and the team identified for this project represents only a small part of the total research team. Should any of the allocated team members at some point during the research project become ill, or cease to work for BMG, then there will be other staff of equivalent status and capability who will be able to step into the breach, and continue the work on the project with minimum disruption – both within the team selected, but also if necessary by drafting in staff of equivalent seniority and experience to take their place.

Continuity will be ensured both through effective record keeping and note taking (which is in part governed by BMG's quality management systems) and also by ensuring that the team is large enough to maintain continuity in the absence of one member, and ensure that those brought in can quickly be brought up to speed. BMG has other staff at Director level who also have experience of delivering quantitative surveys of this nature, and a number of other Research Managers who could also take over, such that continuity would be maintained.

BMG also has fully documented plans in place to deal with wider business continuity issues, such as damage to our building or computer systems, and these ensure that, again, we minimise our vulnerability to such events and maintain continuity of projects for our clients (please see appendix 1 for more detail on this).

BMG views this work as an important project, and one which will have the necessary care and attention given to it during its delivery. We have the experience, and the professional and field capacity, comfortably to handle a piece of work of this size. Nevertheless, we recognise both that we must deliver work to the timescales required by our clients, and that we must at all times maintain the highest standards of quality and customer service.

To ensure this, we plan our forward workload carefully, ensuring that we do not take on work that we cannot deliver, and where time allows, responding to increasing workload by recruiting into the appropriate teams, particularly our field teams.

1.3.6 Suggested timetable

The timetable below reflects the milestones outlined in the brief, and we are confident we can accommodate these timings, subject to adopting the approaches outlined above in relation to the challenges and risks facing the project.

We would also be happy to refine this through discussion with DECC at the inception stage of the project. The ITT also requests a breakdown of the level of input from the various project members, and this is included within the fee section of this proposal.

W/C	Action	Responsibility
16-Nov-15	Inception meeting Review of existing materials (previous surveys, contact information)	BMG/DECC BMG

23-Nov-15	Draft questionnaire submitted Contact information supplied Sample collated and analysed Comments on draft questionnaire Sampling recommendations submitted	BMG DECC BMG DECC BMG
30-Nov-15	Questionnaire finalised Sampling approach agreed Pre-pilot of questionnaire Recommendations for questionnaire amendments submitted	BMG/(DECC) DECC BMG BMG
07-Dec-15	Questionnaire signed off Live pilot Pilot report	DECC BMG BMG
14-Dec-15	Minor amendments as necessary Questionnaire scripted and tested	BMG/(DECC) BMG
21-Dec-15		
28-Dec-15		
04-Jan to 06-Mar-16	Fieldwork Ongoing coding and data validation	BMG BMG
07-Mar-16	Topline data available	BMG
14-Mar-16	Drafts of report and technical report submitted Comments on drafts of report and technical report	BMG DECC
21-Mar-16	Review of comments and revised versions delivered	BMG
28-Mar-16	Reports signed off	DECC
04-Apr-16	Presentation of final results to DECC	BMG

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 A CATI approach

The ITT suggests that a CATI approach would be appropriate, and we concur that it represents the most effective method of engaging with the target audience for a number of reasons:

- Much more cost effective than face-to-face collection methods;
- Avoids the self-selection bias inherent in any self-completion approach, and maximises the inclusion of people with literacy problems, and those who are harder to reach;
- Ensures that consistency is maintained with results from the previous evaluation;
- Delivers a robust sample that is representative of the population of England, Scotland and Wales, ensuring coverage of urban and rural customers, and customers living in the full spectrum of deprivation status;
- Enabling us to control the profile of the achieved sample to ensure that targets are met;
- Allowing us to take steps to maximise response rates and further enhance the robustness of the data.

Calls to households would display a number so that respondents can call back to find out who has been calling them and why. If respondents do decide to call back, they will in the first instance hear a voicemail message giving them a brief overview of the survey and the reason for the call, and offering them the means to either opt in to participation, or to opt out. If they require further information, or would like to speak to someone in person, they will be invited to leave a message to this effect, and will be called back accordingly. However the message will also include the name and contact details of a member of the project team should they wish to make direct contact.

Interviewing would be undertaken from our single site head office, recently re-located in Edgbaston in Birmingham. The close proximity of the research and CATI interviewing teams facilitates a high degree of interaction, allowing ongoing discussion and speedy response in the case of respondent queries or issues. This means that we can respond quickly and effectively to requests for removal from the sample frame and queries about the survey and its purpose, and also to any complaints, which will be escalated as appropriate immediately on receipt.

We use the latest Confirmit software, and our researchers have full support from an experienced team of data service executives, field managers, sampling specialists and coders. We have quality systems that match or exceed industry standards such as: DPA; MRS Code of Conduct; IQCS; ISO 9001:2000 and ISO 20252; and Data Management Association (DMA) membership. We have a fully documented Quality Management System (QMS) and comprehensive validation checks that would be implemented wherever appropriate. **100% of all calls are recorded in our CATI centre and remote dialling facilities are available so that clients can listen in to calls from their own offices.**

1.4.2 Sampling

1.4.2.1 Sample size and composition

It is expected that the workshops will engage with approximately 16,900 consumers, and the project requirement is to ensure a minimum overall sample size of 500, with a minimum of 100 participants from each of the following categories:

- Attended workshop only;
- Attended workshop and 1-2-1;
- Savings message;
- Social message;
- No envelope (subject to size of sample frame which is currently unknown).

We have provided fee options for a sample size of 500, and 750 and, given that the workshop and envelope/message conditions are not mutually exclusive, we would suggest the following sample structure to ensure analysis is possible in each of the individual cells created, subject to their being sufficient numbers of contacts in each of these cells. Should this not be the case then we would work with DECC to develop an alternative sampling strategy that maximises the project's ability to meet objectives.

Table 1: Proposed sample structure on the basis of sample size of 500

	Attended workshop only	Attended workshop and 1-2-1	TOTAL
Savings message	83	84	167
Social message	84	83	167
No envelope	83	83	166
TOTAL	**250**	**250**	**500**

Table 2: Proposed sample structure on the basis of sample size of 750

	Attended workshop only	Attended workshop and 1-2-1	TOTAL
Savings message	125	125	250
Social message	125	125	250
No envelope	125	125	250
TOTAL	**375**	**375**	**750**

The maximum confidence intervals associated with the sample sizes outlined above are as follows at the 95% level of confidence:

- Sample size 83/84: ±10.7%
- Sample size 125: ±8.7%
- Sample size 166/167: ±7.6%
- Sample size 250: ±6.2%
- Sample size 375: ±5.0%
- Sample size 500: ±4.3%
- Sample size 750: ±3.5%

Within this we may wish to add further targets/quotas to ensure we capture sufficiently robust numbers of interviews with those who took action on the day and those who did not.

While the Britain Thinks evaluation of the BESN programme identified that over half of workshop participants took some form of action after attending a workshop, including three in ten who carried out a 'key' action directly related to the project aims (i.e. contacting their energy supplier, switching energy supplier, applying for an ECO/Green Deal energy assessment or applying for another form of grant or loan), it is not clear how this breaks down in terms of actions 'on the day' and subsequent actions. Consequently we would advise on our ability to achieve this once we have had an opportunity to review the available contacts.

We note that programme champions will collect basic information from consumers at the group workshops and one-to-ones. We understand that the information provided for the 2014 evaluation captured approximately 18% of workshop participants, but we would hope that this proportion would be higher in this instance (as a result of previous experience) so that we are able to maximise the level of representativeness of the final sample.

We note that the 2014 evaluation achieved a response rate of 58%, and that a further 35% of those contacted to participate in the research did not recall attending a workshop, and that this group was excluded from the sample. While this might have resulted in some over-estimation of the effectiveness of the workshops, we concur that it would be appropriate to exclude such individuals in the latest evaluation.

By monitoring the composition of this group and comparing it with the surveyed sample we will be able to explore the extent to which the two groups differ, and to decide whether it would be appropriate to extrapolate the proportion that does not recall attending to the wider universe of participants. This could then be built into our analysis, allowing a realistic estimate of the reach and impact of the workshops, on the assumption that it is unlikely for those who do not recall attendance at the workshop to have taken action as a result of their participation.

Our fees are predicated on the fact that the appropriate flags are supplied on the Excel contact database supplied by DECC to enable us to stratify the sample on the appropriate dimensions. As a minimum these would ideally be:

- Name;
- Address;
- Telephone contact number (landline and/or mobile);
- Actions taken on the day of workshop, if any;
- Envelope message (money or social).

We further assume that DECC will only pass on contact information where consent has been provided by the consumer to do so. Alternatively the contact information will need to indicate this clearly to ensure that we can screen out any contacts where consent has not been explicitly provided.

We also note the intention to consider differences between those who followed up with the freepost envelope and those who did not, and those who took action independently outside of the workshop, and we recognise that this will necessarily fall out of the sample in line with the prevalence of such cases.

1.4.2.2 Data security in transit, storage and deletion

Clearly, in order for the project to be successful, it will be essential that protocols are established for the secure transfer and storage of the personal details of customers.

BMG adheres fully to the Data Protection Act with compliance being kept up-to-date by our Data Protection Officer who carries full accreditation from the Information Systems Examination Board (ISEB) certificate of data protection. The Data Protection Officer has responsibility to ensure that all BMG staff are kept up to date with changes and amendments to the Data Protection Act.

We fully recognise the importance of information security management and data security and attained the International Standard for Information Security Management ISO 27001:2005 earlier this year.

We routinely receive databases from our clients and other sources, and take our responsibility to ensure their safety and confidentiality very seriously indeed, given that they represent a cornerstone of our work.

BMG policy states that all personal/protect data must be encrypted to FIPS 140-2 level 1 before electronic transfer. This process can be undertaken by the information management team, and staff should make sure that they are familiar with this process. All passwords must be sent via a separate email if data is leaving the local network. However, it is the stated policy that the transfer of personal/protect data via email should be avoided at all times.

Our preferred route of delivery/transfer is via secure FTP transfer with password protected access. An automatic alert is sent to the system/network administrator once any data has been uploaded or downloaded by a client. On notification (Receiving data) data is downloaded by the database coordinator to a secure location.

All data is automatically scanned for viruses and malware by Panda EndPoint protection. The data is then deleted from the FTP server. Data is then prepared and encrypted before being loaded onto Confirmit.

After one year personal details are deleted from Confirmit (for those projects which are stored on Confirmit). This can be shorter or longer as agreed with the Client.

All hard copy data will be transferred using a recognised courier. Completed surveys for storage are transferred by the DS department to our archive supplier. Non survey related hard copy must be placed in confidential disposable bags.

It is the stated policy of BMG that under no circumstances is personal/protect data to be held in unencrypted form, on any wireless network or on removable media.

Hard copy breaks down into two categories. Hard copies that contain data that is personal/protect, or data which is subject to the data protection act but is not a completed survey. This data needs to be destroyed using the confidential blue bag disposal system. Hard copies containing survey data are kept, under the MRS guidelines, for two years. Once data has been scanned/input then it must be sent to our secure off-site storage facility. Destruction of survey data over two years old is handled by the Data Validation Supervisor and conducted in an environmentally friendly fashion.

All removable media carrying personal/protect data must be destroyed after use. Discs and DVDs will be physically destroyed by being broken up into a number of pieces. Memory sticks will be wiped and electronic data will be destroyed using PGP shred.

Data destruction is the responsibility of the database coordinator and the IT Manager. No employee is allowed to store on any kind of media any personal/protect data received in from a Client or Supplier and/or survey data collected by BMG. Failure to comply will result in disciplinary action. Personal data collected from respondents and held on our secure network is deleted via PGP shredding after twelve months.

Only those details required for the purpose of interview will be provided to recruiters and interviewers. Recruiters to the qualitative element will need all relevant contact information and any demographic information that will inform the fulfilment of quotas. However, given that our CATI call centre uses an auto-dialler, meaning interviewers do not need to enter telephone numbers, and the fact that the CATI script itself automatically updates quota fulfilment information, telephone interviewers will only be provided with names and details regarding their participation and actions to date (where known).

1.4.3 Survey development

We note that the questionnaire will be based on that used in the 2014 evaluation, and that there will need to be a process of review to ensure that this addresses any new research questions and emerging information requirements.

While we would use the inception phase to explore what these questions/issues might be, an initial review of the 2014 questionnaire has raised the following possibilities:

- Actions taken on the day rather than subsequently;
- Recall and use of envelope (where relevant);
- Views on advice received as a result of sending in energy bill (where relevant);
- Uptake of the Warm Homes Discount or joining the Priority Services Register;
- Barriers to taking action;
- Estimate of savings made/expected (although we would expect many consumers to be unable to make such estimates, and would treat any estimates provided with caution), to explore how realistic consumers are in this respect.

While we recognise the need to retain consistency with the 2014 evaluation where possible, we do also believe that some of the 2014 questions could benefit from being reframed to an extent. For example, when assessing the advice received, it may be worth trying to separate whether this was received during the workshop, the one-to-one or via advice received as a result of sending in an energy bill. While it may be difficult for some consumers to make this distinction, it may highlight some interesting findings where they are able to do so.

It will be important to ensure that the information requirements identified are balanced carefully against the burden placed on the respondent, and we would strongly recommend that the survey is no longer than 15 minutes in length as an absolute maximum. This will ensure a high level of participation, ensuring that the final sample is representative of the audience under investigation, and increase the quality of the data collected.

Our costs assume the inclusion of 5 ‘other – specify’ in line with the 2014 questionnaire.

1.4.4 Questionnaire scripting and testing

Once the draft questionnaire has been signed off for piloting by the client it will be reviewed by each department within BMG before being scripted into Confirmit CATI. Logic checks are built into the CATI script and the data services executive and research team subsequently test the script as part of our quality control processes. Specific emphasis is placed on the skips in questions so as to ensure that scripting has been correctly applied. If required, we would be able to supply a link to DECC which would enable you to review the CATI pilot script prior to going live.

1.4.5 Pre-piloting

Prior to the main pilot fieldwork, the survey will be subject to a pre-pilot. We will conduct 8 to 10 interviews in order to test the questionnaire mechanics in terms of screening respondents into the appropriate quota and routing, and also to ensure that questions are unambiguous and clearly understood by respondents. BMG has remote listening facilities, which enables clients to listen in to live interviews from their place of work, and many of our clients have found it invaluable to be involved in the piloting phase, as it allows them to really understand the survey experience from the respondent's point of view.

Any changes required as a result of this piloting stage would be discussed in detail with DECC prior to the survey going to live pilot. Subject to the changes being minimal, we would expect that the pilot interviews will count to overall targets and be included in the final dataset. Hence there is no additional fee for the pilot.

1.4.6 Live pilot

Once the questionnaire has received final sign-off we will move into the full pilot. We have outlined our approaches to maximising response, and minimising non-response bias at section 1.3.2 above, so have not reiterated them here, except to say that we routinely achieve response rates of 50% or more in our CATI work with residents. Many of the victim satisfaction projects we run on behalf of police forces rely on our ability to achieve targets with very limited sample, and on this basis we are confident that we can achieve high response rates for this project. Following the live pilot we would submit a short report summarising the findings and recommendations from this stage. While we would not expect major changes to be required at this stage, we would make any necessary minor amendments to the questionnaire to ensure its suitability for use with this audience.

1.4.7 Fieldwork

1.4.7.1 Interviewer briefing

In respect of response rates, we noted earlier that only experienced interviewers with specific experience of surveys with residents would be deployed. However, every survey has its own characteristics and it is essential that interviewing teams are accurately and fully briefed**.** Each briefing session, attended by 10-15 interviewers, lasts for approximately two hours, and typically takes place on the morning prior to fieldwork commencing.

Interview briefing specific to this project would cover:

- A discussion of project objectives;
- A review of the questionnaire, and issues regarding data capture for questions;
- Explanation of sampling methodology, including sample design and quotas;
- Timetable for the project;
- Review of quality control procedures.

The briefing involves a presentation of the questionnaire by a lead researcher on the project, which is projected from the Confirmit system onto a screen, so that interviewers can work through the questionnaire as shown on the CATI screen when they come to undertake the interviews. We have found this particularly beneficial as the format and layout of the questionnaire is familiar to interviewers from the outset and they can raise any questions or queries with the lead researcher. Interviewers also receive a paper copy of the questionnaire together with detailed briefing notes that they can use as a reference document throughout the fieldwork window. We welcome the attendance of clients at such briefings, as this can really help to provide context, and allows the interviewing team to hear about the research from 'the horse's mouth'.

Before interviewing commences, interviewers will spend half a day practicing with the CATI script, and during this time they will role play with other interviewers as if conducting a 'live' interview. This session is supervised by a team leader and the lead researcher is available to answer any queries.

1.4.7.2 CATI Quality Control

Ensuring and maintaining quality is an essential part of BMG's call handling procedures. As a result, there are set documented protocols in place that ensure that all our interviews are carried out based on the requirements of our clients and to MRS and IQCS standards. Most significantly, the interviewers who will work on this project will already be experienced in undertaking surveys with residents, including vulnerable residents[5], and will bring to this project the experience and insight they have gained as part of that work.

BMG's Confirmit CATI system has pre-set inbuilt logic checks that ensure respondents' answers are logical and are checked as the survey progresses. This would not be obvious to the respondent, but would be a prompt to the interviewer to check their coding. These logic checks are again repeated when the data is processed in MERLIN.

We record 100% of all calls and call recordings are retained for a period of up to six months. BMG also operates a remote dialling system which enables nominated staff from client organisations to dial-in at allotted times in order to listen in to calls live and in process. This would not be obvious to the interviewer or interviewee but all respondents would be notified at the start of the call of the possibility of calls being monitored or recorded.

When completing telephone interviews, all interviewers are supervised by one of BMG's team leaders, with a ratio of 10 interviewers to one team leader. Interviewers are monitored via an online tracking system, which allows the dedicated QC team to listen to both live calls and recordings, and to track the responses entered by the interviewer, enabling them to check the quality of the data capture process as well as call quality, in real time and during live interviews. A minimum of 5% of interviews is monitored for every project.

As part of this monitoring process, interviewers are scored against key criteria relating to their ability to introduce the survey appropriately in terms of project knowledge and in terms of delivery, to adhere to the script, to maintain respondent engagement throughout the survey, to provide respondents with the appropriate information to allow them to answer questions appropriately (e.g. reading out full scales), to record responses fully and accurately, to provide the appropriate information at the interview close (reiteration of name, where calling from, MRS contact etc.) and to ensure verbatim comments are fully 'cleaned'.

Each monitored interview is scored against each of these seven criteria from 1 to 10, with a requirement to achieve a minimum average score of 7. In this way we ensure that our quality standards are applied consistently across the board, and that any areas of poor performance are identified and addressed quickly and efficiently. All monitored interviews involve a face-to-face feedback session with the interviewer in question where any issues are highlighted, and additional supervision and coaching is provided where necessary. Positive performance is also recognised via this process, ensuring a process of continuous positive reinforcement for interviewers to achieve the highest standards.

The results of this tracking of interviewer performance are constantly monitored in real time so that we can understand performance and undertake corrective action should this be necessary.

We also apply a range of criteria which automatically flag a need for follow-up action (e.g. failure to inform the respondent that they are from BMG Research, failing to identify the client on whose behalf the research is being undertaken, failure to identify the correct respondent etc.), and where an interviewer has three such instances within a three month period they are subject to disciplinary action. In instances where the breach is sufficiently significant the interviewer's employment is terminated immediately, subject to appropriate HR procedures.

Our CATI system software records the outcome for every call made, and where an interview is not secured, records the reason for this (e.g. fax, modem, line engaged). The responses recorded on the system are analysed by BMG's field team leaders to ensure that interviews have been completed

[5] BMG undertakes victim satisfaction surveys on behalf of several police forces, and so our interviewers have the skills and experience to deal with vulnerable respondents sensitively and ethically.

appropriately, and that the sampling methodology is being properly adhered to. Where problems are found, interviewers are given appropriate feedback. Where problems persist, interviewer's contracts with BMG can be terminated.

1.4.8 Outputs

1.4.8.1 Overview

The ITT outlines the requirement for the following outputs, and each of these is discussed briefly in the following sections:

- Agreed plan for the project;
- Headline data of those that attended the workshops;
- Cleaned dataset in Excel format;
- Publishable de-attributed dataset;
- Draft and final report;
- Technical report;
- Presentation of results.

1.4.8.2 Project plan

Clearly there will need to be a very detailed phase of development work to ensure that the project takes place on a fully informed and intellectually coherent basis. Consequently the first task would comprise an inception meeting.

Before the meeting BMG will undertake a review of relevant literature, and similar projects undertaken in this sector by BMG and others, in order to bring learnings to the meeting. It will also be essential to review the availability of sample data, methods of enhancing sample data, sampling protocol, coding of open response, timings, outputs, required sign-offs, progress reporting, data protection etc.

BMG will then produce an inception report/project plan summarising agreed outcomes and timescales. This will include responsibilities and milestones in detail through the life of the project. We will also provide a more detailed iteration of our risk analysis. The inception report will provide you with a functional management tool against which to monitor our progress.

1.4.8.3 Headline data of those that attended the workshops

A significant part of the reporting will be an analysis of the attendance data that is collated from Champions via the signing-in sheets. While we recognise that this information is unlikely to be complete (as noted earlier approximately 18% of workshop participants were included in the monitoring information available in 2014), and that it may contain gaps, it will be invaluable in understanding the extent to which the workshops have been successful in targeting the range of vulnerable groups that the BESN is intended to support, and in the sampling process.

On this first point, this would include an assessment of the extent to which the workshops have been successful in reaching those aged over 65, households with dependent children, those without access to gas, those without internet access and those reliant on electric heating (which were identified as being well represented in 2014), and an evaluation of whether the 2015/16 workshops are more successful in engaging audiences that were less well reached in 2014 (i.e. those claiming or entitled to means tested benefits, those with disabilities, those with mobility difficulties, those with chronic illnesses, those disadvantaged by the way they pay for their energy and those without previous experience of switching). It would draw on secondary data-sets (e.g. Census 2011, DECC, ODI, and DWP published statistics, Housing Surveys in the relevant devolved administrations etc.) to put these figures into context, and to assess the programme's success in meeting its objectives. The findings from this analysis will also be incorporated into the written report.

An analysis of this information will also be instrumental in guiding our recommended sampling approach. While it is difficult to specify at this stage exactly what information will be included, our understanding based on the 2014 evaluation is that it will be able to inform estimates in the following areas:

- Age;
- Disability status;
- Receipt of means tested benefits;
- Household composition;
- Access to gas;
- Access to internet;
- Switching history;
- Heating methods;
- Energy payment methods;
- Type of advice issued (one-to-one or group or both and broad topic of advice);
- Outcomes of advice (switching, ECO referrals etc);

1.4.8.4 Cleaned dataset in Excel

Overview

BMG has a full data analysis team, and the company regularly generates complex sets of data tables containing full significance testing and supplements these bivariate analyses with multivariate analysis techniques where appropriate.

Our ISO processes guarantee that all data supplied meet the following criteria:

- **Accurate** – data will be sufficiently correct for its intended purposes;
- **Valid** – data will be recorded in an agreed format and used in compliance with recognised standards;
- **Reliable** – data will reflect stable and consistent data collection processes;
- **Timely** – data will be available within a reasonable time period, quickly enough to support information needs;
- **Relevant** – data captured will be relevant to the purposes for which it is used;
- **Complete** – all data will be captured based on information needs of the client;
- **Secure** – all data will be stored securely and confidentially.

Benefits of Confirmit CATI

A major benefit of using Confirmit CATI is that logic checks can be built into the design of the script. When scripting the questionnaire therefore, all appropriate logic and consistency checks will be built into the set up, so that any inconsistent responses are checked with respondents at the time of interviewing, as part of the automation of the script (preventing respondents providing, and interviewers inputting, illogical responses).

During the data cleaning process, a number of edit checks will be identified and carried out on the data and cleaned and merged data files will be validated by a data processing executive. This process of logic checking is conducted using Merlin software, a specialist software product with a powerful validation facility.

We will agree with you the data cleaning and checking protocols to be applied to each survey file, but these are likely to include:

- Missing data and item non-response;
- Consistent coding of verbatim responses;
- The consistent application of filtered and derived variables;
- Sample bases for valid responses;

- Full and consistent variable labelling;
- Application of weights etc.

Minimising missing data

A number of measures can be taken in order to minimise interviewer missing data:

- The CATI script is prepared so as to prevent interviewers moving through the survey unless a response is provided for each question. If a 'don't know' response is excluded from the response codes this will force respondents to provide, and interviewers to record, a response. Note that this approach would not be appropriate for all questions;
- Interviewers are monitored on the number of 'don't know' responses recorded, and are provided with feedback/coaching as necessary if recorded levels are above average or those expected;
- Where missing data has to be minimised for the purpose of producing regression or other statistical analyses we can use some form of multiple imputation for the missing data. This approach would only be adopted following careful discussion and consultation with the client team.

Coding of open responses

Prior to finalising the data processing specifications, the agency will review coding issues with you.

Coding of the verbatim responses will be undertaken by the call centre team who will have a high degree of familiarity with the project. For consistency, where available we will code verbatim comments to the frames used for the previous evaluation as far as possible. In order to ensure we are applying the frames consistently and in the manner used by the previous contractor, we will review the types of comments that have been included under each code and use this as the basis for briefing the field and coding teams. Where no relevant frames exist we will develop new code frames and send these through to DECC for sign-off before implementation.

The call centre supervisor will undertake a daily review and sign off of the coding before it is reviewed by one of the Coding Executives and finally signed off as complete. Any inconsistencies found by the coding exec are fed back to the field team and to the senior researcher, who will advise if any developments or enhancements to the coding frames are required.

Data reporting

We would agree the data specification with you before running data tables, and would provide recommendations on relevant cross-breaks based on the sub-sample sizes available, although we do need to be mindful that a sample of 83/84 carries a maximum confidence interval of ±10.7% at the 95% level of confidence, and a sample of 125 a maximum confidence interval of ±8.7%, so it is unlikely that we will observe statistically significant differences in the data within individual analysis cells (e.g. those who attended a workshop only and received a savings message compared with those who attended a workshop only and received a social message). However, analysis at amore aggregated level will potentially identify statistically significant differences (e.g. those who attended a workshop only compared to those who also had a one-to-one meeting).

Once the data have been cleaned and coded, merged data files are validated by the DP executive using Merlin, which is fully compatible with SPSS, Excel and other data formats, and which has powerful data validation functionality.

Once the data have been fully validated, the DP executive produces a clean set of data frequencies and ensures the frequency checklist is completed. These frequencies are signed off by the research executive prior to a full data report being produced.

Once a draft data report has been produced, the DP executive checks the report against the checklist. Prior to passing the draft report to research, the DP Manager confirms that all necessary checks have been made and procedures observed. This is recorded on the DP Quality Assurance form, which is signed by the DP Manager. A copy of this form is sent with the draft report to the appropriate executive in research team.

The research executive undertakes a thorough check of the draft report. The executive checks specifically that:

- Targets have been observed and are reflected in the sample profile;
- Survey weights (if appropriate) have been applied properly and produced accurate data;
- Any derived variables have been calculated correctly;
- Required means, medians, standard errors etc. are included;
- All sub-samples and required geographic breakdowns are evident within the data;
- All labels and data specifications are accurate;
- The data specification has been properly adhered to and that all sample bases in the data are accurate;
- There are no logic issues evident in the data.

It is only once this draft report has been thoroughly checked by a member of the research team that associated data and reports will be produced for delivery to DECC.

The data file will include detailed information on how it has been edited and coded, the composition of any derived variables, the level of confidence used in tests of statistical significance, weights (if necessary – please see below) and any other information to ensure that users of the data fully understand its robustness, its limitations, and that they have the tools to ensure appropriate manipulation and interpretation of the data.

Possibilities for weighting

It might be appropriate to consider weighting the final data to ensure they are representative of the wider base of consumers engaged by the workshops.

Our proposals are predicated on ensuring equal numbers of interviews with the various sub-samples (workshop only, workshop and one-to-one, envelope messaging etc.) to allow for sub-analysis. However, an analysis of the contact database supplied by DECC should allow us to identify the actual prevalence of these groups within the overall expected population of 16,900, and on this basis to decide with DECC whether weighting would be necessary.

If we find that the approximately 16,900 consumers do break down approximately evenly across the various sampled groups we would in all likelihood advise against weighting, to avoid reducing the effective sample size. However, if we find that there is significant variability on this basis then we may recommend applying weights to account for this, and to ensure our results can be reliably extrapolated to the wider sample.

1.4.8.5 Publishable de-attributed dataset

The steps outlined above will ensure that the dataset is of the appropriate quality for publication, and that the required materials to facilitate its manipulation and interpretation are in place. This will be further facilitated by the technical report that accompanies the project, which is described in more detail below. BMG has substantial experience of supplying data for publication, and a number of links to examples is included below:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/small-business-survey-2014-businesses-with-employees

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/demand-for-mentoring-among-small-and-medium-sized-enterprises

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-capabilities-in-small-and-medium-enterprises https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/small-businesses-understanding-growth

1.4.8.6 Draft and final report

BMG prides itself on producing clearly communicated and actionable findings, both in verbal presentations and in written reports. We place considerable importance on producing documentation that is thorough and comprehensive, clear, interesting and relevant, whilst also being accessible for audiences who may not be research literate. We recognise that a key requirement will be for concise, clearly understandable reports, which will be designed to help DECC understand service delivery via BESN workshops and judge performance.

We pride ourselves on being able to reduce large volumes of complex data to its core messages in a concise and easy-to-read fashion, including the use of appropriate graphics and tables.

We also place considerable importance on ensuring that our reports go beyond simple narrative descriptions of data, and that they incorporate insights and comparative information that puts the results into context.

All written reporting will go through a strict process of proofing and cross-checking, and will only be signed off by the responsible Director once the Research Executives have demonstrated that all figures quoted are entirely accurate.

All reports will be submitted as drafts to DECC, and comments and queries arising from their review will be incorporated into a subsequent draft. Our fees assume up to four iterations of this process prior to finalisation of the documents, which will be produced in the DECC template in accordance with the detailed guidelines provided.

Much of the work that we conduct as a company is for public sector organisations and as a result a large proportion of the reports that we produce is published. The following are links to examples of our published reports, and reports that have been published by government departments using our findings:

- Department for Business Innovation and Skills, Small Business Survey 2014 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414963/bis-15-151-small-business-survey-2014-sme-employers_v1.pdf
- Valuation Office Agency Statutory Valuations Team Customer Survey: Findings –2013-14 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/399633/SVT_Annual_Report_2013-14.pdf
- Valuation Office Agency Property Services Customer Survey: Findings –2013-14 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/421879/PS_Annual_Report_2013-14-April-2015.pdf
- Electoral Commission Post-polling public opinion research http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/162137/2013-Post-election-survey-Report.pdf
- Greater London Authority/Department for Education: Exploring School Improvement Needs and Practices in London Schools: http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/The%20Mayor%27s%20Education%20Inquiry%20-%20Schools%20Survey.pdf
- Evaluation of Women and Work Sector Pathways Initiative for UKCES, BMG Research http://www.ukces.org.uk/publications/women-and-work-phase-3
- The Pensions Regulator Employers awareness, understanding and activity of workplace pensions reform, Spring 2012 http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/docs/ecr-employer-tracker-research-spring-2012.pdf

We have significant experience of working with clients and/or other research agencies to enhance the design and content of a range of formats, including full and detailed research, summary reports and infographics.

We fully recognise that the final report must be viewed as the end product of a highly reliable research process and to ensure quality, senior staff input into all stages of the research process, including analysis and final reporting.

1.4.8.7 Technical report

The technical report for the project will include, as a minimum, full details on:

- Background to project;
- Outline of project objectives and research questions;
- Data collection approach;
- Sample frame;
- Sampling procedures;
- Response rates;
- Assessment of robustness and degree of uncertainty;
- Achieved versus target sample profile;
- Coding and cleaning conventions;
- Analysis specifications;
- Level of statistical significance tests;
- Definitions of derived variables;
- Weighting procedures (if required);
- Survey development and a copy of the final questionnaire;
- Glossary of terms.

In relation to our technical reports, we ensure all relevant methodological details are included, and every step in the process clearly described, to ensure that it is fit for use as a resource to replicate the research in subsequent iterations where necessary.

1.4.8.8 Presentation of results

As standard practice BMG will consult with DECC as to how the results are to be delivered to ensure that they are entirely appropriate for the audience in question. The presentation will be delivered by a senior member of the project team, to ensure that the detailed knowledge and understanding of the project's objectives and findings can be effectively communicated.

1.5 Added value

At no extra cost we can offer DECC the chance to include up to three questions on our monthly nationally representative CATI omnibus. While we would welcome discussion with DECC as to the areas of investigation this might be useful for, one suggestion might be to explore the extent to which people are aware of, and understand the eligibility criteria, for ECO, PRS or WHD.

1.6 Cost

1.6.1 Summary of costs

Our costs for undertaking the project in line with the proposals outlined in this document, **on the basis of 500 completed interviews would be £28,300 excluding VAT**.

However, subject to the availability of sufficient contacts, we would recommend increasing the overall **sample size to 750, and our overall costs on this basis would be £33,200 excluding VAT.**

Declarations

Section 4

Declarations to be submitted by the Tenderer

Invitation to Tender for: Monitoring the benefits of the Big Energy Savings Network (BESN)

Tender Reference Number: **Error! Reference source not found.**

Deadlines for Tender Responses: **Error! Reference source not found.**

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Statement of non-collusion

To: The Department of Energy and Climate Change

1. We recognise that the essence of competitive tendering is that the Department will receive a bona fide competitive tender from all persons tendering. We therefore certify that this is a bona fide tender and that we have not fixed or adjusted the amount of the tender or our rates and prices included therein by or in accordance with any agreement or arrangement with any other person.
2. We also certify that we have not done and undertake not to do at any time before the hour and date specified for the return of this tender any of the following acts:
    a. communicate to any person other than the Department the amount or approximate amount of our proposed tender, except where the disclosure, in confidence, of the approximate amount is necessary to obtain any insurance premium quotation required for the preparation of the tender;
    b. enter into any agreement or arrangement with any other person that he shall refrain for submitting a tender or as to the amount included in the tender;
    c. offer or pay or give or agree to pay or give any sum of money, inducement or valuable consideration directly or indirectly to any person doing or having done or causing or having caused to be done, in relation to any other actual or proposed tender for the contract any act, omission or thing of the kind described above.

3. In this certificate, the word “person” shall include any person, body or association, corporate or unincorporated; and “any agreement or arrangement” includes any such information, formal or informal, whether legally binding or not.

Signature (duly authorised on behalf of the tenderer)

Print name

On behalf of (organisation name)

Date

Form of Tender

To: The Department of Energy and Climate Change

1. Having considered the invitation to tender and all accompanying documents (including without limitation, the terms and conditions of contract and the Specification) we confirm that we are fully satisfied as to our experience and ability to deliver the goods/services in all respects in accordance with the requirements of this invitation to tender.
2. We hereby tender and undertake to provide and complete all the services required to be performed in accordance with the terms and conditions of contract and the Specification for the amount set out in the Pricing Schedule.
3. We agree that any insertion by us of any conditions qualifying this tender or any unauthorised alteration to any of the terms and conditions of contract made by us may result in the rejection of this tender.
4. We agree that this tender shall remain open to be accepted by the Department for 8 weeks from the date below.
5. We understand that if we are a subsidiary (within the meaning of section 1159 of (and schedule 6 to) the Companies Act 2006) if requested by the Department we may be required to secure a Deed of Guarantee in favour of the Department from our holding company or ultimate holding company, as determined by the Department in their discretion.
6. We understand that the Department is not bound to accept the lowest or any tender it may receive.
7. We certify that this is a bona fide tender.

Signature (duly authorised on behalf of the tenderer)

Print name

On behalf of (organisation name)

Date

Conflict of Interest

I have nothing to declare with respect to any current or potential interest or conflict in relation to this research (or any potential providers who may be subcontracted to deliver this work, their advisers or other related parties). By conflict of interest, I mean, anything which could be reasonably perceived to affect the impartiality of this research, or to indicate a professional or personal interest in the outcomes from this research.

Signed

Name

Position

OR

I wish to declare the following with respect to personal or professional interests related to relevant organisations*;

- X…
- Y…

Where a potential conflict of interest has been declared for an individual or organisation, please clearly outline the role which this individual or organisation will play in the proposed project and how any conflict of interest has or will be mitigated.

- X…
- Y…

Signed ……………………………………

Name ……………………………………

Position ……………………………………

Please complete this form and return this with your ITT documentation - Nil returns are required.

* These may include (but are not restricted to);

- A professional or personal interest in the outcome of this research
- For evaluation projects, a close working, governance, or commercial involvement in the project under evaluation
- Current or past employment with relevant organisations
- Payment (cash or other) received or likely to be received from relevant organisations for goods or services provided (Including consulting or advisory fees)
- Gifts or entertainment received from relevant organisations
- Shareholdings (excluding those within unit trusts, pension funds etc) in relevant organisations
- Close personal relationship or friendships with individuals employed by or otherwise closely associated with relevant organisations

All of the above apply both to the individual signing this form and their close family / friends / partners etc.

If your situation changes during the project in terms of interests or conflicts, you must notify DECC straight away.

A DECLARATION OF INTEREST WILL NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THE INDIVIDUAL OR ORGANISATION CANNOT WORK ON THE PROJECT; BUT IT IS VITAL THAT ANY INTEREST OR CONFLICT IS DECLARED SO IT CAN BE CONSIDERED OPENLY.

Code of Practice[6]

I confirm that I am aware of the requirements of the DECC Code of Practice[7] for Research and, in the proposed project, I will use my best efforts to ensure that the procedures used conform to those requirements under the following headings[8]:

- ☐ Responsibilities
- ☐ Competence
- ☐ Project planning
- ☐ Quality Control
- ☐ Handling of samples and materials
- ☐ Facilities and equipment
- ☐ Documentation of procedures and methods
- ☐ Research/work records

I understand that DECC has the right to inspect our procedures and practices against the requirements of the Code of Practice, and that I may be asked to provide documentary evidence of our working practices or provide access and assistance to auditors appointed by DECC.

(There is some flexibility in the application of the Code of Practice to specific research projects. Contractors are encouraged to discuss with DECC any aspects that cause them concern, in order to reach agreement on the interpretation of each requirement.)

Signature (duly authorised on behalf of the tenderer)

Print name

On behalf of (organisation name)

Date

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[6] Please note that this declaration applies to individuals and single organisations

[7] The Code of Practice is attached to this ITT

[8] Please delete as appropriate

Appendix: Statement of Terms

Set out below are BMG Research's standard terms and conditions. These shall be considered to be in place unless:

a) Our client sets out their own Terms and Conditions at proposal stage, and our submission of a proposal is considered to be acceptance of these or,

b) We sign a contract prepared by the client which sets out the Terms and Conditions under which work will be undertaken.

Compliance with International Standards

BMG complies with the International Standard for Quality Management Systems requirements (ISO 9001:2008) and the International Standard for Market, opinion and social research service requirements (ISO 20252:2012) and The International Standard for Information Security Management (ISO 27001:2013).

Freedom of Information

BMG is willing to support the client in responding to all Freedom of Information requests. However we regard all information about individuals as personally sensitive and should not be disclosed. We also regard our methodology and all other aspects of this tender that are used to evaluate its merit as commercially sensitive. This is a competitive tender and is judged against a set of criteria to evaluate the way we have interpreted the specification and the approach we have put forward to meeting the objectives. If this was placed into the public domain and therefore open to our competitors it could put us at a material disadvantage in any future tendering process. Therefore such commercially sensitive information should not be disclosed, without permission, for a period of at least one year after the award of the tender.

Ethical practice

BMG promotes ethical practice in research: We conduct our work responsibly and in light of the legal and moral codes of society.

We have a responsibility to maintain high scientific standards in the methods employed in the collection and dissemination of data, in the impartial assessment and dissemination of findings and in the maintenance of standards commensurate with professional integrity.

We recognise we have a duty of care to all those undertaking and participating in research and strive to protect subjects from undue harm arising as a consequence of their participation in research. This requires that subjects' participation should be as fully informed as possible and no group should be disadvantaged by routinely being excluded from consideration. All adequate steps shall be taken by both agency and client to ensure that the identity of each respondent participating in the research is protected.

Your acceptance of this proposal will be taken as agreement to abide by good practice in social research ethics.

Termination of contract

If commissioned based on the content of this proposal, the agency considers this to be your acceptance of our stated terms and conditions. Once commissioned, the agency reserves the right to levy a termination charge should the contract be cancelled by the client. All prices quoted are valid for ninety days from the date of this document. Included in the price quoted is a technical report detailing the methodology as delivered. This documentation would be made available to the client on request unless already detailed as part of the specified outputs.

With more than 25 years' experience, BMG Research has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality research and consultancy.

BMG serves both the public and the private sector, providing market and customer insight which is vital in the development of plans, the support of campaigns and the evaluation of performance.

Innovation and development is very much at the heart of our business, and considerable attention is paid to the utilisation of the most up to date technologies and information systems to ensure that market and customer intelligence is widely shared.

Company Reg: 2841970 VAT No: 580660632