

Together we have the energy to transform our communities

Part Three

Ofgem Stakeholder
Engagement and
Consumer Vulnerability
Incentive 2020/21

Our Consumer Vulnerability Activity and The Outcomes We Have Delivered



Electricity North West Limited
Registered number 02366949

electricity
north west
Bringing energy to your door

Welcome to our Part Three submission for Ofgem's Stakeholder Engagement and Consumer Vulnerability (SECV) Incentive for the regulatory year 2020/21.

Electricity North West is one of 14 distribution network operators (DNOs) in Great Britain regulated by Ofgem. As the only single licence DNO we have a determined focus on the North West and are proud of serving over five million customers with excellent performance and high levels of ambition.

We champion the region we serve and are proud that our network keeps our customers' lives running by making sure the electricity flows safely for every minute of every day.

We're responsible for operating, maintaining and upgrading 13,000 km of overhead power lines, more than 44,000 km of underground electricity cables and much more across Cumbria, Lancashire and Greater Manchester. This covers a diverse range of terrain and communities, from isolated farms and villages in rural areas such as the beautiful Lake District, parts of North Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Cheshire; to towns and cities with heavy industry and large urban populations, including the bustling city of Manchester.

2020/21 is the sixth year of the eight-year Business Plan period called RIIO-ED1. This stands for Revenue = Incentives + Innovation + Outputs (Electricity Distribution 1). It is the regulatory framework set by Ofgem which drives network companies to engage proactively with stakeholders to anticipate their needs and deliver a consumer-focused, socially-responsible, and sustainable energy service. Ofgem's SECV Incentive is an annual scheme and our response is divided into three parts:

Part 1: Our stakeholder engagement and consumer vulnerability strategies. This provides the evidence required that we have met Ofgem's minimum requirements.

Part 2: Our stakeholder engagement activity and the outcomes we have delivered.

Part 3: Our consumer vulnerability activity and the outcomes we have delivered.

Our region



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Case study key

The following symbols found throughout our report highlight our 2020/21 activities.



New

Initiatives which were introduced in 2020/21.



Enhanced

Examples of where we have improved our approach in response to stakeholder feedback.



Embedded

Holistic approaches embedded in our business.



Hard-to-reach

Initiatives which best serve the specific interests of hard-to-reach stakeholders.



Innovative

Novel or leading practice, based on benchmarking, for industry replication.



Introduction from Stephanie Trubshaw Customer Director

Strategic Goal

Providing an inclusive and supportive service for all users of electricity in a rapidly changing world - recognising the need to maximise the reach of our services through collaborative, innovative working with a community of trusted partners across our region

Consumer vulnerability pillars

1

Use data to understand vulnerability challenges

2

Continuously improve customer contact data

3

Deliver tailored support to our Priority Services Register customers

4

Work with partners to tackle fuel poverty

5

Build and maintain a resilient network

During COVID-19 the world as we knew it changed. The pandemic intensified the everyday challenges our customers face with their physical health, mental health, livelihoods and difficulty in accessing services.

In addition to providing a safe, reliable and resilient electricity network, our relationships with stakeholders during this time have grown. The resilience of our local partners and the wholehearted commitment of colleagues at all levels to provide responsive, flexible support has led to a significant expansion in successful outcomes and a broader range of vulnerable circumstances supported.

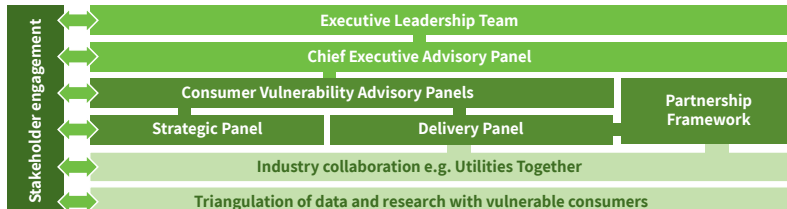
Our strategy, reviewed annually and agreed by our Board, is aligned to Ofgem's 2019 Consumer Vulnerability Strategy to deliver fair and positive outcomes for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.

At the heart of our strategy is our strategic goal, supported by five pillars (see above) that we test and refine through an iterative engagement process to ensure they remain appropriate to meet the needs of vulnerable consumers.

This year our Executive Leadership Team made it a priority to champion our consumer vulnerability strategy by dedicating greater time and resources (See Part One, page six) to engagement and collaboration.

Stakeholders told us that because of the pandemic their engagement needs had changed. In response, we delivered more frequent, shorter, topic-specific and online meetings, aligned to our Guiding Principles. I personally attended every Consumer

Stakeholder Engagement Governance Structure



Vulnerability Advisory Panel meeting and held bilateral one-to-one discussions with members to obtain in-depth and nuanced insights. The strategic and delivery sub-groups of our Advisory Panel provide oversight and scrutiny of our activities and both are led by an independent chair.

Collaboration is pivotal to our approach. In 2019/20 we were instrumental in the formation of Utilities Together and have consciously expanded regional cross-utility initiatives to share ideas, best practice, insight and avoid duplication of effort. Our conscientious approach has increased our efficiency, aligning to our strategic priority of *ensuring the affordability of consumers' bills*.

We use an embedded social value measurement approach to forecast and assess the value we deliver, drawing on tools such as Social Return on Investment (SROI). We use SROI when an initiative saves or generates money for customers and when our actions result in avoided costs to society. **I am proud that the total economic value of initiatives measured through SROI has grown from £11.1m to £16.4m since last year.** The SROI we report in Part Three is entirely additive, meaning that the benefit of an activity is never claimed twice.

I would like to thank our stakeholder community for their support, guidance and partnership over the last year and reaffirm my commitment to build on these relationships as we build back better from COVID-19.

| Part Three | Supporting vulnerable consumers | Case Studies | Benefit £m | Cost £m | Multiplier |
|------------|---------------------------------|--------------|------------|---------|------------|
| | Outcomes delivered this year | 19 | £14.15 | £1.59 | 9 |
| | Future outcomes enabled | 3 | £2.19 | £0.06 | 37 |

View a summary of our SROI calculations and a peer review undertaken by Economic Insight on [our website](#).

Co-ordinating communications across utilities

What we heard

We provided details of our input into 'Utilities Together', a multi-utility forum to share best practice in partnership work, with our Public Panel of domestic customers. The Panel expressed a desire to see us expand this collaboration with other utility providers in the North West to provide joined-up, efficient and cost-effective services to consumers in vulnerable circumstances.

What we did

We deepened collaboration with forum members Northern Gas Network, United Utilities and Cadent Gas to:

- Share best practice training programmes e.g. NSPCC (see [page three](#))
- Enhance social data mapping through additional data sets (see [page five](#))
- Co-fund a mobile dementia advice and support centre (see [page seven](#))
- Collaborate on the first region-wide trial of a single PSR (see [page six](#))

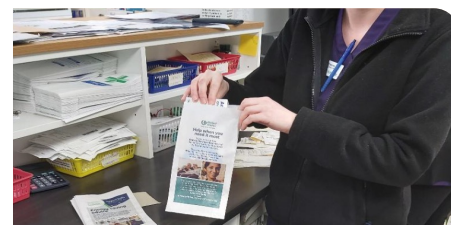
Learning from the successful outcomes of our co-funded 2019/20 awareness campaign that was facilitated through a network of independent pharmacies, we have since made this activity 'business as usual' with greater investment and a more informed approach this year.

We included key Priority Services Register (PSR) and energy efficiency messaging on 400,000 pharmacy prescription bags and distributed 60,000 PSR leaflets in 200 pharmacies in hard to reach communities across the North West.

Enhancing our social data mapping with a range of other data sets enabled us to identify **hard-to-reach communities**, target our outreach approach, and strengthen the opportunity for impact. This year, we broadened the information included on the leaflets to incorporate safety advice, such as how customers can **request an electric plug socket cover to protect individuals with Alzheimer's or Dementia** or request a locking cooker valve from Cadent, one of our Utilities Together partners.



This year we shared best practice and lessons learned from Utilities Together to encourage industry replication. Over 200 organisations participated in the NEA's second annual Spotlight Sessions conference.



Outcome

A multi-agency approach has enabled a **cost-effective method of connecting more consumers to vital support**. Our pharmacy campaign delivered a social benefit of £1.24m – a multiplier of x30 (up from x26 last year) for every £1 invested. This benefit was driven largely by action taken by consumers as a result of **improved safety and energy efficiency awareness** and the support available to 1,200 new PSR members.

Summary of our outcomes and initiatives

In this section we summarise a selection of high impact initiatives which encapsulate our strategic goal and consumer vulnerability pillars and were developed following inclusive, meaningful and proportionate engagement.

2020/21 performance highlights

The table to the right demonstrates the SROI or qualitative benefit associated with 22 innovative initiatives across each of our consumer vulnerability priorities.

2020/21 performance highlights

Pillar 1 Use data to understand vulnerability challenges

- ★ 12 new data sets enrich social data mapping

Pillar 2 Continuously improve customer contact data

- ★ Industry first trial of a multi-utility single PSR

Pillar 3 Deliver tailored support to our PSR customers

- ★ Partnerships aligned to four key areas of risk

Pillar 4 Work with partners to tackle fuel poverty


- ★ £1.88m benefit to fuel poor customers

Pillar 5 Build and maintain a resilient network

- ★ 100 pharmacies sign-up to Business PSR

| Stakeholder priority | Initiative name | Page | Maturity | | Innovative | Hard-to-reach | SROI |
|---|---|------|---------------|----------|------------|---------------|------------------------|
| | | | New this year | Embedded | | | |
|  1. Use data to understand vulnerability challenges | Updating our approach to PSR prioritisation Strategic engagement informs a tailored service | 4 | ✓ | | | ✓ | 91.5% PSR Satisfaction |
| | Predicting future trends in vulnerability Understanding enriched via 12 data sets shared by our partners Investment prioritisation expanded to include future risk factors | 5 | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | £383,000 |
| | New ways to reach and maintain a 10/10 service Iterative research informs the launch of a new chatbot channel | 5 | ✓ | | | ✓ | £224,000 |
|  2. Continuously improve customer contact data | Driving industry-wide change in PSR data collection A cross-utility trial of a single PSR platform for North West customers | 6 | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | Greater inclusion |
| | Refreshing customer contact data +82,580 customers registered 624,991 members proactively contacted | 6 | | ✓ | | | £6.61m |
| | Changing course when initiatives do not return value to our customers Data cleanse 'bots' stopped in favour of greater value adding activities | 7 | | ✓ | | | £68,000 |
|  3. Deliver tailored support to our PSR customers | Co-ordinating communications across utilities Utilities Together members issue 400,000 co-branded pharmacy bags | 1 | | ✓ | | ✓ | £1.24m |
| | Broadening the support provided through our partnership network 14 funded partners' activities aligned to 4 future risk factors in x10 priority locations, reach 27,444 consumers in vulnerable circumstances | 7 | | ✓ | | ✓ | Greater inclusion |
| | Supporting customers with their physical health Rapid response fund created to accelerate grant funding to alleviate cold homes | 8 | | ✓ | | ✓ | £785,000 |
| | Supporting customers with mental health challenges 24/7 multi-channel support service helps 2,500 young people | 8 | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | £1.72m |
|  4. Work with partners to tackle fuel poverty | Supporting customers with accessibility needs Radio and local media used to engage 78,000 hard to reach customers | 8 | ✓ | | | ✓ | Greater Inclusion |
| | Designing services to eliminate risk - Smart Street Expansion of targeted deployment to 250,000 who will save £60 per year | 9 | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | £1.37m |
| | Increasing our understanding of fuel poverty - One Manchester Interventions reduce inequalities of access to information and services | 9 | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | Greater inclusion |
| | Inclusive engagement - Marches Energy Mobile exhibition brings a multi-agency approach to fuel poor communities | 9 | ✓ | | | ✓ | £38,000 |
|  5. Build and maintain a resilient network | Collaboration to support customers who are struggling financially A strategic partnership significantly expands referral pathways from 8 to 18 | 10 | | ✓ | | ✓ | £1.88m |
| | Ensuring customers are not ill-equipped during power cuts Data sharing enables targeting of broadband battery back-up packs | 10 | ✓ | | | ✓ | £601,000 |
| | Business PSR becomes business as usual Expansion of membership, with a focus on local pharmacies and GP surgeries | 10 | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | £310,000 |
| | Enabling customers to create energy efficient homes Data sharing and hands-on support to guide successful grant applications for organisations supporting individual households | 10 | ✓ | | | ✓ | £924,000 |

The table below highlights the impact of a selection of stakeholder engagement activities on policies, procedures, business plans and our organisational culture.

| Business priority | Initiative name | Page | Maturity | | Innovative | Hard-to-reach | SROI |
|--|--|------|---------------|----------|------------|---------------|---------------------|
| | | | New this year | Embedded | | | |
|  Enhancing our culture | Embedding a culture of spotting vulnerability Training programme enhanced to reflect circumstances worsened by COVID-19 | 3 | | ✓ | | ✓ | Increased awareness |
| | Enhanced mental health strategy delivers measurable impact Engagement delivers 4% increase in colleagues accessing assistance programmes | 3 | | ✓ | | ✓ | £30,000 |
| | Stepping in to prevent customers self-disconnecting Colleague engagement leads to roll-out of £10 emergency credit vouchers | 3 | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | £12,000 |

Enhancing our culture of consumer vulnerability

We have developed a culture of stakeholder engagement, embedding consumer vulnerability structures, processes and governance, giving our people strong principles and the right skills and tools. The initiatives described in this section have full senior management buy-in and show just some of the ways we have been able to raise awareness, improve the quality and responsiveness of our approach, and better serve our communities.

HARD-TO-REACH



EMBEDDED



Enhancing our mental health strategy to deliver measurable impact

What we heard

We introduced our wellbeing vision in 2018 which includes a focus on mental health. This year our strategic partner Mates in Mind reviewed our strategy and concluded we were 'improving and some way to achieving best practice'. It recommended we improve how we measure our success and increase transparency and accountability by communicating our performance externally.

Our vision is for each individual to leave work as happy and healthy as when they arrived - if not better.

GOAL 1

Reduce stigma and tackle discrimination

GOAL 2

Empower colleagues to maintain and improve their wellbeing

GOAL 3

For our people to intervene if they see signs of mental ill health and take steps to support and rehabilitate

What we did

In response we reviewed, revised and communicated an updated mental health strategy which includes clear performance metrics. These include the reporting of sickness absence; the length of absences relating to mental health, access to, and use of, professional support services, staff turnover, staff engagement and customer feedback. Staff engagement, such as anonymous surveys also enable us to identify 'presenteeism'—the problem of workers' being on the job but, because of poor wellbeing, not functioning to the best of their ability.

This year our established steering group of cross-functional leaders, including our Customer Director, optimised the support structure in place through widescale mental health awareness training.

Training supports our Consumer Vulnerability Strategy by better equipping colleagues with the understanding and emotional intelligence to spot previously unseen vulnerability and provide support

- 52 Mental Wellbeing Champions accessed in-depth training, appropriate supervision and professional support. Champions met regularly to share learnings and raised their profiles via internal communications (intranet, newsletters and depot posters)
- All our senior and wider leadership team undertook a four hour 'Manage the Conversation Training'
- We guided every Line Manager through a new wellbeing information toolbox
- All customer facing colleagues received Mental Health First Aid Training
- 2,093 colleagues received ongoing wellbeing communications.

In February we launched a **Mental Wellbeing hub** on our website. To demonstrate commitment to our strategy we freely shared our vision, **managers guide, quizzes** and a downloadable mental health toolbox.



Outcome

Despite a challenging year colleagues have left work happier and healthier with 75% overall satisfaction (up 3% compared to last year) and 85% proud to work for Electricity North West (up 4%). Creating a psychologically safe environment has encouraged colleagues to report mental ill-health and influenced a 4% increase in the number accessing our Employee Assistance Programme since 2018 (from 3% to 7%). **The optimised support structure has influenced exemplary call quality, inspiring greater confidence among colleagues in managing mental health conversations with each other and customers.** 95% of 26,526 vulnerable customers participating in an in-the-moment telephone survey (an uptake of 15%) said they were satisfied with information provided by our colleagues. In the first two months of it being available, 85 stakeholders accessed our mental wellbeing first aid toolbox, generating 630-page views and 130 different referrals to our partners. Over 12 months this will deliver a social benefit of £30,000, a multiplier of x14 for every £1 spent.

HARD-TO-REACH



NEW



Stepping in to prevent customers from self-disconnecting

What we heard

During the early stages of government lockdown measures in 2020, energy suppliers' call handling capacity was severely depleted. We received calls from distressed Pre-Payment Meter (PPM) customers who were not able to afford a top-up voucher and had disconnected their power supply as a result. These customers were reaching out to us as a last resort after failing to reach their energy supplier.

What we did

We introduced an **industry-first process for issuing emergency credit vouchers** to anyone using pre-payment meters at risk of self-disconnecting their energy supply. At their discretion, colleagues issued vouchers and referred consenting customers onto expert partners for longer term solutions. We set up a process for communicating cases to energy suppliers and shared learnings with Ofgem and other DNOs via the Customer Social Issues Working Group.

Cognisant of increasing financial vulnerability during the pandemic, we developed our own service capability by enabling 10 colleagues to complete the **City and Guilds Level 3 Award in Fuel Debt Advice** to build their confidence in supporting customers who are advising they are in a financial crisis, but do not want to be referred to a partner for support.

Barbara Mackin, - Customer Welfare Advisor said:

"I really disliked the feeling of helplessness in not being able to provide any kind of immediate financial assistance, so I raised this in a Team Brief meeting."



Outcome

Having a broader interpretation of our role in relation to tackling social issues relevant to vulnerable consumers meant that 479 customers in financial crisis were supported with a £10 top-up voucher, providing immediate relief from acute anxiety. This delivered a social benefit of £12,000 this year and a multiplier of x3 for every £1 invested. **Other networks have indicated they will now implement the scheme as best practice.**

HARD-TO-REACH



ENHANCED



Embedding a culture of spotting vulnerability

What we heard

Our partner, The NSPCC, told us that isolation during COVID-19, a lack of support services and the burden of juggling home and work responsibilities significantly increased the risk of child abuse. But that referrals to child protection services, often made by schools and health professionals, dropped by as much as 50%. Even so, an increase in contacts to its Helpline demonstrated that children still required support.

What we did

Frontline colleagues undertook an interactive online learning course called 'It's Your Call', designed to help them recognise and report signs of sometimes apparent, but at other times subtle, abuse and neglect.

Jill Hendry, Welfare Engagement & Partnership Lead, said:



"Whilst working in a customer's property, a frontline colleague who had completed the training contacted me to report an overwhelming smell of dog excrement. Out of concern for the wellbeing of the family living in the house and having consulted NSPCC, I made a referral to social services. Our Health and Safety Team shared this story in a company-wide briefing, leading to many more colleagues undertaking the training."

Outcome

We shared our learning with 'Utilities Together', leading to three other utility providers rolling out the training. 19,025 hours of training such as 'It's Your Call' increased the awareness of 1,050 of our colleagues. **Our Welfare Team received more calls than last year from frontline staff reporting vulnerable circumstances and, in all instances, made referrals to specialist partners, social services or local councils.** As colleagues embrace a safeguarding role, they have asked us to make it easier for them to quickly and discreetly signpost their concerns. We will launch a phone app in May to fulfill their request, which will also assist in the measurement of outcomes.

Pillar 1: Using data to understand vulnerability challenges of the North West

At the start of 2020/21 our social data mapping showed that over 33% of the population in the North West – 1.6 million people – are eligible for the Priority Services Register, however 16% were registered. This created a gap of 45% of the eligible population unregistered. By using data to understand the drivers and types of vulnerability in our region, developing tailored services to support customers and prioritising those who are most in need, we are working to close the PSR registration gap.

2020/21 performance highlights:

91.5%

PSR customer satisfaction

47,118

sign-ups among high priority PSR members

12

new data sets to enrich our social data mapping tool

7%

reduction of PSR gap in areas of greatest need

£224,000

SROI delivered by new chatbot channel

HARD-TO-REACH



ENHANCED



Updating our approach to PSR prioritisation

What we heard

This year, our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel conducted a strategic review of our PSR prioritisation approach and recommended that we apply a multiple indices factor so that consumers with intersecting vulnerable circumstances are given higher priority. Due to the impact of COVID-19 they also suggested two new needs codes to identify consumers who are struggling financially and those who live alone.

What we did

We classified the severity of 29 Ofgem vulnerability needs codes as low, medium or high. Our classification approach is based on the impact of a loss of electricity on a consumer living in vulnerable circumstances. We use the results to prioritise customers for communication (tailored to individual preference), support and the partnerships we have in place to deliver services.

Customers with more than one needs code are graded based on the highest categorisation. We introduced a process that enables our supervisors to change the category allocated to customers if they identify intersecting criteria. For example, if one of our advisors discovers that a dementia patient, someone of pensionable age or with more severe mental health challenges is **living alone**, their categorisation is revised upwards. This process change, and the use of the code 'temporary life change' to capture transitory financial vulnerability, has enabled us to respond quickly, whilst we collaborate nationally to influence the addition of new needs codes.

We expanded data sharing with United Utilities to identify customers who are **struggling financially**. This is an important addition to our PSR because our Value of Lost Load data indicates these customers are likely to be disproportionately impacted by a power cut and receptive to receiving support from our trusted partners.

In addition to targeting PSR sign-ups at groups that are underrepresented (notably mental health, chronic illness and pensionable age), we apply our risk-based approach to deliver awareness campaigns with partners such as Parents and Carers Together (page eight).

| Tailored service provided to vulnerable consumers - exceeding Ofgem's requirements | High category | Medium category | Low category |
|--|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Reach of proactive contact to refresh PSR data | 100% annually | 1/3 annually | 1/3 annually |
| Written advance notification of planned works | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Proactive calls 6 days and 1 day ahead of planned works | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Reminder SMS 1 day ahead of planned works | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Proactive updates during an unplanned power cut ¹ | Called | SMS/ called | SMS/ called |
| Proactive adverse weather alerts | ✓ | | |

¹Customers are contacted according to their preferred method of communication. This table denotes the priority order in which we contact customers.

PSR membership in underrepresented* needs codes increased by 115,533. Data sharing supported 3,117 customers experiencing temporary life changes, such as financial vulnerability being identified and many signposted to new energy efficiency and debt referral pathways, created through a strategic partnership with Citizens Advice Manchester (see page ten).

903,618 PSR customers with 1.83m registered vulnerabilities

| High category | | Medium category | | Low category | |
|---|-----------------|---|-----------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 250,294 members | 27% share (+2%) | 304,539 members | 34% share | 348,740 members | 39% share (-2%) |
| Top category: chronic/serious illness (10%) | | Top category: physical impairment (11%) | | Top category: pensionable age (33%) | |

We measure PSR customers' overall satisfaction with our services across planned and unplanned supply interruptions and general enquiries. This year, 91.5% were satisfied, an increase of 2.5% since last year.

| Top 5 increase in vulnerability needs codes (by volume) | | Top 5 increase in vulnerability needs codes (by percentage uplift) | |
|---|---------|--|------|
| 1 Pensionable age* | +38,761 | Medically dependent on electricity | +73% |
| 2 Chronic/serious illness* | +38,075 | Temporary - life changes | +68% |
| 3 Mental health* | +19,673 | Temporary - young adult householder | +50% |
| 4 Physical impairment* | +18,021 | Mental health* | +38% |
| 5 Families with young children | +14,300 | Oxygen use | +34% |

*Vulnerability categories that are underrepresented in our PSR when compared to their incidence in the population

Outcome

Campaigns led to 47,118 customers with a **high priority needs code joining the PSR**, increasing the overall share of membership among our high category by 2% year-on-year.

A PSR customer said:

"My mum is severely disabled and uses equipment that needs power, so I was delighted when after the power went off I received a text to warn me and then within an hour a phone call to see if we needed anything. They phoned back again to double check the power was back on, it was a 10/10 service."





Predicting future trends in vulnerability

What we heard

Our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel challenged us to expand the range of data sets we use to inform our location-based approach to targeting interventions, drawing on intelligence which identifies longer term trends.

What we did

We used our social data mapping tool to rank the 34 Local Authorities in our region according to a range of six vulnerability criteria (shown below) developed in consultation with our Advisory Panel last year. This data evidenced that Blackpool remains the locality with the greatest combined prevalence of vulnerability, although our 2019/20 interventions successfully reduced Blackpool's PSR gap by 15%.

Blackpool rank vs. other local authorities (where 1/34 indicates the highest prevalence)

| | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-----|
| 1. Low income | 5/34 | |
| 2. Fuel poverty | 3/34 | |
| 3. Over 65 | 16/34 | 65+ |
| 4. Physical disability | 1/34 | |
| 5. Power cut incidence | 9.2 per 1,000 households | |
| 6. PSR gap | 33% | |

We commissioned in-depth research to explore the anticipated risk factors and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumers in vulnerable circumstances in all 34 Local Authorities (LAs). The study found that the most severe impacts will be for those with multiple risk factors or vulnerabilities - synergistic with our refined approach to categorising PSR members. The study predicted that the most marked and extensive impacts of COVID-19 will be on customers' **physical health, mental health, economic stability and difficulty in accessing services**. In response, we collaborated with stakeholders belonging to our Partnership Framework (see Part One, page five) to source the following 12 data sets to overlay onto our social data mapping tool.

| Enriching our social data mapping with future trends | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| Physical health | Mental health | Economic stability | Accessing services |
| | Data shared by Cadent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suicide in males under 50 Divorce rates | Data from COVID-19 study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal Credit claimants Unemployment Small business closures Food banks in LSOAs Data shared by British Red Cross: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 Vulnerability Index | Data shared by Talk Talk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internet engagement types Office for National Statistics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-English speakers Ofcom: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology Tracker |
| | Data shared by NSPCC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic abuse Child abuse | | |

The results indicated that future vulnerability will be concentrated in the same areas as our existing prioritisation, particularly in Blackpool, and in much of Greater Manchester (e.g. Rochdale) and urban East Lancashire (e.g. Burnley, Hyndburn). Whilst this validated our existing focus areas, it enabled us to build on last year's efforts by changing our service delivery and the activities undertaken by our partners in these localities.

| Our own activity in Blackpool | Our funded partners' activities in Blackpool |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively contacted 12,266 PSR customers in Blackpool by phone to check in and provide support Prolonged (three year) funded partnership with Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHIL) Improved network reliability for over 23,000 customers by accelerating the completion of a £1.4m transformer in Lytham and St Annes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnered with CHIL to provide 500 residents with central heating, boiler replacements and loft and cavity wall insulation Worked with Age Concern (as a sole funder) to expand the reach of its support into Blackpool, delivering food parcels and acting as a befriending service Funded 'Amazing Grace', a Citizens Advice referral partner, to feed 400 families in extreme poverty per week |

Outcome - Blackpool

- The number of faults reduced from 9.2 to 7.9 per 1,000 dwellings in Blackpool this year, compared to an average of 11.8 across the region.
- Blackpool now has the smallest PSR gap (29%) out of all 34 LAs.
- The social benefit of expanding PSR membership, delivering boiler replacements and food parcels in Blackpool was £383,000, a multiplier of x8 for every £1 invested.

Outcome - Top 10 priority areas

- Embedding the use of our enhanced data sets to inform our partners' activities in the 10 most impacted areas has delivered a 7% reduction in the overall PSR gap (to 40%).
- We will continue this proactive and place-based strategy to reduce risk** by identifying and registering consumers with the greatest need, signposting them to support needed immediately whilst also building resilience in the event of a power cut.



New ways to reach and maintain a 10/10 service

What we heard

Research with vulnerable consumers on their communication preferences revealed an unmet need for a chatbot (an automated online chat function). This was seen as a convenient way to obtain information 24/7 and resolve issues quickly and easier to use for those with a hearing impairment or a preference to communicate in writing.

What we did

Guided by feedback from our Customer Voice Feedback Panel of 2,478 customers and 136 employees we co-created a chatbot channel with our digital partner Mando. We then trialled the chatbot on our website between 1st - 7th February, an average week in terms of contact volumes. The bot conducted 158 active conversations with customers and 71%

of users continued to engage with it after asking a question. This demonstrated that the bot is a channel of choice for those who use it. Importantly, 92% of users were able to resolve their query through their first interaction with the bot, without needing to 'channel hop'. 63% of users claimed that without the self-serve channel they would have called us instead, suggesting that this tool is likely to reduce call volumes. The trial revealed that users prefer using the chatbot to ask questions and update their PSR information, with these two options accounting for half of all interactions.

Ella Stafford, Customer Experience Manager, said:

"We have found that customers want to ask the chatbot general enquiries such as who their supplier is or ask about substation maintenance. This is informing where we build further capability in the tool to respond to customer demand."



Hi! I'm the Electricity North West Agent, can I help you?



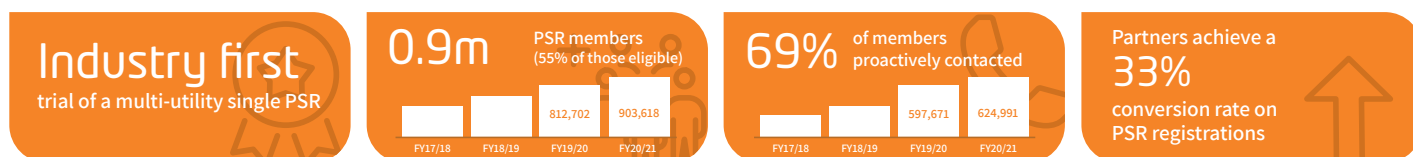
Outcome

92% of customers participating in our Chabot exit survey were satisfied with their experience. Based on positive customer feedback, we fully launched the chatbot on 8th March. We anticipate it will serve 11,000 customers per year and **significantly reduce the time taken to have their questions answered (relative to making a phone call) whilst maintaining high satisfaction**. Customer and company efficiency savings will deliver a social benefit of £224,000, a multiplier of x4 for every £1 invested. As the tool is enhanced, additional efficiency savings will be introduced, such as customers updating their own PSR data. This will enable colleagues to focus more time on assisting vulnerable consumers with more complex needs.

Pillar 2: Continuously improving and refreshing our data

We have a Business Plan commitment to keep an up-to-date and accurate PSR. A range of innovative and targeted initiatives enabled us to grow our PSR membership to a total of 903,618 members this year, whilst simultaneously maintaining the quality of the existing data.

2020/21 performance highlights:



★ INNOVATIVE

HARD-TO-REACH

Driving industry-wide change in PSR data collection

What we heard

Our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel said the need for a multi-utility single PSR is both important and urgent – in addition to more effectively capturing transient vulnerability. Our Public Panel challenged us to be trailblazers in leading industry wide change.

What we did

Capturing transient vulnerability

Along with Western Power Distribution we are the only network to collect PSR data at an 'individual' and 'property' level. This enables us to more effectively protect an individual's sensitive data and provide tailored support. This is also important for capturing transitory vulnerability and reaching transient communities, defined as people and groups who move in and out of an area by choice (e.g. students) or factors outside of their control (e.g. seasonal workers). During COVID-19 we significantly increased transient

vulnerability within our PSR membership base through targeted awareness campaigns in localities identified by our social data mapping tool as having a higher prevalence of transient communities, such as Blackpool and Greater Manchester.

Jo Crinson, Customer and Community Development Manager, explains:

"Since our industry first data-sharing trial with United Utilities in 2018, we have encountered lethargy in the sector to take the next step towards a multi-utility single PSR. Our stakeholders have urged us to continue our proactivity in finding a solution, preferably before RII0-ED2."



Together' forum we expanded the trial to our regional network counterparts in water and gas.

Our strategic partner Citizens Advice Manchester will provide customer data for the regional pilot we have planned to commence in April. It will track the journey of 100 customers, to include ease of system use and accessibility, accurate and timely transfer of data to all three utilities and suppliers, data transfer compliance and the retention and removal of data from the portal.

Outcome

We are leading the development of a single PSR across sectors for all vulnerable consumers. We will share lessons learned from our trial with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Vulnerability Registration Service (VRS) which provides a single reference point when customers need support for financial problems. To aid joined-up development we have introduced Auriga to the VRS. **We will refine our best practice approach and work towards it being replicated nationally.**

Developing a multi-utility single PSR

Auriga Services launched a nationwide PSR portal in October 2020 which can be branded for any company and enable customers to enter their details just once. To demonstrate the effectiveness of the portal we completed a Data Protection Impact Assessment and agreed to lead a trial. Through engaging the 'Utilities

EMBEDDED

Refreshing customer contact data

What we heard

In our annual cycle of market research PSR members asked us to maintain regular contact with them to understand changes in their critical needs and raise awareness of our services.

What we did

We enhanced the PSR data we hold through a three-pronged strategy:

1. Enabling a one stop shop for prospective members

We continued to use our embedded 'behind the scenes' processes that ensure customers only have to register once through three ongoing data sharing channels with United Utilities and Cadent.

2. Making every contact with our customers count

Our 'We're Switched On' approach means that as part of every call we tell customers about the PSR and ask whether anyone in their household, or anyone they know, would benefit from this service. Our partners have complemented this activity by issuing a total of 19,259 PSR leaflets to eligible customers during their outreach activities. Due to COVID-19 this is significantly fewer leaflets distributed than last year. However, we still validated 6,397 referrals from our partners paired-back promotional campaigns, a 33% conversion rate. **This increased from 15% last year, indicating a significant improvement in the effectiveness of targeted awareness campaigns.**

3. Proactively contacting PSR members

As part of our tailored service (see **page four**) we proactively contacted 624,991 members (69%) this year through their preferred method of communication. The purpose of this contact so that we can check the information we hold is still relevant and appropriate. We remove dormant individuals when we have received no response after three attempts to contact them over a period of three years. We also cleanse our data when consumers signal to us that their circumstances have changed. We provide a range of mechanisms for members to leave the PSR including by letter, an online form, chatbot, telephone and in response to receiving proactive weather alerts.

| Our three-pronged strategy to enhance our PSR data | | 2020/21 | 2019/20 |
|--|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| Registrations | 1.Enable a one stop shop for consumers | | |
| | Two-way data share with energy suppliers | +112,579 | +120,887 |
| | Two-way data share with United Utilities | +8,104 | +7,938 |
| | Data received from Cadent | +415 | +453 |
| | Outcome from this activity | +121,098 | +129,278 |
| | 2. Make every contact count | | |
| | We're Switched On' campaign: additions | +40,766 | +25,183 |
| Removals | We're Switched On' campaign: updates ¹ | +26,231 | +45,318 |
| | Awareness campaigns via our partners | +6,397 | +14,627 |
| | Outcome from this activity | +47,163 | +40,440 |
| | 3. Proactively contact members | | |
| | Dormant customers identified | -1,321 | -1,261 |
| | Opt-outs in response to a change in consumers' circumstances | -84,359 | -79,552 |
| | Outcome from this activity | -85,680 | -80,813 |
| | Net PSR membership change | +82,580 | +88,905 |

¹ not counted in outcome

Sarah*, Said:

"I was contacted in my capacity as nominated contact for my mother. Not being in the UK and travel restrictions during COVID-19 made providing support to her difficult. The kind agent empathised and arranged for Age Concern Lancashire to call her regularly and deliver shopping. I will never forget this kindness."

*name changed for confidentiality reasons



EMBEDDED



Changing course when initiatives do not return value to our customers

Last year we published details of an innovative trial to use two virtual workers ('bots') to deactivate duplicate PSR data obtained through data sharing arrangements and retain the most up-to-date contact in our database. **This innovation was not delivering the benefits expected** because the bots speed of processing (>7 minutes) was slower than a human (3 minutes) and success ratio without human intervention unacceptably low. We stopped the trial, saving £68,000, and reinvested this money in expanding data sharing, working towards a single PSR, outperforming targets for proactive contact and improving the accuracy of data captured by colleagues.

Outcome

At the start of the year the PSR gap was 668,488. **In total we acquired 82,580 new PSR customers this year, representing 12% of these eligible customers.** We have calculated the SROI of adding customers to the PSR as £80 per person, equating to a total benefit of £6.61m this year. **This calculation is driven largely by improved resilience to power cuts, including avoided distress, lost time and the need for primary healthcare support (emergency or social services).** Through regular contact with existing members, over 20,000 customers were able to signal changes in their circumstances, which enabled us to tailor support to their individual needs. For instance, some customers, including lone pensioners, indicated how isolated they felt during COVID-19. Having identified this is a key risk factor (see **page five**) we were well prepared to signpost customers to our partners' befriending services.

Pillar 3: Delivering joined-up services with trusted partners

We recognise that our partners are sometimes even better placed than us to deliver the enhanced support our customers require. Following our embedded partnership strategy, we review our partnerships annually against our strategic plans and identify trusted organisations to fill any existing gaps. This year our focus has been on expanding the range of partnerships to provide full and effective support for all groups of vulnerable consumers.

2020/21 performance highlights:

100

partnerships
(28 new this year)



Partnerships aligned to
4 key
areas of risk



2,500

young people helped
by 24/7 multi-channel
support service



27,444

consumers in vulnerable
circumstances reached



£4.01m

social benefit
delivered



HARD-TO-REACH



EMBEDDED



Broadening the support provided through our partnership network

What we heard

Our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel challenged us to use our partnership framework to support a broader range of consumers in vulnerable circumstances and enable longer term funding in targeted areas. The delivery sub-group of our Panel told us that COVID-19 was increasing concerns in communities over the affordability of energy bills, social isolation and food poverty.

What we did

Prior to the pandemic we had allocated £235,000 from our Consumer Vulnerability Fund to our partners. We combined the intelligence provided by our delivery partners on the ground with a wide range of data sets (see **page five**) to identify four longer-term vulnerability risk factors and the locations most in need of support.

We empowered our partners to align their plans to these risk factors and support a broader range of vulnerable circumstances than in previous years. By fast-tracking payments to them, we prevented 11 staff employed by our partners from being furloughed and some support services being withdrawn. In response to stakeholder feedback, we updated our tender framework to explicitly allow for the design of longer-term investment and partnerships. We embraced this by committing to an initial two-year collaboration with Citizens Advice Manchester to expand our focus on alleviating fuel poverty (see **page ten**).

4 Risk factors

Physical health, mental health, difficulty in accessing services and economic stability

10 Target priority areas

Barrow-in-furness, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Burnley, Copeland, Eden, Hyndburn Manchester, Pendle and Rochdale

14 Partners

Selected to provide targeted support based upon:
Alignment to risk factors
Delivering an innovative approach
Operating in areas of special interest
Capability to deliver project outcomes
Likelihood of enduring social benefits
Reciprocal learning opportunities

Outcome

85% of our partnership investment was allocated to 10 priority localities (+5% vs. last year) and reached a total of 27,444 individuals (+237% vs. last year) who collectively were experiencing 37,098 vulnerable circumstances. We continued and expanded our 2019/20 focus areas of providing support to PSR members and those who are socially isolated or fuel poor. However, we also **broadened the range of circumstances supported** to reach more disabled people, carers of dementia patients, those with mental health challenges, temporary life changes (e.g. post hospital recovery) or customers most at risk of digital exclusion.

HARD-TO-REACH



ENHANCED



Supporting customers with their physical health

What we heard

Our COVID-19 study (**page five**) identified an **increased risk for consumers living in cold homes. It recognised that these people would be spending longer at home and be more susceptible to respiratory diseases while earning less money. Informed stakeholders, such as the NEA, challenged us to help these customers overcome financial barriers to obtaining grant funding for heating interventions.**

What we did

We empowered Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHIL) to create a **'rapid response fund' to support customers to quickly access heating installations** while their grant applications (e.g. Green Homes) were pending. This negated the need for them to make a financial contribution. CHIL also used the fund to **introduce a boiler maintenance or replacement service** for households.

Stuart Winterbottom, CHIL said:

"We supported a single mum who had a new-born baby; no central heating or hot water, was reliant on Universal Credit and no savings. We helped her secure £971 ECO funding and a £300 contribution from the council. The rapid response fund plugged a gap of £699, enabling a new boiler to be fitted."



We expanded vulnerable consumers' access to grant funding by partnering with Citizens Advice Manchester and leveraged a new partnership with Parents and Carers Together, a carer forum for parents of children who are disabled, to raise awareness of the PSR.



Investment
£27,500



Investment
£130,645



Investment
£2,845

Project outcomes

- 491 heating and insulation surveys
- 254 households accessing grants for central heating boiler servicing, insulation or white goods replacement
- 1,012 PSR sign-ups; with over half being among carers and parents of children who are disabled (via a PACT campaign)
- 602 referrals made to other community organisations for wrap-around support such as food parcels
- Partner training delivered to frontline colleagues to deepen awareness of the challenges faced by the disabled customers

Areas reached: Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Burnley, Hyndburn, Manchester, Pendle and Rochdale

Outcome

Our funding ensured boilers were combusting fuel safely and efficiently, minimising the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, protecting warranties, reducing the likelihood of breakdown during the winter and maintaining boiler efficiency to keep bills low. **Our interventions improved the health and wellbeing of customers by helping to heat and insulate their homes** and even enabled 10 to be discharged from hospital earlier. This delivered a social benefit of £785,000 and a multiplier of x18 for every £1 invested. **On this basis we will expand this activity in 2021/22.**



HARD-TO-REACH



NEW



Supporting customers with mental health challenges

What we heard

According to our partner, Mind, more than half of adults (60%) said their mental health got worse during lockdown. They predicted that young people will be more impacted in terms of mental health and unemployment. It also revealed that people living with dementia are amongst the worst affected, with impacts extending to those caring for them.

What we did

As part of our social role we continued to identify and deliver solutions (both energy and non-energy) for consumers in vulnerable circumstances. We expanded our partnership with the Burnley Boys and Girls Club (BBGC) into a second year, enabling them to diversify their pandemic support services. BBGC, known for providing opportunities and a safe space for young people to socialise, received unprecedented contact from young and vulnerable people during the first phase of lockdown. BBGC leveraged our funding to expand befriending and bereavement services and **introduce a multi-channel support line for young people requiring help.**



Investment
£10,000

Project outcomes

2,500 young people supported through a **24/7 support line** service and 1-2-1 mentoring, listening or therapy sessions for members who have either been stated with learning or behavioural difficulties or just needed someone to talk to. Over 10,000 website interactions and 1,500 text or WhatsApp messages were registered in addition to five referrals to emergency safeguarding services

Areas reached: Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn and Pendle

In 2019/20 we learnt through our engagement with Age Concern that loneliness can have a major adverse impact on our customers' physical and mental health. This year we worked with Homelife Carlisle and Ambleside Parish Council to provide weekly telephone and COVID-secure support to those who had health challenges, were self-isolating or did not have family members to assist them.



Investment
£40,000

Ambleside
Parish Council

Investment
£21,040

Project outcomes

- A trained network of 157 volunteers supported 300 people with 2,344 befriending calls, running errands such as collecting medication and delivering 2,169 food parcels
- 1,348 customers signed up to the PSR and specialist support was provided to elderly and disabled people, as well as those on low incomes, for maintaining, adapting and improving their homes, with a focus on energy efficiency

Areas reached: Ambleside and Carlisle

Lockdown restrictions delayed the launch of a **Mobile Advice Centre** (see front cover) co-funded with Cadent and United Utilities until April 2021. Now operational, it will enable Age Concern Lancashire to provide a **specialist dementia awareness and support hub** (including PSR) to a population of 35,000.

Outcome

Our schemes directly provided 14,600 people with **independent living and mental health support during the pandemic**. This reduced the need for acute healthcare support and delivered a social benefit of £1.72m and a multiplier of x24 for every £1 invested.

HARD-TO-REACH



NEW



Supporting customers with accessibility needs

What we heard

The UK Consumer Digital Index has found that **22% people do not have the skills for everyday life, such as the ability to manage money, engage with government services and find a job online. There are 4.1 million adults in the UK still yet to go online; 75% of which have indicated that 'nothing' could motivate them to change.** Our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel expressed concern towards this data, considering that many government and wider support services were being migrated online during the pandemic.

What we did

Our strategy is to support initiatives which best serve specific interests of challenging groups or hard to reach stakeholders. We formed a new partnership with Advocacy Focus to **provide hard to reach communities with the skills and communication channels and to empower individuals with a 'voice'**. A network of advocacy experts and volunteers helped individuals become more empowered in decision-making relating to their health and removed barriers to accessing the necessary online support.



Investment
£40,000

Project outcomes

- An awareness campaign via local newspapers and radio reached 68,085 people and generated enquiries that led to over 1,000 referrals to a network of 126 support groups
- 87 advocates supported 300 people with handling paperwork, making complaints, preparing for health appointments, self-esteem building exercises, social care assessments, counselling, bereavement support and digital upskilling

Areas reached: Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn and Pendle

We also expanded our use of radio as a means of engaging with digitally excluded consumers to raise awareness of relevant support services.



Investment
£17,000

Project outcomes

We reached 10,000 radio listeners with information on who we are, the support available via our PSR and trusted partners and provided updates on planned and unplanned supply interruptions

Areas reached: Bury, Manchester and Rochdale

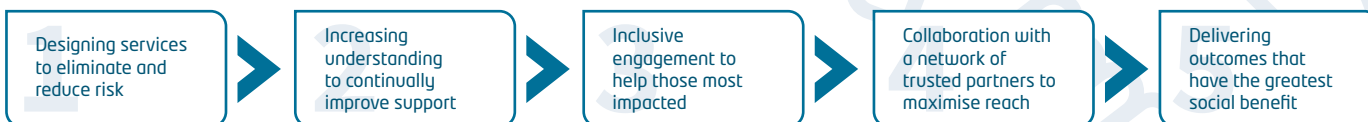
Outcome

By engaging with people who are harder to reach we seek to **build a community that is confident, well-prepared for most situations and who know where, how and who to access support from.**

We will continue to explore the role we can play in overcoming barriers to equip people with the skills for everyday life and are in the early stages of a digital poverty collaboration with PACT and Stockport Council.

Pillar 4: Tackling fuel poverty

This year, our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel (see Part One, page four) encouraged us to extend our partnership network and support services to fuel poor customers. With their strategic input we identified a set of guiding principles that govern enhancements to our programme.



2020/21 performance highlights:



Designing services to eliminate risk – Smart Street

What we heard

In a survey conducted with 1,000 members of the Customer Voice Feedback Panel, 63% said that we should support fuel poor customers through initiatives that do not require them to actively engage, such as targeted investment in our network.

What we did

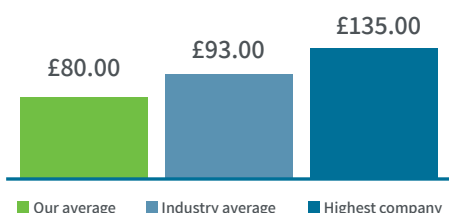
We rolled-out our Smart Street voltage optimisation technology in 14 locations identified through our social data mapping tool. The initial innovation funded trial of Smart Street was proven to increase the efficiency of our networks and customers' appliances and reduce energy consumption by 8%, without customers having to take any action. The 180 sites selected for deployment in ED1 include areas that have a fuel poverty prevalence of up to 33%.

Outcome

Smart Street will reduce 64,000 customers' energy bills by up to £60 per year. **Targeted deployment in areas of fuel poverty will deliver an additional social benefit of £1.37m**, bringing the total social benefit to £20.6m by 2023. As part of *planning for the future*, we will now scale deployment so that 250,000 customers, targeted in areas of fuel poverty, can benefit by 2028.

During ED1, business outperformance and cost-efficiency means we expect to save at least £127m, of which £53m (12/13 prices) is being returned as bill reductions to customers. **Our average bill price in this period means that our customers have paid 14% less than the average DNO group cost.**

ED1 to date (2015/16 to 2020/21) DNO Group average domestic bill impact



Increasing our understanding of fuel poverty – One Manchester

What we heard

The first phase of a longitudinal research study into fuel poverty (see Part One, page five) showed two dominant mindsets; a survival segment who cannot engage with energy until their essential physiological and safety needs are met and a striving segment who are better placed to engage but lack interest.



What we did

We developed good practice in place-based partnership with One Manchester, a housing association, by establishing a working group of housing providers and 13 local community groups. It included representatives of **hard-to-reach** customers, such as the **Caribbean and African Health Network**. Members provided insight on appropriate content and language to engage each segment.

Through this group the need for a hyper-local, impactful campaign targeted at people with recognisable needs was identified. Other requirements included making its focus broader than energy and including messaging that would empower consumers to help themselves. Case studies were also shared demonstrating residents are more likely to take up advice if it is delivered by individuals from a similar cultural background or trusted local community groups.

The group co-designed a range of interventions for customers including a toolbox of tips on how to manage their home to live more comfortably and make the best use of available support. We provided frontline workers and Community Champions with new skills and mentoring to give them the confidence and ability to promote the toolbox.

Outcome

Our research is helping us to **better understand the triggers, motivators and enablers to fuel poor customers taking up support offers**, including inequalities of access to information. Testing a range of interventions over the next year will keep our focus on building our capability, and that of our stakeholder community, to deliver interventions that have a long term sustainable impact, thereby delivering value for money.



Inclusive engagement – Marches Energy

What we heard

Our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel advised us to adopt a multi-agency and cross-channel approach to make our engagement with fuel poor communities as inclusive as possible.

What we did

We initiated pooling of resources with stakeholders such as United Utilities, Mind, Money Advice Trust and Age UK to create a **new online support hub for customers struggling financially**, including energy efficiency advice and help to access essential services. For 'offline' users we offered free telephone advice sessions and worked with Marches Energy to create a mobile exhibition vehicle version of the hub to visit fuel poor communities.



Investment
£12,181

Project outcomes

- 3,309 customers accessed the online hub
- We piloted the exhibition delivery model which brought together Marches Energy, Groundwork and The Bread and Butter Thing, to offer a **range of wrap-around support services, all in one location**. After one event 20% took-up the opportunity to have further tailored support through home visits. COVID-19 has postponed our roll-out of the exhibition.

Areas reached: Manchester

Outcome

The level of engagement observed from a **multi-agency approach** in the pilot indicates each interaction at an exhibition has a £92 social benefit (and a benefit of £38,000 per exhibition). This benefit was calculated based on follow-up communication with fuel poor customers to evaluate their energy behaviour changes. 12 events have been planned for 2021/22.

HARD-TO-REACH



ENHANCED



Collaboration with partners to support customers who are struggling financially

What we heard

This year our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel were concerned that COVID-19 is likely to increase the number of customers struggling to pay their energy bills and exacerbate already high levels of fuel poverty in the North West (12.1%). As part of Electricity North West's strategic priority of *planning for the future*, the Panel set us a target of reaching 100% of fuel poor customers by 2028.

What we did

We engaged with **Citizens Advice Manchester (CAM)**, who had a proven track record in supporting fuel poor customers at scale. It operated an extensive referral network that linked to other partners and reached beyond Manchester to other priority areas in Cumbria. To develop a business case for a new strategic partnership with CAM, we triangulated a range of inputs including stakeholder feedback, the SROI of 18 proposed referral outcomes and a new metric which calculates the amount invested in our partners' activities per fuel poor customer in our region. After a three-month mobilisation period, a two-year programme with CAM commenced in November to **complement our existing network of trusted partners**.

citizens advice Manchester

Investment
£130,645

CAFS Cumbria Action for Sustainability

Investment
£27,500Investment
£39,874

Project outcomes

3,534 customers were supported with 9,215 referral outcomes:

| Referral outcome | SROI* | Outputs | Total |
|---|-------|--------------|---------------|
| Energy behavioural change | £ 138 | 2359 | £325,542 |
| Tariff supplier advice | £159 | 1396 | £221,964 |
| PSR confirmed sign ups | £80 | 858 | £68,640 |
| Health and well-being | £74 | 566 | £41,884 |
| Warm Home Discount | £159 | 554 | £88,086 |
| Debt/benefit advice | £420 | 551 | £231,420 |
| Tariff supplier weighted | £776 | 199 | £154,424 |
| Grant funding application | £855 | 144 | £123,120 |
| Tariff supplier switched | £338 | 133 | £44,954 |
| Energy Saving Measures Installed | £735 | 109 | £80,115 |
| Total from x10 key referral pathways | | 7,325 | £1.39m |

Areas reached: All 10 priority areas (see page seven)

Hayley Hughes, Citizens Advice Manchester said:



"**Ataif*** had become a single parent and when COVID hit, he was unable to juggle working with childcare. He therefore gave up his job to care for his child. He had fallen behind on several bills including electricity, rent, water and credit cards. Our specialist debt advisers supported with negotiating nil offer payments to his creditors and a trust fund application to have his energy supplier arrears of £1,375 written off, putting him in a much better place to manage his other repayments."

*name changed for confidentiality reasons

Outcome

Through our network of trusted partners, we have **achieved greater scale and diversity with an 125% increase in standard services and referral pathways from 8 to 18**. In the first two years of our partnership with CAM we will invest £250k to ensure 10,000 additional vulnerable and **hard-to-reach** customers will be supported. Factoring in the first five months of delivery with our wider activities has increased our investment per fuel poor customer in 2020/21 from £0.33 to £0.77 and the expansion in our fuel poverty programme has delivered a social benefit of £1.88m and a multiplier of x8 for every £1 spent.

Pillar 5: Building and maintaining a resilient network

HARD-TO-REACH



NEW



Ensuring customers are not left ill-equipped during power cuts

What we heard

We shared details of how we were responding to the changing needs of communities during COVID-19 in a Business in the Community webinar. In response, telecoms provider Talk Talk asked us to guide their efforts in identifying consumers in vulnerable circumstances in the North West, so that they can be better served.

What we did

Our *planning for the future* engagement identified a risk of consumers being impacted by the planned Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) switch-off in 2025. Consumers migrating from the traditional telephone network to newer digital technology will **restrict the ability of some groups (e.g. those who only have access to a landline telephone service or rely on telecare devices) to communicate or signal their need for support during supply interruptions**. We provided Talk Talk with access to our social data mapping and worked collaboratively to enhance this data with mobile coverage. We will use this data to target Battery Back-up (BBU) packs at **hard-to-reach** consumers, which enable continuity of broadband service during a power cut.

Outcome

Approximately 5% of households in Great Britain only have a landline or are in a mobile phone signal blackspot and are therefore at greatest risk of losing communication. The social benefit of providing BBUs free of charge to **45,000 consumers at greatest risk** will be £601,000, informed by the cost to economy of internet failure, per hour.



HARD-TO-REACH



EMBEDDED



Business PSR becomes business as usual

What we heard

We are the only network to have established a dedicated Business Priority Services Register (BPSR) available to all businesses. After a power cut led to spoiled flu vaccines in another region, a colleague suggested we expand the BPSR and target organisations providing essential public health services.

What we did

To protect the storage of COVID-19 vaccinations we proactively engaged with the NHS and Resilience Direct to identify locations at risk, should faults occur on our network. Due to the risk of security attacks, electricity networks were not provided with a list of vaccination centres. In response we provided the NHS with a dedicated contact who remained on standby to conduct site visits and provide back-up generation where needed. **We also tailored our 2020/21 BPSR awareness campaign to target pharmacies and GP surgeries who store flu vaccines**. Advisory Panel members such as Oldham Council contacted surgeries in their area to raise awareness of the benefits of the BPSR and we used our pharmacy campaign (see **page one**) to encourage sign-ups.

Outcome

2,670 businesses have signed-up to the PSR which provides a **range of resilience benefits** valued at £114 per business, per year such as 30 days' notice of a planned power cut and guidance on continuity plans such as procuring a generator. The number of pharmacies registered has increased from 4 to 104 this year. Combined, this has delivered a social benefit of £310,000 and a multiplier of x21 for every £1 spent.



HARD-TO-REACH



NEW



Enabling customers to create energy efficient homes

What we heard

In scanning the macroeconomic environment for future risks, our Consumer Vulnerability Delivery Panel told us that **enduring COVID-19 impacts presented a far greater risk to their service delivery than Brexit**. They asked for urgent guidance on where to target Green Homes Grant (GHG) funds to maximise their reach and benefit.

What we did

By using our social data mapping tool, **we supported local authorities to understand the distribution of properties with an EPC rating of E, F or G across their regions, in order to identify localities most in need of funding**. This informed bids which secured government funding of £513,000 in phase one and £5m in phase two. In the early stages of implementation, we heard that some customers were finding the GHG application process confusing. In response, we worked with stakeholders (e.g. Alston Moor Community Group, CHIL and CAFS) to develop simple guidance materials and used these to train our frontline contact centre staff and CAM. As a result, 201 customers were successfully guided through the grant application process.

Outcome

Grants will enable households to **increase energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty**, which will help to prevent illnesses linked to cold conditions. This will contribute towards **tackling climate change** and provide work for local contractors and apprenticeships or training for **new green jobs**. The total social benefit of this engagement this year has been £924,000.



Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic 2020/21



OUR KEY PUBLICATIONS

The following publications are available to download from our [website](#).

