

Western Power Distribution Company Profile



Western Power Distribution (WPD) owns and operates the electricity distribution networks in South Wales and South West England. WPD's vision is to be world class in power delivery.

WPD is owned by PPL Global LLC, a subsidiary of PPL Corporation of Allentown, Pennsylvania, USA.

WPD delivers electricity to 1.5 million customers over a 14,400 km² service area in South West England, and to just over 1 million customers over an 11,800 km² service area in South and West Wales. Our network is one of the largest of all the distribution networks in the UK, covering densely populated residential neighbourhoods and widely dispersed rural populations.

The company employs approximately 2,300 staff of whom 1,500 are based in South West England and around 800 are located in Wales.

Over the last 3 years WPD has increased the number of vulnerable customers recorded on its Priority Services Register ("PSR") by 35% from around 100,000 customers to over 135,000.

WPD's excellent customer service has been recognised through the government's Charter Mark award which it has held continually since 1992. WPD is proud to be the only energy company to have achieved this.



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Ofgem Customer Service Reward Scheme

Priority Customer Care

Safeguarding vulnerable customers during severe weather emergencies

This year our biggest challenge was the snow and blizzards in February which left 40,000 customers without electricity in freezing conditions. We were able to combine our new hi tech telephone system, our PSR records and our partnership with oxygen providers to help vulnerable customers.



New call taker system

In 2008 we introduced a new system for emergency calls. The system identifies the location of the customer from their telephone number (landline or mobile) and if they are registered with us. This gives improved automatic messages to the customers and provides customer details, including call history to our staff taking calls. Customers also have the option to request a call-back or to speak to the same agent on a repeat call. These features are particularly valuable for vulnerable customers.

Telephone records

It is vital that we have a telephone number for all our PSR customers, to utilise the call taker system. We capture this information each day from customer calls. This year we also began a programme to mail all PSR customers to confirm their details, starting with 15,000 customers where we do not hold a telephone number.

Call-backs to vulnerable customers

For over 2 years we have been telephoning any PSR customer who is without electricity for over an hour, during

normal weather. From October 2008 we extended this service to all customers during normal weather and all PSR customers during severe weather emergencies when it is most needed.

Within hours of the February 2009 severe weather, we were able to use our PSR to identify and contact 435 medically dependent customers left without power and give an accurate restoration time to enable them to plan ahead. We also liaised with the oxygen providers (see over).

The next day we rang 500 medically dependent and vulnerable customers without power to offer an update and reassurance. As the weather and travel conditions were so treacherous, the WRVS visiting service was suspended. WPD staff continued to provide this service with home visits to check on customers and bring hot food & drinks and in some cases a generator.

The next day as our engineers were completing the restoration work we rang 250 PSR customers to check that they had their electricity back.

Customers are at their most vulnerable during power cuts, particularly during bad weather. During 2008/09 we looked at how to improve the customer journey of vulnerable customers who suffer a power cut.

Feedback from vulnerable customers told us they want:

- to know who to ring if there is a power cut
- accurate information about when their power will be back on so that they can plan ahead
- reassurance and empathy from us
- advice on what to do during a power cut
- to know more about our services.

We have responded by:

- working with Age Concern and RNIB to promote our emergency number and an action plan to over 50,000 vulnerable customers
- promoting our services to customers and agencies
- introducing a new call taker system that can recognise the customer and automatically give up-to-date information about their locality
- pro-actively calling every PSR customer off supply during the severe weather to offer reassurance and assistance.

Ofgem Customer Service Reward Scheme

Priority Customer Care



Active customer engagement

Customer call-backs

We have been asking customers about their experiences of power cuts.

We called every customer after their power was restored, to give an explanation and ask for feedback on our service. This year we made over 25,000 calls. Customers told us that they value accurate information on their restoration time.

Customer research

To find out what our PSR customers need from us, we held 4 focus groups across our region, facilitated by specialist researchers and attended by vulnerable customers and carers. This was supported by 6 in-depth interviews.

The researchers found that customers who depend on electricity due to illness or disability find power cuts very stressful and want empathy and reassurance from us. Most importantly they need accurate information on restoration in order to plan ahead. This also reduces the level of anxiety. These customers said that they would value a call to check that they are managing in a power cut.

Improving customer awareness with community partners

Project Outreach

With the help of a former energywatch priority services adviser, we surveyed customers and agencies to seek their views on how we could improve our service to PSR customers.

The initial feedback from the survey was that many customers are not aware of WPD's PSR services. Project Outreach sought to address this through 10 multi-agency events across the region. The contacts made resulted in partnerships to publicise WPD's services.

Age Concern Cymru

In 2008, Age Concern Cymru told us that many over 50s did not know what to do in a power cut, and were not aware of WPD's emergency telephone number. So we teamed up with them to produce an 8-point plan. We ran a joint campaign to promote the plan. Age Concern volunteers handed out information packs including a fridge magnet featuring WPD's emergency helpline to 50,000 older customers at events across our region. These customers now have better information available in the event of a power cut, which will make the experience a little less stressful. We are continuing this campaign in South West England in 2009.

Updating our PSR records

Having reliable records of medically dependent customers is essential during power cuts.

Oxygen dependent customers

- We extended our partnership with oxygen providers into the South West.
- This enables us to maintain reliable records for oxygen dependent customers.
- Over 6,500 customers were added to our PSR, in addition to 3,400 in South Wales added last year.
- During power emergencies we contact the oxygen providers to advise them which of their customers are affected, so that they can offer medical assistance to their customers.

Kidney patients

- We contact hospitals regularly to promote our services to kidney patients and register new patients.
- We increased our registered kidney patients from 200 to 250 in 2008.

Stroke services

- We provided special chairs to two Cardiff Hospitals, for patients recovering from strokes.
- When patients are ready to leave hospital they are given information about WPD's PSR.

Working with RNIB Cymru

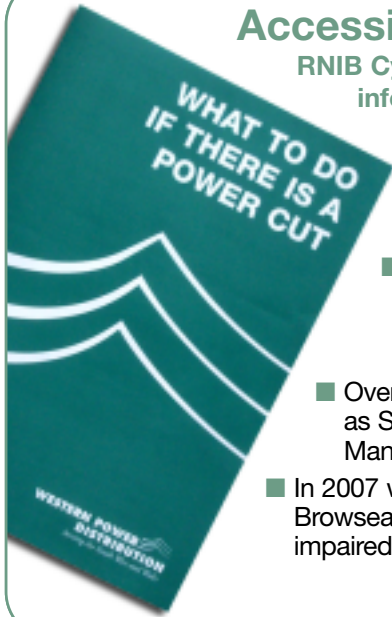
We established a partnership with RNIB Cymru to run a similar campaign to distribute accessible information to their network of clubs and other organisations. They are also helping us to bring our safety campaigns to blind and partially sighted customers. We are looking to roll-out these initiatives to RNIB offices in South West England next year.

Priority Customer Care Supporting Information

Accessible customer information

RNIB Cymru helped us to make our customer information more accessible.

- We asked RNIB to produce audio-CD versions of our power cuts advice and highlighted the availability of Braille and audio CDs on our website and in our leaflets (in English and Welsh).
- Our larger print booklet, written in easywords by Mencap, gives advice about power cuts and how to access our PSR. RNIB said that this was accessible by the majority of partially sighted customers as well.
- Over 8,000 copies of our accessible materials have been distributed through bodies such as Social Services, The Pensions Service, Housing Associations and Citizens Advice. Many of these contacts were made as a result of Project Outreach.
- In 2007 we made our website accessible to the W3C/WAI-AAA standard, including the Browsealoud facility. We have now improved the accessible contacts page for deaf/hearing impaired customers and blind/sighted customers.



Findings from our PSR customer research

"When the power goes off, many will call to report the problem. However, there are a significant number who are unable to do so because of their condition - in many ways these people need special attention."

"In particular, there needs to be a way of identifying these people and checking that they are alright, especially if they live on their own."

"The overriding need of these people is to have accurate information on when the power will be restored. This reduces their panic and allows them to plan what they need to do - this is understandable given what they have to do just to survive day to day."

"In the very least they would like better information about the service and a simple easy to use card on what to do when a power cut occurs."

"Empathising with the impact of the disability or, condition is something that needs to be understood by those who answer the telephone to these customers."

Support from community partners

"This is a simple but very effective way of helping older people deal with what could be a stressful situation". **Robert Taylor, Director of Age Concern Cymru**

"I was surprised when I talked to Western Power to find out how much help is available to people. We can't afford to miss out." **Budleigh Salterton town councillor, Alan Jones at one of our Project Outreach events**



Feedback from customers who like our call-backs

"Your staff worked hard in awful weather conditions to minimise the interruptions and we were very glad to be kept informed of what was happening. Your staff's efforts were much appreciated"

"..our thanks for what we consider excellent service.. the lady I spoke to initially, the people who carried out the rectification to restore the supply and lastly Jason who called to check if everything was as it should be".

"I was given precise details of what the fault was and the estimated time for repair, which turned out to be very accurate. I received a call from WPD apologising for the trouble we have been put to. Well done WPD, it certainly knows how to look after its customers."

Ofgem Customer Service Reward Scheme Corporate Social Responsibility

WPD's Community Support Policy is reviewed annually by the Executive and endorsed by our CEO. We identify areas where business issues link to social issues, and determine criteria that all community support projects must meet. We work in partnership with local community groups to deliver a wide range of projects.

Our key themes are:

- Education
- Safety
- Environment

We have linked these themes to the following social and business issues:

- Drug related crime
- Bogus officials
- Inclusive training
- Child safety
- The local environment

Fighting Crime

Drug related crime

Cannabis growing uses large amounts of electricity often connected illegally and unsafely to the electricity network. This is a danger to the public and to the environment.

WPD is working to tackle these dangers as well as the wider social issues associated with cannabis.

WPD is supporting Avon & Somerset Police by providing thermal imaging cameras to detect cannabis houses from heat losses and assist in seizure operations.



WPD helicopters also use this technology to inspect its overhead lines and equipment. This is an innovative partnership that combines a common interest in fighting cannabis with a shared technology.

Seizures of cannabis by Avon and Somerset Police have more than trebled in 2008/09 to 25,000 plants from 65 seizures, up from 8,000 plants in 2007/8. This has an estimated street value of £25m. The Police credit this success to the thermal imaging cameras.

Protecting Older People

WPD works with community partners to keep older people safe from the danger of crime.

In 2008 we worked with the Police on the "Elder Aware" project. 450 goodie bags including information on bogus officials were handed out at events in Bath.

In 2009 we extended our support for the Safer Newport Partnership. Security lighting and timer switches were provided for elderly residents, together with information about WPD's PSR. This follows our 2007 work in Merthyr Tydfil.

Inclusive Training

WPD has an established partnership with Odyssey the outreach programme of Cardiff based *Hijinx Theatre*. This group enables people with learning disabilities

to take part in drama activities. Odyssey members provide training to our contact centre staff, helping them to improve communication with vulnerable customers. This is a two-way process as we have also been supporting training opportunities for the Odyssey members.

In 2008 WPD looked at creative ways to develop the Odyssey training that would provide a more sustainable benefit for its members. The result was an innovative pilot project for 10 Odyssey members with various disabilities, to achieve Open College Network accreditation as a drama workshop assistant to enable them to lead community group activities. WPD contact centre staff took part in role play exercises as part of the training. WPD and Hijinx believe this training provides valuable skills to people with limited employment opportunities, as well as to the WPD staff involved. Some of the students are already working with groups in their community.

We also supported other groups providing inclusive training including a group for visually impaired adults in South Wales.

Ofgem Customer Service Reward Scheme

Corporate Social Responsibility

WPD's Charitable Trust supports community groups, often supported by staff, that help disadvantaged children and young adults. This year projects we helped included:

- a centre that supports people suffering from the effects of social exclusion and deprivation
- a centre that provides help and advice for disabled people
- a group which promotes independence and equality for people with learning disabilities
- a community group run by parents of disabled children and young adults
- an Asian women's sewing group stage a fashion show
- literacy resources to support primary school children with English as a second language



The shows use WPD's safety character "Pylonman" to emphasise the dangers of playing near electrical equipment and the effects of vandalism on our network. The show is delivered as a Year 6 workshop followed by a performance involving the children to the rest of the school in the afternoon.

We provide a wide range of safety resources to enhance the national curriculum. This is supported on our website which includes an interactive safety game for children.

This year we launched eight new educational worksheets designed for schoolchildren visiting WPD's events.

We also worked with police forces in the South West to produce 400 "Get Savvy" packs. These cover a range of social issues including safety. These packs are used by community support officers during their schools visits.

keen to be green

We recognise the impact of our activities on the environment. As well as our own internal initiatives we are helping our customers and their families to improve and appreciate their local environment.

WPD's new "keen to be green" programme supports projects involving community organisations such as schools and charities targeted at protecting wildlife habitat, recycling, reducing waste and conserving energy. We also aim to enhance the national curriculum by working with schools to achieve the green flag as part of the government's Eco Schools Programme.

This builds on our tree scheme which has been running for over 17 years in partnership with two local environmental groups. We support school and community projects to plant trees and shrubs. In 2008 over 8,600 trees were planted.

Brighter Bikes Safer Cycling

Encouraging children to cycle is a great way to help the environment and promote healthy living. We ran a radio campaign involving the major radio stations across South West England promoting an online safety quiz for children.

Our "Brighter Bikes" safety poster campaign encouraged children to light up their cycles at night. We ran this in conjunction with the Media Wales newspaper group and through our own staff magazine.

"Apprentice Challenge" is an annual event that puts our apprentices' skills to good use in helping to improve outdoor spaces across the region including projects for Special Schools and environmental charities.

Keeping Children Safe

One of the main social impacts of our network is the need to protect the public from the potential hazards of our equipment. There is also a business benefit by reducing vandalism of our substations and equipment, therefore reducing power cuts.

We deliver our safety message to over 50,000 children each year. Where incidents have occurred, we work with local schools to target our safety message and reduce further incidents.

We work with the emergency services to support a number of joint safety initiatives such as Crucial Crew, Junior Life Skills, Hazard Alley and the Safety Zone. Our operational staff and apprentices attend many of these events.

It's a Big Act

We commissioned the Big Act Theatre Company to deliver innovative safety shows at primary schools in Bristol and Somerset selected on the basis of incidents of vandalism to equipment in the area. The project was piloted in June 2008 and developed using feedback from pupils and staff. We plan to extend this project in 2010.

Ofgem Customer Service Reward Scheme

Corporate Social Responsibility Supporting Information

Case Study Cannabis

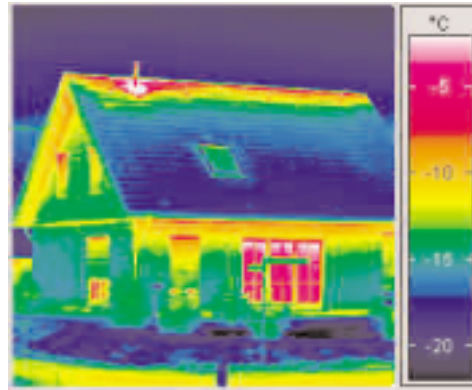
The Benefits

WPD provided Avon and Somerset Police with handheld infra-red thermal imaging cameras that can detect the heat losses associated with the powerful lights used to grow cannabis on a large scale. Early detection also helps reduce the risk of fire due to illegal connection to the electricity network.

WPD is supporting initiatives that help reduce these losses and so reduce carbon emissions. It is estimated that 360,000 units of lost electricity will have been saved.

The cameras are also used during night time operations to locate suspects of drug related crime.

The cameras have also been used to search for missing persons including the successful location of a 3 year old girl.



Some Feedback

"These imagers have been tremendously successful in helping us combat the threat of Cannabis factories and in helping to reduce drug related crime."

**Drugs Strategy Manager
Avon & Somerset Constabulary**

"We are very grateful for continued support and cooperation and look forward to continuing this work in the future."

**Jackie Roberts
Assistant Chief Constable, Avon
& Somerset Constabulary**

Case study Hijinx Theatre

The Benefits

One student, who suffered head trauma after an accident and now uses an electric wheelchair had just finished training to become a teacher before his accident. The course was important to him as he has begun to see that he can still do something he loved to do before his accident, to work with people."

For two other students with learning disabilities we also provided support to help them travel on their own for the first time, meeting them at the train station and helping them with the buses. These students have now grown in confidence to be able to handle journeys alone, an important step to greater independence.



Some Feedback

"The growth in each of these students has been phenomenal... a massive step in gaining a little independence from parents and other forms of support."

"Many of the students have also started to use their new skills as drama workshop leaders in leading games and exercises for other groups which they attend, so increasing the benefit within the community."

"On behalf of everyone on the course and all at Hijinx I would like to thank Western Power for supporting the Drama Workshop assistant Course, it really has been a fantastic project which has extended beyond the regular sessions."

**Ben Pettitt-Wade,
Outreach Officer Hijinx Theatre**