



ELECTRICITY
CUSTOMER
CHAMPION

Stakeholder Engagement & Consumer Vulnerability Trial

Part 1

I am delighted to introduce UK Power Networks' entry to the 2015 trial of the Electricity Distribution Stakeholder Engagement and Consumer Vulnerability Incentive Scheme.

UK Power Networks has a vision to be the best performing Distribution Network Operator (DNO) group by 2018/19. A key element of achieving this is to be a respected corporate citizen. Our strategy to deliver our vision is clear. We must provide specific services and customer care to those who need our help most and we must be a trusted source of help for all vulnerable and fuel poor customers in the regions that we serve.

We have a clear line of sight from our executive management team through to our customer facing staff of how we are delivering against our strategy. The feedback that we obtain from our customers and a range of partners that we work with ensures our services are continuously improving. Overall accountability for co-ordinating our work continues to lie within our Customer Services team supported by a broad cross section of employees that serve our customers day in and day out.

We are proud of what we have achieved so far because we know we have made a real difference to people's lives. However, we realise that we need to continue to do more in this area and keep pushing the boundaries to provide the best service. To become the best by 2018/19, we need to ensure that we keep engaging with our vulnerable customers, understanding their needs and improving our service to them. We will ensure we have the correct resources to cope with the ever increasing needs – especially providing a targeted service to address the transient needs of our customers. We will also have the best links with wider services, working closely with related organisations that will help our customers.

Finally, this report highlights the value adding work that we have done in the last 12 months, delivering real benefits to our customers. In addition to our future plans that are as a result of the valuable learning and customer insight.



Basil Scarsella, CEO

1. Continue to understand our vulnerable customers

We understand that vulnerability can be due to a variety of reasons which are outlined in Part 2B. The work we have carried out over the years has shown us that vulnerable and fuel poor customers' needs are both complex and transitory, and so it is vital that we continually listen to their views and shape our service to meet their specific needs. That is why in the last 12 months we have:

- Undertaken a focus group that has led to us refining our service and training 52 customer champions who can offer hands on welfare support to vulnerable customers during a power cut.
- Contacted almost 500 customers through an online survey and gained feedback that leaflets were an effective channel to promote the Priority Services Register (PSR). Therefore leaflets have formed an integral part of all planned future PSR promotion campaigns.
- Utilised data analytics and worked with partners such as the National Energy Action to understand the variation of vulnerability across our geographical footprint. With this understanding we have trialled an initiative in some geographical areas showing highest deprivation. We will continue to use this understanding.

This structured engagement, conducted over multiple channels and with partners has informed our detailed activities over the last twelve months as summarised in part 2, section 2 of this submission.

2. Enhancing our service to our vulnerable customers

We have undertaken a range of activities to address issues associated with consumer vulnerability and seen some tremendous successes:

Providing quality information through the customers' channel of choice:

- During a power cut our dedicated team call every vulnerable customer affected and in the last 12 months we have made over 80,000 calls.
- We also offer to keep customers updated via text message until their power supply is restored; in the last 12 months we have sent over 28,000 of these text messages.

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- During longer power cuts our Customer Champions or the British Red Cross (BRC) will visit the affected area to offer updates and hands-on support to vulnerable customers, (in the last 12 months the BRC supported 1,100 customers) including the provision of torches and blankets.
- In certain circumstances we also despatch our command vehicle to the local area, which vulnerable customers can use as a point of contact, a charging point for mobile phones or to sit down and have a cup of tea with a friendly face in what could be a stressful situation.

Improving our data and information management:

- Every touchpoint with a customer is an opportunity to improve our understanding of our customers' needs. We have invested over £50m in implementing new systems and processes, including a leading edge Customer Relationship Management capability. This enables us to have a single view of all customer interactions and means the PSR is fully integrated with our CRM so we can dynamically update records. Over the last 12 months we have confirmed over 35,000 customer records are up to date.
- Our field staff also benefit from this information network as they now can see where a vulnerable customer is on their mobile devices through live control diagrams. Providing this information gives the insight to deliver a better service because our engineers can see the location of vulnerable customers and understand their circumstances.
- We have trained not only our 200 customer facing staff to equip them with the skills to identify and support vulnerable customers, but also rolled out the same training to over 900 staff in the wider business that may be called upon to support in major storms and incidents so we are more resilient.
- We have empowered our workforce to take personal responsibility. Relevant managers have the flexibility and authorisation to pay for food, book hotels or offer a gesture of goodwill as appropriate to any vulnerable customer to ensure their needs are met. Our customer advisors performance is managed based on the quality of the customer conversation not the length of time on the call to offer the best service that meets the customer's individual needs.

3. Focus on fuel poor customers

We have applied a lot of focus to understanding the needs of households who may be struggling with their fuel bills. We are continuing to invest in developing smart technology projects, such as '[energywise](#)', where we are using cutting-edge technology to examine how we can help fuel-poor customers adapt their behaviour to help the future market.

We recognise, as reinforced by Dermot Nolan's [recent speech](#) at Energy UK's annual conference, that for many consumers, smart meters will be the most significant – and most visible – example of innovation in energy coming into their lives. It presents a real opportunity to benefit and engage consumers about their energy use. So *energywise* will recruit several hundred households in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets between 2015 and 2017, and carry out two trials; firstly exploring if fuel poor households can benefit from energy efficiency measures such as smart meters, smart energy displays, energy efficient light bulbs, ecoKettle and standby saver; and secondly, understanding their appetite to change their behaviour by swapping to an 'off-peak' tariff, with favourable rates at certain times.

The learning from this project has reinforced that it is important to work with local trusted community groups to access and engage with consumers. This output has given us confidence in our strategy of engaging with appropriate partners (such as the BRC and councils) to deliver benefits to customers. Moreover the project has demonstrated that it is important to have customer facing staff being able to speak one of the local non-English dialects as this supports in overcoming language barriers, and building rapport and trust with the community.

We understand that we play a significant part in making customers aware of the Warm Home Discount scheme as well as awareness about energy efficiency to reduce energy bills. Which is why we provide 'Warm Home Discount' information to our customer facing staff to share with our customers and why in partnership with other organisations have offered various energy efficiency workshops to customers within our regions.

4. Help our customer more by linking with wider services

We want to provide a holistic service to our vulnerable customers: not just providing good customer service but also ensuring that customers have access to services and facilities which can help them further. We also want to ensure that all organisations that deal with vulnerability – whatever its form – know what services we offer and can refer vulnerable customers to us where appropriate.

We work with a wide range of partners including the BRC, Citizens Advice, Age UK, the Royal Association for Deaf People, National Energy Action, councils, Carers Trust, catering companies and energy suppliers. As an example, our relationship with the BRC meant over 1,100 customers in nine months received face-to-face support during a power cut specific to their needs.

Our work with partners has contributed to:

- Being the first DNO to publish sign language videos which have been viewed over 2,000 times.
- Being the first DNO to offer a web chat service with 6,500 customers using this channel with 89% customer satisfaction.
- Our plan to be the first to introduce video chat similar to the amazon example with our agents offering a sign language video chat service.
- Our plan to start a cross utility forum chaired by us to improve service to customers

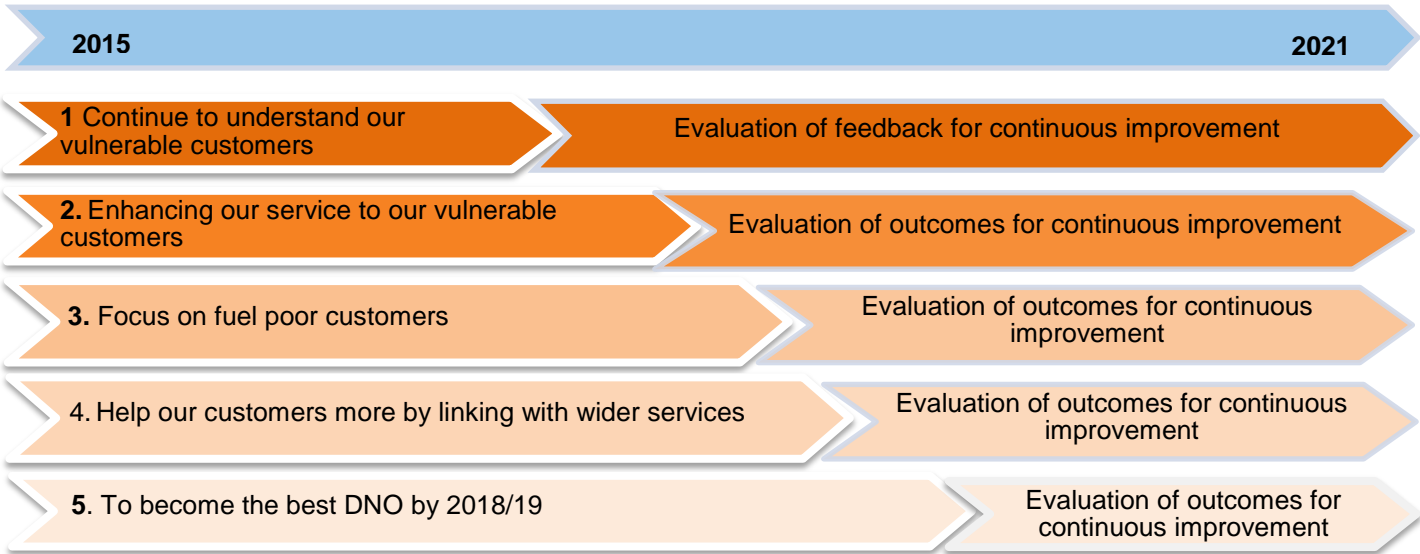
5. To become the best DNO by 2018/19

We believe we have made a real difference to many people lives. We recognise that we cannot stand still though and that expectations are rising, change is gathering pace and what happens in the consumer world will reach our industry soon. Therefore we have exciting plans to:

- Maximise the benefits of our new technology investment to hold higher quality data on our customers so we can offer a better service.
- Build stronger networks with other organisations so we can offer a wider range of help and support to our customers.
- Expand our team to provide drive and focus to implement our forward plans.
- Work across the utility industry and collaborate on projects to further improve the service a customer receives.

We want to be the best and for others in the industry to learn from us. We have confidence in our plans and believe they will ensure we become a trusted source of help for all vulnerable and fuel poor customers in the regions that we serve.

This diagram shows our Strategic Delivery Plan for developing and improving the service to vulnerable customers. Section 2B of this submission follows the same overarching structure.



Part 2B

1. Continue to understand our vulnerable customers

Our [Stakeholder Engagement and Vulnerable Customer Strategy](#) is based on feedback from stakeholders and extensive understanding of our vulnerable and fuel poor customers’ needs. The work we have carried out has shown us that vulnerable and fuel poor customers’ needs are both complex and transitory, and so it is vital that we continually listen to their views and shape our service to meet their specific needs

We know that consumer vulnerability is a complex issue and can change as the customer’s circumstances change. These issues have been documented in [Ofgem’s Consumer Vulnerability Strategy](#). We understand that vulnerability can be due to a variety of reasons including age, loss of hearing, a dependence on medical equipment, disabilities, mental health issues, young children in the home, learning difficulties or dementia and many more. There are three main causes to fuel poverty; low income, the cost of energy and the energy efficiency of our customers’ homes. Although there is a correlation between

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fuel poverty and vulnerability, they are separate issues with distinct challenges. We know vulnerability is different for every customer so each of our vulnerable customers gets treated on a case by case basis. We have carried out the following engagement over the last 12 months:

- A vulnerable customer and fuel poor focus group that was attended by subject matter experts
- An online survey where we asked for views from almost 500 vulnerable customers
- Our regular critical friends panels where we discussed customer service with key partners

We have also carried out the specific pieces of work detailed below, in order to understand our vulnerable and fuel poor customers’ needs further.

- **energywise project**

This Low Carbon Network Fund project aims to help households manage their energy usage by exploring if they could benefit from energy efficiency measures such as smart meters, or energy efficient light bulbs, as well as understanding customers’ appetite to change their behaviour by swapping to an ‘off-peak’ tariff with favourable rates at off-peak times. The project has already offered useful insight to us. Early evidence suggests that almost a third of the households in the trial have turned to energy companies for advice about lowering their electricity bills, and just over a third would first turn to organisations like energy companies, local councils or landlords for information about electricity use in future. These are initial findings so conclusions may be revised however findings are very promising so far.

- **Heat map showing customer vulnerability**

We carried out detailed work to understand the variation of vulnerability across our geographical footprint following initial work with National Energy Action. We identified where we were likely to find higher levels of vulnerability in its various forms – for example, the percentage of the population who are elderly, the levels of unemployment (as a proxy for disposable income) and the number of customers already registered on the PSR. We then mapped and weighted these indices to develop a heat map of vulnerability – see right for an example, the colours on the map represent the ranking of deprivation with red showing the 10% most deprived areas, amber the next 10% and the rest shown as green. We used this map when selecting locations to hold energy efficient workshops. We targeted areas with high levels of vulnerability and held the workshops in those locations. We will continue to use the map in the same way in the future for other initiatives to help customers most in need.



The table below summarises what vulnerable and fuel poor customers have told us they want and this has shaped the initiatives we have delivered and will continue to deliver.

In summary vulnerable and fuel poor customers told us they want:	Engagement method
UK Power Networks to raise awareness of their PSR	Online survey and vulnerable customer focus group
Help during a power cut ranging from being able to speak to someone quickly to having someone visit their home	Vulnerable customer focus group
UK Power Networks to offer advice or refer them to someone who can give them useful advice to save money on their energy bills	Vulnerable customer focus group
UK Power Networks to hold accurate information about them whilst they are on the PSR so their needs are fully met.	Vulnerable customer focus group

2. Enhancing our service to vulnerable customers

We offer our vulnerable customers a variety of services to address the issues associated with consumer vulnerability. To gain external accreditation for our services, and further improve them, we are committed to meeting the BSI 18477 standard: *Inclusive service provision – requirements for identifying and responding to consumer vulnerability*. We are also committed to achieving the ‘Louder than Words’ charter, a nationally recognised standard that shows people who are deaf or have hearing issues that we offer a fully deaf aware service.

2.1. Services during a power cut

The services that customers expect will vary depending on their vulnerability and the duration of the power cut. We offer extensive services to our vulnerable customers during a power cut, including a dedicated high priority telephone number to call in such circumstances. During a power cut our dedicated team call every vulnerable customer affected and in the last 12 months we have made over 80,000 calls. We also offer to keep customers updated via text message until their power supply is restored; in the last 12 months we have sent over 28,000 of these text messages to vulnerable customers. During longer power cuts our Customer Champions or the BRC will visit the affected area to offer updates and hands-on support to vulnerable customers, including the provision of torches and blankets. In the last nine months 446 torches and blankets were distributed. In addition this face-to-face support can allow customers to receive face to face updates about when the power will be back on. We also offer hot food, money for a meal or hotels if needed. In certain circumstances we also despatch our command vehicle to the local area (16 times in the last 12 months), which vulnerable customers can use as a point of contact, a charging point for mobile phones or to sit down and have a cup of tea with a friendly face in what could be a stressful situation.

An example of how we have helped just one of our vulnerable customers by tailoring the service we provided to his specific needs is during a planned power cut in Norwich, we were advised of a D-Day veteran who would have been unable to watch the commemorations on television due to the power cut. Through liaison with our customer service team we identified that the customer wasn't well enough for us to take him to an alternative location to watch the programme, and so we arranged for a generator to be installed at his house, thus enabling him to pay his respects.

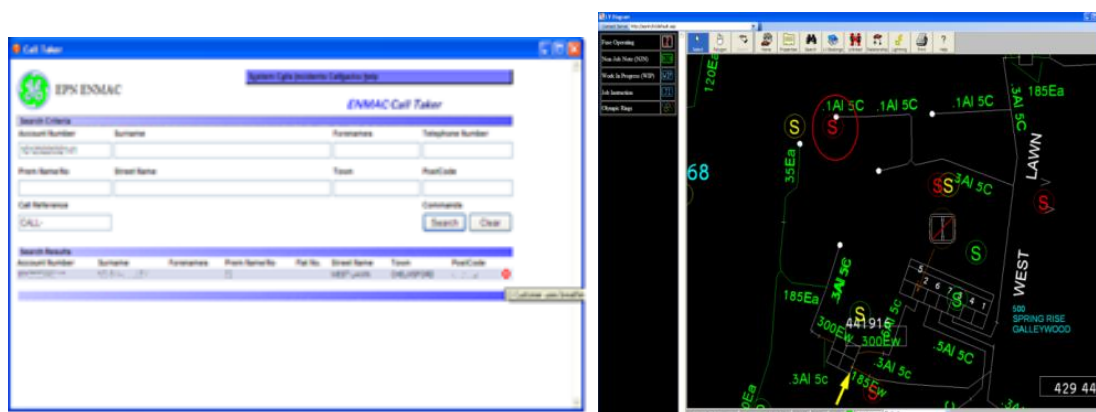
2.2. A new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system

Key to our management of information is having one system holding one source of data. We introduced a new CRM system as part of a £50 million Business Transformation Programme across the company. We now have increased confidence in the accuracy of our vulnerable customer data as our PSR database is no longer a standalone system – it is fully integrated with our CRM so we can dynamically update customers' records. The system enables us to see a full customer history and also allows vulnerable customers to choose their preferred method for us to contact them.

2.3. Acquiring new data and updating our PSR in real time

We obtain vulnerable customer data from a range of sources – most notably, through our daily interactions with customers. If we identify a customer as vulnerable, we now add them to our PSR immediately to provide them with much needed additional support during power cuts. As soon as we know a customer is vulnerable, our employees add the customer details directly to our system and this updates our PSR so that other call advisors can see the information immediately. Our network control system is also updated straightaway, so that our operational teams have immediate visibility of all known vulnerable customers. We believe that this system change is key to offering an excellent service to our vulnerable customers, especially when they are without power.

The diagrams below shows our real-time information screens our customer service employees use to register a vulnerable customer, and how that customer appears on our network control system (as an 'S').



2.4. We have confirmed over 35,000 vulnerable customer records are up to date

We recognise that our PSR needs careful management and that our customer records are continually changing. Our ambition is to ensure that every record on the PSR is updated regularly and over the last 12 months during over 115,000 customer interactions we continually seek to update these records. We are keen to develop this work further and to be even more proactive. Accordingly, we are establishing a pilot programme to update a sample of PSR records, using data from specialist data companies. This will improve our data and prove cost and time efficient. If the pilot is

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successful, we will roll it out and build it into our strategy and business-as-usual processes. We know this work is not the only answer, which is why we plan to also contact our customers directly.

2.5. Temporary vulnerability

We allow a much wider list of customers to join our PSR than ever before. Anyone who considers themselves to be vulnerable is eligible for inclusion on our PSR because we know that vulnerability is complex and difficult to categorise. We know vulnerability can be temporary in nature, for example, when a customer has had hospital treatment and would be vulnerable during their recovery time or when a new baby is in the household. Our CRM system will enable us to add specific categories to the PSR for such customers to help maintain data quality.

2.6. How we use the data on our PSR

The data on our PSR is fundamentally at the core of our service offering, and we use it extensively. We have a dedicated team of 11 people who are responsible for contacting vulnerable customers on the PSR during unplanned power cuts, to keep them updated on progress. To add to this, every single one of our call advisors takes ownership for consumer vulnerability and listens out for signs of vulnerability in conversations with customers. In situations where customer service agents identify a specific need that cannot be satisfied over the phone, we have the ability to send the BRC to the customers' premises to assist them. The team also notifies all local councils so they can share this message with wider groups of customers, we have notified them 292 times in the last 12 months. Furthermore, during any major network events the BRC joins us in our call centre and works closely with us to help prioritise customers on the PSR that will need the most help, so we can provide extra support. We also use the data to ensure that PSR customers are contacted proactively in advance of any planned interruptions to supply and are offered advice about preparing for the event.

2.7. Over 1,000 employees trained on vulnerability

Over 200 of our employees who receive power-cut enquiries from customers on a daily basis have been trained in consumer vulnerability because it is a key part of their role. In addition we have trained over 900 employees on consumer vulnerability in other parts of the organisation, such as Finance and HR. These employees are trained to offer support to our call centre when we receive high volumes of calls, and thus they are equipped with the skills to identify vulnerable customers, which is essential to providing an excellent service. We continue to develop our employees' skills and confidence with annual refresher training because we are committed to providing our vulnerable customers with the best service possible.

2.8. A flexible approach to helping vulnerable customers

Our customer facing staff have the flexibility to do what they believe is best when offering a service to vulnerable customers, because we know that no two vulnerable customers have exactly the same needs. We have put in place a process which authorises relevant managers to pay for food, book hotels or offer a gesture of goodwill as appropriate. If a vulnerable customer is without power overnight and we are not sure when their power will be restored, we will agree with the customer the best option for them.

We know that some vulnerable customers need more time to speak to an advisor so we do not target our call advisors on the length of time on customer calls. If the customer needs to ask lots of questions and needs extra reassurance then our call advisors will do this. We have ongoing call quality and training to ensure these calls are handled correctly and to ensure our call advisors are given enough flexibility to offer the best service that meets the customer's individual needs.

2.9. Award nominated winter campaign

Our customer facing employees promote the PSR every time they speak to customers but it was clear that there were additional steps we could take to increase awareness among our vulnerable customers. To that end, we ran a winter campaign that has been shortlisted for two industry awards (Utility Week and Corp Comms awards). The campaign saw more than 350,000 leaflets and posters distributed by our employees and partner organisations to key places throughout the community, such as charity shops, housing association offices and council offices. We sent an email to 3.1million customers giving them details of the PSR and encouraging them to apply. The channels selected for the campaign were linked directly to feedback we received from our stakeholders.



We sent press releases to key media; set up broadcast interviews with senior staff; invited the media to see our maintenance work, such as tree cutting; and involved key partners such as the BRC. Through this media activity we achieved 39 items across print, broadcast and online media, with a potential audience reach of 1.5 million.

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In addition to this, feedback from our critical friends panel indicated that we should be promoting the PSR through social media channels. Accordingly, we held a four-week competition on twitter and Facebook, backed up by online advertisements on these channels. We then took this further – directly targeting customers who were vulnerable or hard to reach. We focused our online advertising on a number of areas, such as those covering disability or carers groups. This targeted approach proved very successful: enabling us to reach over 2 million customers overall on social media.

We know that MPs are interested in our interactions with vulnerable customers and are keen to reach out to customers in their areas. For the third year running we have contacted the MPs in our three regions, briefed them and asked for their support in promoting the PSR to their constituents. In the last year eight MPs have promoted awareness of UK Power Networks and the PSR to their constituents – by issuing press releases to their local newspapers, on twitter and by adding information to their websites. To further reinforce this work we are following up this activity with a drop-in event on this subject in the House of Commons on 8 December.

In summary this promotion of the PSR has contributed significantly to the increase in the number of customers registered on our PSR from 378,614 in 2013/14 to 530,449 in 2014/15. We tracked awareness of UK Power Networks before the campaign then after the campaign and awareness increased by 3%. We also saw a 3% increase in the number of vulnerable customers that are aware of the PSR.

2.10. Using our partners to promote the PSR

Some of our partners help us promote the PSR via their channels – enabling us to reach more vulnerable customers. For example, Carers Trust has published online articles and blog posts promoting the PSR, and the BRC has distributed over 35,000 PSR leaflets in the last 12 months. As part of a wider winter warmth grant programme, run in partnership with Age UK, the dissemination of PSR information is currently underway. We began planning our partnership programmes in 2014 and many of these are in progress.

Customers are keen for us to continue to work with third parties to promote the PSR and help provide a better service and have suggested that we work with local authorities, the emergency services, charities, housing associations and the health service. We know that local third parties that consumers trust can add real value. For example, Dartford Borough Council posted 40,000 waste collection calendars (image shown to the right) to their residents which included information about our PSR.



2.11. Summary of initiatives delivered to improve the service to vulnerable customers

The following table shows a summary of initiatives we have delivered to help support our vulnerable customers. These are in addition to the initiatives listed on the pages above.

What stakeholders said	Engagement method	Action as a result of the engagement	Benefit
If I have a power cut, keep me updated	Critical Friends Panel East	We called over 80,000 customers on the PSR and sent almost 29,000 text messages in the last 12 months to vulnerable customers that were affected by a power cut	Customers on the PSR kept up to date during a power cut
Websites are not accessible to all PSR customers, leaflets should be used	Vulnerable customer focus group and online survey	We distributed over 350,000 PSR leaflets to our partners for onward distribution to customers to raise awareness of the PSR	This has contributed to a 40% increase in the number of customers on the PSR
Promote the PSR to wider audiences	Vulnerable customer focus group	We emailed 3.1million customers promoting the PSR as part of the getting ready for winter campaign	This has contributed to the number of customers who are aware of UK Power Networks PSR increasing by 3%
Vulnerable customers need communication channels available in different languages and Braille	Vulnerable customer focus group	We have printed literature in Braille, large print and six different languages. We offer a Language Line for customers to call us and have published webpages with key information in six languages	Literature helps us to reach harder to reach customers. Language webpages viewed over 2,000 times

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What stakeholders said	Engagement method	Action as a result of the engagement	Benefit
Promote the PSR to wider audiences	Vulnerable customer focus group	We are working with the ENA and all DNOs to promote the PSR jointly on the ENA website	Making the PSR easier to access for vulnerable customers
Nervousness about personal information being shared with third parties	Vulnerable customer focus group	We produced a privacy policy to assure customers	Gives vulnerable customers a clear understanding of how we use their personal data
Vulnerable customers want easy access to a single emergency telephone number to call if there is a power cut	Critical Friends Panel London	We recommended the telephone number 105 for the single emergency number Ofcom application to all DNOs on the single emergency number project	This has ensured the national telephone number will cater for visually impaired customers because the digit '5' is a navigational key for partially sighted customers
Accessible and clear communication is key	Royal Association for Deaf People	We were the first DNO to launch web chat	Over 6,500 customers have chatted to us using web chat and the overall satisfaction rating for these is 89%. We have shared this best practice with other DNOs, one of whom has since launched web chat for their customers
Vulnerable customers need hands-on support during power cuts	Vulnerable customer focus group	We trained and recruited 52 Customer Champions who visit customers during power cuts	Vulnerable customers have received face to face support, including the provision of torches, the use of the company mobile phone to contact relatives and also the provision of information on the power cut, as appropriate to their needs and vulnerability
Vulnerable customers may not have an email address	Phone call from a customer	We amended the PSR online form so that customers' email addresses are non-mandatory	Easier for vulnerable customers to apply to the PSR

3. Focus on fuel poor customers

We know that fuel poverty has three main contributing factors; low income, the cost of energy and the energy efficiency of our customers' homes. Our focus therefore is to improve the service to our fuel poor customers based on tackling these three areas. Stakeholders have told us that they see us playing a role in helping these customers and we understand that we have more to do in this area, which is why it is an area of focus for us.

3.1. Warm Home Discount promotion

We provide 'warm home discount' information to our customer facing staff to share with our customers during conversations, to help fuel poor customers. We are using this initial piece of work as a pilot and will look to embed and roll out further, including a robust tool to log the referrals we have made.

A carer registered at Action for Carers Surrey said:

"I initially called the UKPN helpline to sign up to the Priority Service Register. I look after someone who has Tourettes and extremely challenging behaviour but who also has leukaemia and needs a hospital profiling bed. The woman I spoke to at UKPN was so helpful and non-judgemental. During the conversation she also asked me whether I knew about the Warm Home Discount, which I did not. We talked through my situation and I discovered I was eligible for the discount and saved £140. This money makes such a difference to me as a carer."

3.2. Energy efficiency surgeries

Following a series of workshops held in 2014 with Young Carers, to promote electrical safety and energy efficiency in the home, we identified that there were further opportunities to offer improved benefits to a wider fuel poor audience. Accordingly, in partnership with NEA, we held seven energy efficiency surgeries in February and March 2015, across six towns that we had highlighted as having higher levels of fuel poverty. As a direct result of these surgeries, 155 customers received advice on energy efficiency, 42 customers switched suppliers to a better tariff, three customers signed up to insulate their lofts, and 28 customers applied for the Warm Home Discount who were not aware that they qualified. In addition, 59 customers signed up to our PSR. In total, this initiative delivered £15,377 of annual customer benefits.

Last year we developed a Social Return on Investment (SROI) model to measure the value of benefits generated for stakeholders as a result of the initiatives we deliver either solely or through our partners. Using this model we

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calculated a social return from these surgeries of £1.19 for every £1 invested. We have since shared our knowledge of this model through an ENA meeting with other industry partners resulting in one DNO requesting to meet with us to develop further. We have also published our findings in an edition of NEA Focus magazine.

3.3. Funding local energy community projects

Our Power of Giving fund supports initiatives which promote energy efficiency and address social concerns (e.g. fuel poverty) or offer grass roots benefits to local communities. This has enabled us to provide financial support for a number of projects which have already delivered benefits to our vulnerable customers, including:

- A Groundwork London project which provided energy efficiency advice and energy saving devices to 69 customers in Wandsworth. Benefit: an approximate saving of £15 per customer on their energy bills
- A Groundwork Hertfordshire project which provided energy advice and home visits to 32 vulnerable households. Benefit: eight customers switched their energy tariff and 12 customers qualified for a Warm Home Discount, these along with other initiatives resulted in a saving of over £7,250 per annum
- A Home Energy Efficiency initiative which provided tailored energy advice to 269 low income and vulnerable households in the London Borough of Waltham Forest. Benefit: 152 customers switched energy supplier and 58 households qualified for a Warm Home Discount, resulting in a combined saving of £39,000 per annum

4. Help our customers more, by linking with wider services

We work with a wide range of partners including the BRC, Citizens Advice, Age UK, the Royal Association for Deaf People, National Energy Action, councils, Carers Trust, catering companies, and energy suppliers.

4.1. Leading the industry when catering for deaf and hard of hearing customers

Our partnership with the Royal Association for Deaf People has improved our communications with deaf customers, and we have shared our learning from this work with other DNOs, GDNs and energy suppliers at an ENA event, to enable them to roll it out and help their deaf or hard of hearing customers. Our work for these customers includes:

- Being the first DNO to launch a live web chat on our website, which is a useful communication channel for deaf or hard of hearing customers. We have seen over 6,500 customers communicate with us using web chat, with an overall satisfaction rating of 89%.
- Being the first DNO to publish videos offering useful power-cut advice in British Sign Language. We published five videos (which cost under £13,000 to produce) and these have been viewed over 2,000 times.
- Installing hearing loops in our call centre and in some of our offices, and have given our Customer Champions access to these so they can visit customers' homes and speak to them using the loop.
- Making good progress towards gaining our 'Louder than Words' charter mark in 2016.
- Continuing to lead the industry, we also plan to launch a video chat on our website during the last quarter of 2015 which we will use to communicate with relevant customers, using British Sign Language.

Dr Jan Sheldon, chief executive of the Royal Association for Deaf People said:

"We work with Deaf people to help to make mainstream services more accessible to them. Our partnership with UK Power Networks (UKPN) is enormously beneficial to Deaf people. For the first time ever, Deaf people have access to information about UKPN services in their first language. They also have information about the Priority Services Register and why this is important. UKPN have introduced webchat and will soon be introducing video chat to support accessibility for Deaf customers. They have also worked with RAD to develop video clips in British Sign Language for the UKPN web site and to provide information to their staff about how to support Deaf people. It is clear that UKPN do care about making their service accessible to Deaf people."

4.2. The partners helping us make a real difference to vulnerable customers

The table below contains examples of the outstanding work and benefits achieved for customers through these partnerships.

Stakeholders said	Our partnerships	Action as a result of partnership	Cost	Benefit
Vulnerable customers need hands-on support	The BRC	Extra welfare and face to face support was given to customers during a power cut	£64,000	During the nine months to June we supported over 1,100 customers during a power cut across 93 events using 229 BRC volunteers

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Stakeholders said	Our partnerships	Action as a result of partnership	Cost	Benefit
Vulnerable customers need hands-on support	The BRC	Designed and delivered a joint training programme covering consumer vulnerability to our Customer Champions	Venue and time	52 Customer Champion employees trained on vulnerability
Vulnerable customers need hands-on support	Age UK	Issued 200 winter warmth packs containing items such as blankets and torches and carried out 586 benefit checks with customers	£108,000	Extra welfare support for customers and over £805,000 savings identified for older people so far (project ongoing)
If I have a power cut, keep me updated	Councils	Agreement in place to notify councils of certain power cuts so they can share the message to wider groups of customers	Time	We issued 292 notifications.
Promote the PSR to wider audiences	Islington Council	Promoting the PSR by displaying posters locally and including information in their local magazine	£500	In 2013/14 Islington Council referred 400 customers for inclusion on our PSR. The number of referrals increased to 835 in 2014/15
Promote the PSR to wider audiences	Carers Trust	Distributed 19,000 leaflets promoting the PSR to carers	Printing – approx. £1,000	Reached 19,000 hard to reach carers and promoted the PSR
Vulnerable customers need hands-on support	Catering companies	Provided hot meals during power cuts	£40,000	420 meals provided via the food vans or via hotels
You should collaborate more with organisations	Electricity DNOs	We chair the ENA Consumer Vulnerability Stakeholder communications subgroup. We also attend and proactively engage with the other customer working groups that sit under the CSIWG	Time	Collaborative working to drive best practice
Sharing data with other utilities	Energy suppliers	We receive data from Suppliers on additions, deletions and updates to their PSRs on a daily basis	Time	True alignment with Suppliers' PSRs.
Can more be done with energy suppliers to promote the PSR?	EDF Energy	3 meetings held with EDF Energy in the last 12 months to discuss customer communication	Time	EDF Energy shared our messages to their customers three times during large scale power outages and updated their website in October 2014 with enhanced DNO contact details
Training is key to an organisation being deaf aware	Royal Association for Deaf People	We briefed 568 staff on top tips for communicating with deaf customers for their use during customer contact	Time	Improved communication with deaf, hard to reach customers.

5. To become the best DNO by 2018/19

We're proud of what we have achieved so far because we know we have made a real difference to people's lives. However, we realise that we need to continue to do more in this area and keep pushing the boundaries to provide the best service. To become the best by 2018/19, we need to ensure that we keep engaging with our vulnerable customers, understanding their needs and improving our service to them. We'll ensure we have the correct resources to cope with the ever increasing needs especially to provide a targeted service to address the transient needs of our customers. We will have the best links with wider services that will help our customers. Our ambition to be the best DNO by 2018/19 is a vision shared across UK Power Networks. We want to be a trusted source of help and support to all of our vulnerable customers, in as many ways as we can. We want to be the best in the industry and for others in the industry to learn from us.

