



Part 3: Summary of outcomes resulting from our activities to address consumer vulnerability

Stakeholder Engagement and Consumer Vulnerability Incentive

Providing the highest level of care to our most vulnerable customers



Contents

Introduction

Page
01

Our Consumer Vulnerability strategy

Page
02

Section
1

We understand our vulnerable customers' needs

Pages
03 – 04

Section
2

We are enhancing our service to vulnerable customers

Pages
05 – 07

Section
3

We are focusing on fuel-poor customers

Page
08

Section
4

We are helping our customers by partnering with wider services

Pages
09 – 10

Section
5

Introduction

A year of delivery for our most vulnerable customers



Basil Scarsella
Chief Executive Officer

Customer service is at the heart of our organisation and I am especially committed to ensuring that we recognise and do our utmost for every one of our vulnerable customers. This year has seen a real turning point in our understanding and the development of our services for our customers who are most vulnerable during a power cut and those in fuel poverty. Our vulnerable customers' satisfaction with our service has increased from 80% to 88% in 3 years. From my many years in this sector I am acutely aware of the importance of being caring and considerate towards these customers, and I make sure that this is a top priority for everyone at UK Power Networks. This was brought home to me in our recent sensory training with Age UK, where I was able to put myself in the shoes of our customers facing a range of difficulties, which was truly enlightening.

We have listened to our stakeholders and genuinely reached out to groups and individuals this year that we had never engaged with before, through new, face-to-face methods. From this we have reviewed our strategic approach and developed our services in many ways and added wholly new services, as set out in this report.

This has involved considerable time and support from many of our partners, to whom I offer our utmost appreciation. Despite our great desire to support our vulnerable and fuel poor customers, it is only with the expertise, skills and professionalism of the many organisations, charities and communities we work with that we are able to make a real difference to our vulnerable customers in their homes.

UK Power Networks aspires to be a respected corporate citizen and we understand that our approach to consumer vulnerability is a central part of this. I'm really proud of the progress we are making and all the work that has happened to practically help our most vulnerable customers. Whether it's leading the industry with services for deaf and hard of hearing customers, investing in our new customer and community support teams or launching our new "You and Your Home" service for fuel poor customers, I am proud of the way our people across the whole business are displaying the values we desire and receiving such positive responses from our customers.

I believe this submission on Consumer Vulnerability will show you how we have delivered a remarkable set of achievements and how our partners and most vulnerable customers are recognising this. I look forward to taking advantage of new technologies and opportunities in the years ahead to achieve even more in this area.



Basil Scarsella
Chief Executive Officer

Stakeholders agree that focusing on consumer vulnerability is important:

- 71% of stakeholders we asked agreed consumer vulnerability should be a priority
- "17% of the UK are in fuel poverty and cold homes are currently a bigger killer across the UK than road accidents, alcohol or drug abuse" (National Energy Action)
- "Fuel poverty is not always obvious; it's about making it socially acceptable to admit and talk about it. It is about getting local communities and society to point them in the direction for help." (Stakeholder)
- "Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities in London are particularly concerned about being alone in a power cut and are having greater difficulties with affordability." London Sustainability Exchange
- There are 9 million people in the UK aged over 65 who have at least one impairment (Age UK)

Highlighting some of our **50** Consumer Vulnerability outcomes



Find out more here
[ukpowernetworks.co.uk/
consumervulnerability](http://ukpowernetworks.co.uk/consumervulnerability)

Huge efforts to continue to understand our vulnerable customers

Major research study
with over

1,000

hard to reach customers



Face to face
engagement
with over 100
vulnerable
customers

Using innovative
sensory equipment
to see the world
through the
customers eyes

New services launched for customers experiencing fuel poverty

New scheme to
tackle fuel poverty
'You and your home'



Over 160

customers saved nearly
£25,000 through energy
efficiency workshops



Innovative service improvements to the most vulnerable

3,000

customers helped by
our new 'customer
and community
support' team

100%

PSR records updated
using innovative data
cleanse

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



New innovative partnerships to help the most vulnerable

**West Sussex
Fire and
Rescue
Service**



Carers Trust gaining informed
consent from **180 patients**



Parish councils
signing
customers up
to the PSR

1 Our Consumer Vulnerability strategy

Looking after the most vulnerable members of our society is one of the greatest challenges we all face and one to which the general public attach great importance. We are determined to make sure that we do all we can to recognise and respond to this priority.

Defining consumer vulnerability

We concur with Ofgem's definition of consumer vulnerability as:

When a consumer's personal circumstances and characteristics combine with aspects of the market to create situations where he or she is:

- Significantly less able than a typical consumer to protect or represent his or her interests in the energy market; and/or
- Significantly more likely than a typical consumer to suffer detriment, or that detriment is likely to be more substantial

We delivered

50 Consumer Vulnerability outcomes

Whilst there is a correlation between fuel poverty and vulnerability, we recognise that they are separate issues with different challenges for different demographic groups. We know that fuel poverty has three main contributing factors: low income, the cost of energy and the energy efficiency of our customers' homes, so we concentrate on tackling these.

79% of stakeholders surveyed agree with our consumer vulnerability vision which is to:

"Do our utmost to identify the customers that are most vulnerable during a power cut and/or who may be in fuel poverty whilst engaging with them sensitively. To provide the highest possible levels of care and attention during any interaction as well as a personalised suite of products and services to support them in their everyday lives."

Our strategy

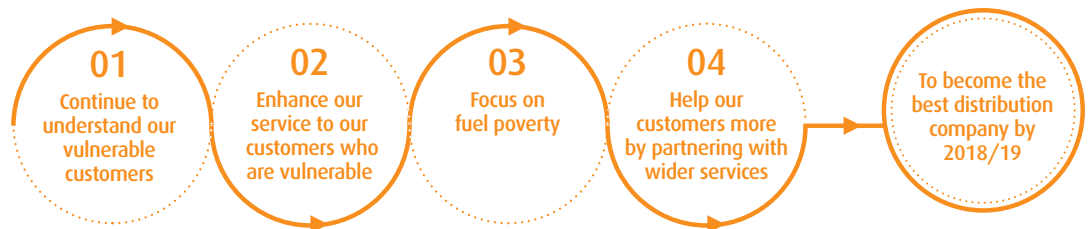
This year, stakeholders let us know that delivering tailored services to our vulnerable and fuel-poor customers was very important and should remain one of our key focus areas. They specifically stated that fuel poverty and vulnerability during a power cut are two separate areas of focus:

"Fuel poverty and vulnerable customers can be separate entities; they overlap but are different - anyone can be in fuel poverty, but vulnerable tends to be health related, but could also include people working from home." (Stakeholder group view at a Critical Friends Panel)

National Energy Action have made it very clear that fuel poverty is a crisis that needs to be addressed, stating that "Cold homes are currently a bigger killer across the UK than road accidents, alcohol or drug abuse". DECC estimates that 10.4% of households in England are in fuel poverty. Listening to this has shaped our consumer vulnerability strategy.

Our consumer vulnerability strategy and principles

Our strategy for delivering on our vision is based on four principles, which underpin our aim to become the best electricity distribution company by 2018/19. We review this strategy each year with stakeholders and customers to ensure we continue to focus on the areas that are important to our vulnerable customers.



All projects across these areas are regularly monitored and evaluated

Face-to-face engagement with our most vulnerable customers has been the focus this year

Bringing a personal dimension to our engagement is especially important with face-to-face often the best way. We have also extended our partnerships with charities, local authorities, other utilities and local groups to reach out to communities. This year we have carried out more engagement activities than ever before.

Engaged with over 100 customers at various Age UK, Alzheimer's Society and British Lung Foundation events.

Carried out face-to-face market research via interviews with over 30 customers.

Engaged daily with our customers via 2,500 calls and 2,000 texts.

Hosted a focus group to discuss consumer vulnerability with partner organisations, including stakeholders from Neighbourhood Watch, Citizens Advice and Carers Trust.

Held a focus group with customers on our PSR from Ipswich who had recently experienced a power cut.

Engaged with over 200 stakeholders at critical friends panels, where we discussed customer service and vulnerable consumers with key partners.

Ran two online research surveys with approximately 1,000 vulnerable customers.

Hosted a forum with other utilities including Thames Water and National Grid to share best practice and discuss how we can all work together to help our vulnerable customers.

Engaged personally with over 90 customers in their homes, in partnership with West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service.

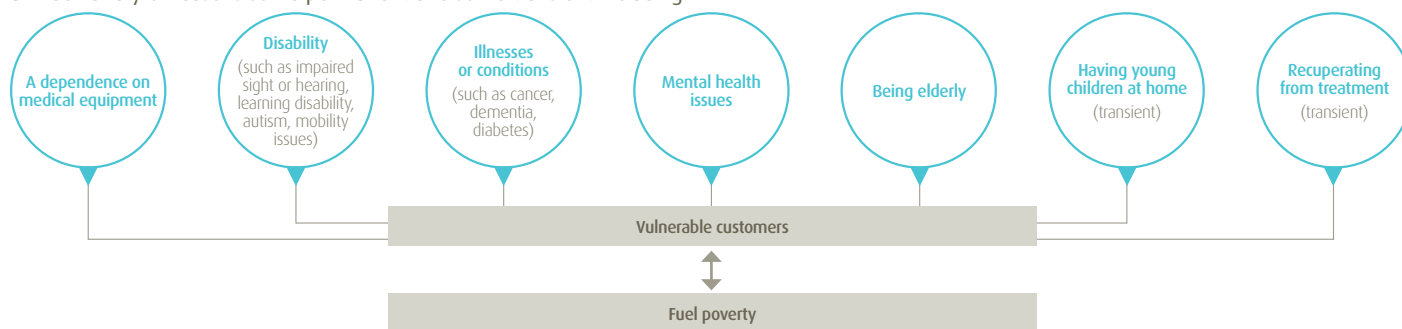


A dementia café

2 We understand our vulnerable customers' needs

Profiling our vulnerable customers

We know how difficult it can be to cope without power. We have been helping our most vulnerable customers for years and have developed a deep understanding of their needs. Feedback from customers tells us this as well as vulnerable customers rating us 88% for customer satisfaction. We know that consumer vulnerability is a complex issue and can change as our customers' circumstances change. We understand that vulnerability can be due to a wide variety of reasons some permanent and some transient including:



We are adopting an innovative face-to-face approach to engagement

See more pictures
[ukpowernetworks.co.uk/
image5](http://ukpowernetworks.co.uk/image5)

We have had great insight from partners in the past, but this year we really wanted to take this a step further and hear first-hand from our customers what they want from us. The best way to talk and engage with our customers is directly in their communities or by joining up with trusted brands outside the electricity industry. So our customer service team spoke to over 100 customers and had face-to-face discussions at two Age UK coffee mornings, two Alzheimer's Society "Dementia café" events and a British Lung Foundation coffee meeting. We also carried out in-depth surveys with over 100 customers here and at other events, on topics such as energy efficiency or the support they would want during a power cut. We chose the geographical areas for these events based on areas of high deprivation in London, Kent, Sussex and Hertfordshire. We received great feedback: **"We all found it extremely interesting, particularly as most members hadn't realised the very good service you provide. Everybody was very impressed!"** (Chair of a local British Lung Foundation support group). More importantly, by engaging directly with them, face-to-face, we gained a real, honest and candid insight into what our customers really want from us.



Face-to-face engagement with a customer

Outcomes:

- Over 100 in-depth interviews with customers enabling us to co-design and launch our new service: 'You and your home' (read more on page 8).
- Over 70 customers signed up to our priority service register (PSR) from these face-to-face meetings.

Using innovative sensory equipment to see the world through our customers' eyes

See more pictures
[ukpowernetworks.co.uk/
image6](http://ukpowernetworks.co.uk/image6)

Employees from all levels have gone through a new sensory training programme that Age UK designed. The course is designed to give employees real insight into what it feels like to deal with the sorts of challenges that our vulnerable customers live with. Employees on the course were able to experience what it felt like to try to navigate a fuse box with poor eyesight and stiff joints. They attempted to find information in our literature using eyes that were impaired in the way our customers' eyes can be. This first hand experience is so much more powerful than being told how it feels, our employees were able to experience it for themselves. This gave them levels of empathy and understanding that they will remember vividly in their dealings with vulnerable customers in the future. One of our employees commented: **"[The training] makes me think and realise just how much more difficult it would be to communicate. Also how it is important that we live in a diverse community and the needs of all should be taken into account and catered for."**

In addition to this innovative training we already have an embedded training programme and have over 1,000 employees trained on consumer vulnerability. Over 200 of our employees who receive power cut enquiries from customers on a daily basis have been trained because it is a key part of their role. In addition we have trained over 900 employees 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. To measure improvements for customers we have a robust call quality evaluation process and we also provide annual refresher training because we are committed to providing our vulnerable customers with the best service possible.

Outcomes:

- Over 5,000 hours of customer service training, including consumer vulnerability, to over 1,000 employees.
- We have redesigned our training materials.
- We realised some of our literature was difficult to read for customers with eyesight disabilities so we made large (A3 sized) versions of our literature available.



Our executive management team wearing goggles that restrict their vision, and replicate certain eye conditions



Our employee, trying to use trip switches whilst wearing a glove that restricts movement to replicate arthritis.

We have built on our understanding of the social issues affecting 'hard-to-reach' groups through a major research study

Our stakeholders last year highlighted the importance of issues affecting hard-to-reach communities. We realised we could strengthen our knowledge about hard-to-reach communities in our region, especially customers who live in rural or coastal regions. Our region is diverse and has urban and rural areas plus a long coastline that in places suffers from coastal erosion, high deprivation, limited economic activity and in particular, low income and seasonal holiday pay. Therefore we invested in a major research study with over 1,000 hard-to-reach customers in partnership with a marketing research consultancy. We found that during a power cut, rural and coastal customers, compared to urban customers, want regular updates and reassurance as well as hands on support such as hot drinks.

We also interviewed ethnic minority groups that are traditionally hard-to-reach, with London Sustainability Exchange. We interviewed customers face to face via focus groups or paired interviews with carers inside customers' homes. The research told us that 10% of the customers we surveyed who were from ethnic minority backgrounds have at least one adult in their household who does not speak English. This makes it more difficult for our customers and engineers to interact when we need to let them know about the work we are carrying out. Some social issues that were highlighted were that our non-English speaking customers rely on support networks in their neighbourhood during power cuts as well as religious communities. One participant in the research said: **"I think some of the Mosques should [offer help], because they can engage a lot more with the community than other groups"**. (a domestic customer)

94% of stakeholders surveyed told us this research would be really interesting and useful for them, so we shared it at our Critical Friends Panels and wider audiences, and we published the findings on our website.

Outcomes:

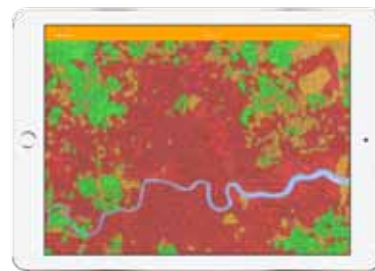
- We set up a customer and community support team for use during power cuts which has helped 3,000 customers in rural and coastal regions (read more on page 5).
- We launched a new mobile app to help communication between our non-English speaking customers and our employees (read more on page 5).



Face-to-face survey with domestic customers

We have a detailed understanding of which towns are affected by vulnerability

Following initial work with National Energy Action, we carried out detailed work to understand the variation of vulnerability across our region. 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, levels of unemployment and the number of customers already registered on our PSR. We then mapped and weighted these indices to develop a heat map of vulnerability – see right for an example.



Our vulnerability map

Key:

- 10% most deprived areas
- The next 10% deprived areas
- Areas that do not fall into the top 20%

Outcomes:

We use this map regularly to help inform which geographical areas need our support the most. We selected:

- Locations for eight energy efficiency workshops (read more on page 8).
- Locations for five "Caring for Customers" roadshows held to promote the PSR (read more on page 7).
- Location for a focus group with vulnerable customers.
- Locations for our market research (read more above).

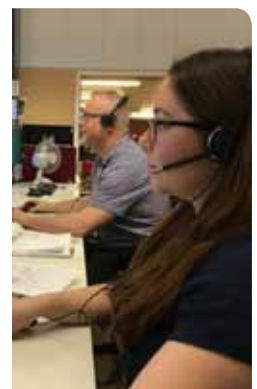
A flexible approach to helping vulnerable customers

Our stakeholders and partners have confirmed that excellent service can only be achieved if our customer-facing staff are empowered and have the flexibility to do what they believe is best when offering a service to customers. No two vulnerable customers have exactly the same needs. For this reason 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, because not every customer wants to leave their home to stay in a hotel.

We also know that some vulnerable customers need more time to speak to an advisor, so in contrast to some call centres, we do not target our call advisors on the length of time spent on customer calls. If the customer needs to ask lots of questions and needs extra reassurance then our call advisors will accommodate this. For example, where we received a call from a family affected by a power cut, which was causing them stress because they had twin premature babies at home in incubators that were now not working. Having no power meant the family were going to have to take the twins back to hospital, which was obviously very distressing. To avoid this our employee was flexible and sent a team immediately to the family's home to connect a generator for them. The family stayed at home and said they were **"absolutely thrilled by the service provided"**.

Outcomes:

- Customers receive a tailored service that meets their needs because our staff have the flexibility to do the right thing.
- Expanded our vulnerable customer team to 14 people.



Some of our vulnerable customer team

3 We are enhancing our service to vulnerable customers

We have offered extensive services to our vulnerable customers experiencing a power cut, for years. This includes a dedicated high-priority telephone number to call. Our dedicated team call every vulnerable customer affected and in the last 12 months we have made over 80,000 such 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 customers. During longer power cuts, our Customer Champions or the British Red Cross will visit customers' homes and communities to offer updates and hands-on support, including the provision of torches and blankets. We also offer hot food, money for a meal or hotels if needed.

Our focus this year was driven by stakeholders

Our customers and stakeholders have told us

1. I want to be kept up to date and supported by you during power cuts
2. I want to deal with a company that takes time to understand my needs
3. Vulnerable people should easily be able to receive your free extra support

So this year we focused on:

1. Keeping customers informed during a power cut
2. Treating customers as individuals
3. Promoting the Priority Service Register (PSR)

1. Keeping customers informed during a power cut

New customer and community support team

We introduced a new service that we co-designed with customers and stakeholders to keep customers informed and supported during a power cut. Our research with harder to reach audiences showed that during a power cut, rural and coastal customers, compared to urban customers, want regular updates, reassurance as well as hands-on support. This is why we decided to invest in a new 'customer and community support' team offering hands-on help to those that need it during a power cut. The new team provide services such as hot drinks, food, wifi, charging points and live updates about when the lights will come back on. 65% of the stakeholders who were surveyed believed that this was the right thing to do and agreed we should partner with Haste to provide this service (a support services company that we have a successful and existing partnership with). Vulnerable customers told us **"place [the team] by a doctor's surgery because everyone would know where that is."** An example of the team in action was in March 2016 when a large care home was without power. We sent our new team to provide power for specialist equipment, hot food and drinks for the residents and wifi access for the staff. Every customer that used the van that day was 100% satisfied.



Our new team in action

Outcome:

- The team has supported 3,000 customers in rural and coastal regions during power cuts.

A best-practice model for the British Red Cross to roll out with all other utilities across the UK

We are leading knowledge-sharing among utility companies, to improve service to vulnerable customers in the UK. We are the only distribution company to have partnered with the British Red Cross this year specifically to develop a standard service that they will offer to utility companies. We have a dedicated customer service employee seconded on this project and they have engaged with all electricity distribution companies and gas network operators to ensure best practice is shared among us. Many utility companies across the UK partner with the British Red Cross and alert them when their customers need support during outages. The service the British Red Cross provide is very varied across the UK, some offering customers limited one-off support or some offering hot drinks, blankets, torches and other useful hands-on support to customers. We are now developing a recommended model for all utilities to adopt to ensure they offer the best possible service to vulnerable customers throughout the UK.

Outcome:

- Customers serviced by other utilities across the UK, will receive improved service by the British Red Cross.



We designed a new mobile app that helps our hard-to-reach non-English speaking customers

The market research we carried out tells us that 10% of the customers we surveyed who were from ethnic minority backgrounds have at least one adult in their household who does not speak English. This makes it more difficult for our customers and engineers to interact when we need to let them know about power cuts, roadworks or other works. In order to ensure we deliver the best possible service to all of our customers, recognising their diversity, we have created a mobile app to overcome language difficulties. It has a number of common phrases built into it and also allows customers and our engineers to have a three-way conversation with a translator in real-time.



Our new app in action.

Outcome:

- Employees using the app have said it improves their service to customers, with 100% agreeing with this.

We have gained feedback about what our emergency boxes should contain for vulnerable customers

When particularly vulnerable customers sign up to the PSR, they receive a box of useful items such as a torch, sticker showing the emergency telephone number and an analogue phone that works during a power cut. We have been doing this now for over two years, but we wanted to make sure our customers still found these items useful and ask if they wanted anything else included. We therefore engaged with over 140 vulnerable customers and young future bill-payers to seek their opinions and find out what other items they would find useful during a power cut. We then discussed this at our cross-utility working group, vulnerable customer partner group and critical friends panels and agreed that the new boxes will include practical tools from other utilities.



The new pack will be launched in 2016.

Outcome:

- Co-designed with employees, customers and other utilities the new contents of the emergency boxes.

2. Treating customers as individuals

Our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system allows us to record temporary vulnerability and gives us increased confidence in data

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, because we know that vulnerability is complex and difficult to categorise. We know vulnerability can be temporary in nature, for example, when a customer is recovering at home after hospital treatment or when a new baby is in the household. Our CRM system enables us to add temporary records to any customer likely to be vulnerable during a power cut during a limited period (e.g. a week, two months, a year).

We introduced a new CRM system as part of a £50 million Business Transformation Programme across the company, which thousands of our employees use on a day-to-day basis. 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.

Outcomes:

- In 2015/16 our temporary vulnerability process was used over 22,500 times.
- Thousands of employees use this new system daily.

3. Promoting the Priority Service Register (PSR)

We have over 500,000 vulnerable customers registered on our PSR. This year we increased this number by over 30,000 and by 2023 we aim to have over one million customers' details on our PSR.

Parish councils directly sign up customers to our PSR

Our review of best practice stakeholder engagement showed us that direct face-to-face engagement results in high levels of stakeholder participation. We approached parish councils, whom stakeholders told us are trusted within their local communities, to ask if they would be willing to participate in a pilot project to directly recruit and gain informed consent (rather than signpost) residents to the PSR.

We contacted 400 parishes about this activity for PSR recruitment either door-to-door or at community events such as coffee mornings. Fifty parishes responded and from this trial, 30 will feature PSR details in newsletters and parish councils requested 1,450 forms to distribute.

The trial has proven that face-to-face engagement produces the highest sign-up rates. For example, Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council found that 95% of those eligible signed up to the PSR when spoken to directly. The results are extremely promising, so we will widen this programme in 2016.

Outcomes of 2-month trial:

- Nine parish councils have spoken face-to-face with 160 households, directly signing up over 80 residents.
- Trial demonstrated direct outreach is far more successful than signposting.

Working with local councils to promote the PSR

Building on our successful relationships we built with councils last year, we made contact with every single council this year to help build the number of customers on our PSR and promote energy efficiency tips. Islington Council alone signposted over 700 customers to the PSR. Stakeholders have told us that this is an excellent way of reaching out to local communities, using trusted sources to raise awareness of our service. **"I have been very impressed with the work that UK Power Networks have been trying to do for vulnerable customers and in particular with respect to fuel poverty."** Steve Gallant, Suffolk Coastal District Council.

Outcomes:

- Over 3.9 million households received information in council newsletters.
- Over 15,000 PSR leaflets were requested by councils and other local partners for residents.

Carers Trust gains informed consent from hard-to-reach audiences

Customers who have carers are particularly difficult for utilities to reach. We know face-to-face engagement works and Carers Trust have this engagement every day when caring for their clients. This is why we set up a pilot project with Carers Trust to sign up this hard to reach group to our PSR. Together, we have targeted deprived areas, like Dover, to encourage carers to sign up their patients directly. This pilot is proving to be a highly effective way of reaching the most vulnerable of our hard-to-reach customers.



Outcome:

- 180 customers have been signed up to the PSR by Carers Trust.

Members of Parliament promoted the PSR

We wrote to all 170 MPs in our region, asking them to promote our PSR. We also held a briefing event in the House of Commons for MPs, at which we had 15 attendees. Eight MPs have added information to their website, some sent messages via social media, and some requested literature. Caroline Ansell, MP for Eastbourne said: **“UK Power Networks’ Priority Service Register is a great free service for vulnerable people to sign up to. The PSR briefing event in Parliament was very useful and I was also pleased that they came to Eastbourne to promote it directly to my constituents.”**



See more pictures
[ukpowernetworks.co.uk/
image7](http://ukpowernetworks.co.uk/image7)



David Amess MP and our Director of Customer Services, Matt Rudling at the briefing event

Outcomes:

- Over 1,200 leaflets and 250 posters were distributed to MPs’ constituencies. 68 MPs received tailored constituency information on PSR.
- Caroline Ansell MP and Amber Rudd MP visited events that we held in their local areas to promote the PSR.

We delivered a wider “Caring for Customers” recruitment programme



See more pictures
[ukpowernetworks.co.uk/
image8](http://ukpowernetworks.co.uk/image8)

Each year we supplement the local work we do with a wider programme which reaches wider audiences to promote the PSR. Following on from our Utility Week “Marketing Initiative of the Year” award-winning winter campaign in 2014/15, we reviewed the success of this, sought feedback from stakeholders and then launched a new “Caring for Customers” Winter campaign. This involved:

- Five local events in areas that we know have high levels of deprivation: Hastings, Ipswich, Southwark, Clacton-on-Sea (including Jaywick) and Eastbourne. These events reached over 700 customers, face-to-face.
- An email sent to over 3.5 million customers; this encouraged over 15,000 new people to sign up to the PSR, compared to less than 2,000 last year, when sending an email to a similar number of our customers.
- Online and social media advertising, targeting groups covering disability and carers.
- Comprehensive media engagement through press releases, social media and broadcast interviews.



Our command vehicle at a local roadshow event

Outcomes:

- 16,000 new customers have been added to our PSR from this campaign.
- Awareness of UK Power Networks increased to 64% after the campaign which is a strong 3% increase from last year. (Over the last three years we have seen a steady 3% increase year on year, which is a great achievement with 18 million customers to reach).

We maintained and cleansed customer data on our Priority Service Register (PSR)

Quality of data plays a huge part in delivering excellent service to our customers, which is why we have focused sharply on it over the last few years. Our ambition is to ensure that every record on the PSR is updated regularly. Our data and information strategy was developed using direct stakeholder feedback. 58% of our stakeholders who were surveyed agreed that our strategy for ensuring that our PSR is up to date (see below) is the right one for our customers. Our stakeholders told us they do not want us to call every customer on the PSR to check that their details are correct, because this could be mistaken for cold calling. They told us to only call when the customer was affected by a power cut. Our approach is detailed below:

Our strategy for maintaining our PSR:

01 Cleansing customer records on a daily basis when we talk to our customers

Over the last 12 months we have had 115,000 interactions with our vulnerable customers and we use this as an opportunity to ask the customer if the details we hold are up-to-date.

02 Innovative annual cleanse against external databases

This year for the first time, we engaged a specialist data management company to systematically compare our priority service data to the national register of deaths and telephone number records. This work has made a great improvement to the quality of our data records and we will continue this in the future.

03 Adding new customers to our PSR immediately

If we identify a customer as vulnerable, we add them to our PSR immediately to provide them with additional support during power cuts. Our network control system is also updated straight away, so that our operational teams have immediate visibility of all known vulnerable customers.

Outcomes:

- 100% of records cleansed.
- Data enriched by the addition of over 390,000 additional items of information.
- Over 800,000 customer mobile and landline records checked to ensure they are accurate.
- We shared this best-practice data-cleansing approach with SSPD.

4 We are focusing on fuel-poor customers

Stakeholders told us that providing services for fuel-poor customers is important so we focused on expanding this activity. Although customers don't pay their energy bills directly to us, the best way we can help those struggling with energy bills is to keep our proportion of the bill as low as possible, which is what we focus on. We know that fuel poverty has three main contributing factors: low income, the cost of energy and the energy efficiency of our customers' homes, so we also focus on tackling these. Whilst there is a correlation between fuel poverty and vulnerability, we recognise that they are separate issues with different challenges for different demographic groups. For instance, research that we commissioned from the London Sustainability Exchange found that 24% of people surveyed found it difficult to pay their bills.

Over £150 a year saved, on average, by 164 customers through energy efficiency workshops  [See more pictures ukpowernetworks.co.uk/image9](https://ukpowernetworks.co.uk/image9)

70% of customers surveyed told us that they would like to receive advice from us on how to manage their energy bills. Last year we held workshops to help customers with their electricity bills and received positive feedback so we continued the face-to-face workshops again this year. They focused on providing tips and advice on how to use energy efficiently and how to save money on energy bills. We choose the locations of the workshops using our map showing high areas of deprivation.

We partnered with Groundwork Hertfordshire and provided energy advice and home visits to 32 vulnerable households. These helped with switching energy tariffs, getting the Warm Home Discount and other initiatives resulting in a saving of over £7,250 per annum. We also worked with Groundwork London who provided energy saving devices to 69 customers in Wandsworth, saving them an average of £15 each.

To reach more customers in need of the support, this year we learnt from our energywise project, which is a Low Carbon Networks Fund project exploring fuel poverty and energy efficiency in Tower Hamlets. This taught us that partnering with social housing bodies is an effective way of reaching fuel poor customers. Therefore we delivered eight workshops with five housing associations, and a further 14 housing providers expressed an interest in running sessions in the future. By working together we were able to reach many more tenants in an efficient way and also educate social housing staff members to spread energy efficiency advice.

Comments from participants included: **"The session was very helpful in showing me how to get a cheaper tariff from my energy provider"**, and, **"The session was very good, lots of energy saving tips"** (Circle Old Ford residents). All participants found the sessions useful, with 85% saying they were very useful. Altogether 63 residents attended them, saving an average of over £260 per annum (over £16,500 per year in total).

Our energy efficiency advice workshops



Outcomes:

- 164 customers benefited, saving in total nearly £25,000 per year.
- 13 social housing staff educated to be energy efficiency champions and spread energy efficiency advice.

New scheme to tackle fuel poverty: 'You and your home'

We have built on our previous advice service around the Warm Home Discount to offer a far more comprehensive support and advice package. We have designed this service based directly on customer feedback. We talked to over 100 customers face to face and they told us loud and clear that their energy bills and energy costs in general worried them and 70% said they would appreciate receiving advice from us on how to manage their energy costs. We therefore decided to launch a brand new service to do just that. We knew we had to work in partnership with a charity with the necessary skills and public trust to deliver this new service and chose the Citizens Advice as our partner because they were the most well-known organisation, with 98% of our surveyed customers recognising the Citizens Advice brand. **"UK Power Networks understands what the social circumstances are. The company appreciates that customers are more likely to have confidence working with us, hence why UK Power Networks initially reached out to us. It's refreshing that they have realised that."** (Citizens Advice, Ipswich)

The "You and your home" service provides free and impartial advice on reducing energy bills, improving energy efficiency, finding the best energy tariff, managing fuel debt, and offering benefits checks to see if customers are entitled to anything more. Customers who can use some help are referred directly to the scheme by our customer service agents. Citizens Advice representatives then call or visit the customer to talk through their circumstances and offer tailored advice. We aim to help over 1,000 customers in 2016/17 through this new service.

 citizens advice



Outcomes:

- We co-designed our new "You and your home" service through face-to-face contact with over 100 customers and stakeholder feedback.

Warm Home Discount promotion

We continued to provide Warm Home Discount information to our customer-facing staff to share with our fuel-poor customers and will refer the customer to our 'You and Your home' service. 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."**

5 We are helping our customers by partnering with wider services

Our partnership strategy

Partnerships are critical to our operations, because by working together using their expertise and ours we can offer customers a higher level of service. We recognise the importance of sharing best practice and common experiences with other water, gas and electricity companies. However we also see the huge benefit in partnering with companies outside the industry to offer different levels of expertise to our customers.

72% of stakeholders surveyed have endorsed our partnership strategy, which guides why and how we select partners, and how we evaluate our external partnerships.

We choose partnerships that will enhance our service to vulnerable customers based on six key principles:

- ✓ They are a trusted organisation with a good reputation
- ✓ They have a good track record on the specific issue on which we hope to partner with them
- ✓ The overall cost of the partnership and value for money for customers
- ✓ Quality of outcomes delivered
- ✓ Their company vision and values align with ours
- ✓ They look after customers in our geographic region

We work with a wide range of partners:

Our existing partners



Local authorities

New partnerships this year

nationalgrid

Parish councils



West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service



An innovative partnership outside the utility industry with West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service

See more pictures
[ukpowernetworks.co.uk/
image11](http://ukpowernetworks.co.uk/image11)

A pilot event with West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service tested our face-to-face engagement when promoting the PSR. We engaged with over 90 customers about the services available to them. We don't have the opportunity to visit many customers' homes, so we looked for a partner which does have this opportunity, and selected the West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service because they serve areas of high deprivation which we found out using our map. They are a trusted partner and run a campaign in which they knock on customers' doors to check smoke alarms and give safety advice which aligns to our safety values. So we joined up on the day and had one of our employees knock at every door with the Fire and Rescue Service. We also set up an information point in a nearby school in a deprived area of Crawley to engage children and give away safety messages. We surveyed over 90 residents on their views about power cuts and electricity bills.

A representative from West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service said: **"I think today has been a really positive exercise for both organisations. Let's hope we can do something similar again in the near future!"**

Outcomes:

- We used feedback from these meetings to develop our 'You and Your Home' service.
- We signed up over 30 customers to the PSR at this event.



West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service with UK Power Networks in Crawley



Engaging with parents in the school grounds



Visiting local residents in Crawley with the Fire and Rescue Service

We have partnered with Essex & Suffolk Water

We have worked closely with Essex & Suffolk Water, who like us provide an essential service to customers in the east of England. There are plenty of opportunities for us to learn from each other and we have shared how we serve our most vulnerable customers and train our employees.



Outcomes:

- Better service to our customers because Essex & Suffolk Water can take our overflow calls in extreme weather events.
- Essex & Suffolk Water have learned from us and trained 50 employees specifically around consumer vulnerability to improve their service to vulnerable customers.

Bringing partners together to discuss how we can co-design new ways of working together on consumer vulnerability

See more pictures
[ukpowernetworks.co.uk/
image10](https://ukpowernetworks.co.uk/image10)

80% of stakeholders surveyed voted in strong agreement or agreement that engagement methods should be tailored to the audience rather than one method of engagement to cater for all. Stakeholders also confirmed which partners and potential partners have the highest brand recognition: The British Red Cross, Citizens Advice, Macmillan Cancer Support and the Fire and Rescue Service.

Therefore, for the first time we held a Partners Forum aimed at organisations specialising in supporting those who are also our vulnerable customers. All of those with high brand recognition were invited. The Carers Trust, Dolby Vivisol, Macmillan Cancer Support, Neighbourhood Watch, NEA, London Sustainability Exchange, Alzheimer's Society, Citizens Advice and the British Red Cross were all represented.

Discussion topics included sharing best practice in terms of how we work with the British Red Cross, how we can work better together with new/existing partners to support vulnerable customers and sharing our market research results about hard-to-reach groups.



Discussions at our Partner Forum

Outcome:

- 80% of our partners who attended felt confident that they could develop a plan in their organisation to help customers in partnership with us.

We are leading the industry in supporting deaf and hard of hearing customers

See videos here
[ukpowernetworks.co.uk/
video2](https://ukpowernetworks.co.uk/video2)

Last year we received feedback from customers that our service could be improved to cater for deaf and hard of hearing customers. Around three million people in our area have some form of hearing loss, or one in six of the population, which is why it is important for us to address this. We therefore took action and delivered lots of improvements. This year we have continued this great work by:

- Continuing to offer our live web chat and offered a new video chat service which is a useful communication channel for deaf or hard of hearing customers. We have seen over 4,800 customers communicate with us using web and video chat this year, with an overall satisfaction rating of 88%.
- Improving our videos by adding transcripts to help deaf customers use our videos.
- Continuing to use our hearing loops in our call centre and in some of our offices, and giving our Customer Champions access to these so they can visit customers' homes and speak to them using the loop.
- Being highly commended by Royal Association for the Deaf for the 'Most Accessible Mainstream Services' award.

A large achievement for us this year was gaining external accreditation for our work. 'Louder than Words', from Action on Hearing Loss, is a nationally recognised accreditation for companies striving to offer excellent levels of service and accessibility for customers and employees who are deaf or have a hearing loss. We have worked really hard over the last year to achieve this and Royal Association for the Deaf and Action on Hearing Loss have been great partners to enable us to do this. We have looked at our full service offering to ensure we cater for customers who have hearing difficulties such as training, our policies and communication channels.

Action on Hearing Loss said **"UK Power Networks has met and in some places exceeded the requirements for the Charter. There are some excellent practices taking place within the organisation and many different activities have been implemented. UK Power Networks staff have a high level of deaf awareness and will be providing an excellent level of service to deaf and hard of hearing customers and staff."**



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 Service Register and why this is important."**



Outcome:

- We have improved training, policies and communication channels which means an improved service is offered to deaf and hard of hearing customers.

More examples

What stakeholders say	Our partnerships	Action as a result of partnership	Benefit
Vulnerable customers need hands-on support	The British Red Cross	Extra welfare and face-to-face support was given to customers by British Red Cross volunteers during a power cut	66% of customers helped by the British Red Cross received flasks, hot meals or blankets.
If I have a power cut, keep me updated	Councils	We notified councils over 349 times of certain power cuts so they can share the message with wider groups	This has provided information to over 170,000 customers.
Sharing data with other utilities	Energy suppliers	We receive data from suppliers on additions, deletions and updates to their PSRs on a daily basis.	True alignment with suppliers' PSRs.
Can more be done with energy suppliers to promote the PSR?	EDF Energy	2 meetings held with EDF Energy to discuss customer communication	EDF Energy shared our messages with their customers during power cuts.

