

Stakeholder Engagement and Consumer Vulnerability Incentive 2016/17



Part 3:

Serving our customers with
additional requirements

Supporting vulnerable customers



Taking care of our vulnerable customers via tailored, proactive support is at the heart of our customer service approach. We have 348,865 vulnerable customers signed up to our Priority Services Register (PSR). Vulnerable issues range from physical or sight impairments, chronic or serious illness, mental health issues and many other areas.

However, the service we can provide them is only as good as the data we hold. Fortunately, as a result of launching our Customer Relationship Management tool last year, we have greatly improved the way we collect, store and integrate our vulnerable customer information.

We can now record multiple and transient vulnerabilities and provide staff with a clear structure as how to log all contacts. This enables us to see a precise road map of the customer journey; who was contacted by whom, about what, and when, which can also be produced graphically. We continually assess feedback from customers on our PSR, to ensure what we do reflects genuine need. In this way, we can ensure that our data analysis translates into initiatives.

Last year, our data analysis demonstrated that we served 42,509 customers with hearing or speech difficulties and 29,798 blind customers so this became a focus. Working with the RNIB, we produced sign language videos to make our literature more accessible to all communities, and introduced our newsletter being sent out to our customers with sight issues in the form of a memory stick. In addition, all of our new connection customers now get a welcome leaflet that requests them to register any PSR customers at the address. By focussing on these areas we have increased the total number of PSR registered customers by over 11% on last years' volume.

As a single licence holder distribution network operator, it is key that we are smart with our use of customer money. Analysing our CRM data we identified that we had 65,858 customers who have no contact details other than their address, and 98,560 with email addresses. This understanding allows us to target our communications in a cost effective way.

We've also undertaken a customer survey with our vulnerable customers to get feedback on what is important with them. Responding to this customer insight and views expressed at our September Vulnerable Customer Advisory Panel, and following agreement and discussion of costs versus benefit with this, several changes to our communication channels were implemented. One of these has been the introduction of a new greeting system for PSR customers to assure them that they have been recognised as such and that their call is being transferred to a member of the appropriate team as high priority.

In addition, when 63% of our vulnerable customers told us that we should be proactive in communicating information in the event of bad weather, and 89% agreed we should provide advanced notice of imminent storms, we implemented this into our standard business operations.

We have also introduced a new process to ensure customers get 10 days' notice of planned disruption. We have invested in implementing a welfare advisory team to contact those customers currently on the PSR when they are affected by a fault in order to pre-warn them of planned works. This interaction provides the opportunity to check and update customer information on the system and ensure that we are meeting our obligations in tackling the specific issues that are relevant to our vulnerable customers.

We have also implemented a generator policy for planned supply interruptions which affect those PSR customers who are medically dependent on electricity. If 20% of PSR customers are affected by an interruption then we now aim to supply generation or welfare, such as hot drinks and blankets, on the day.

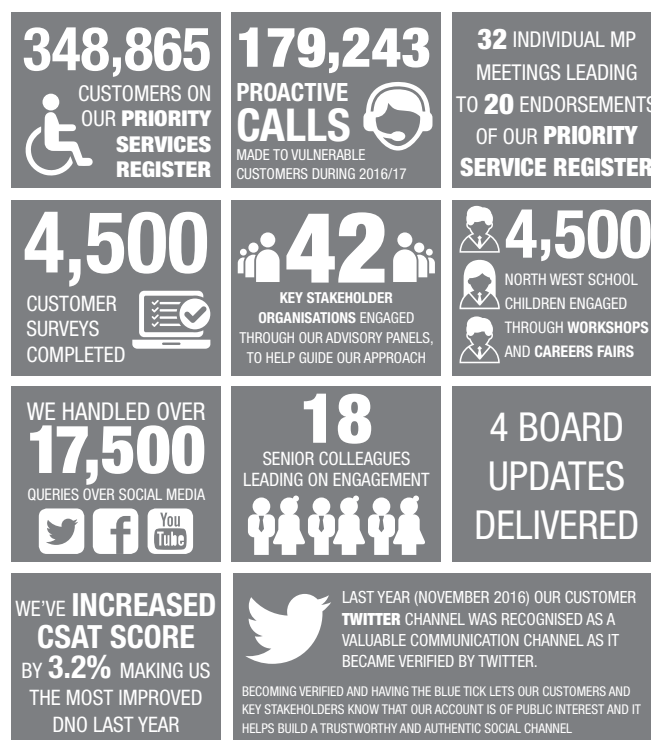
We are also continuing to focus on improving employee skills in order to upskill our teams and close the vulnerability gap. Investing monies earned through the SECV incentive, we took the decision to create a new dedicated, in-house Customer Welfare Team. This team of six advisors and Welfare Manager, provides dedicated support to customers in vulnerable situations. Following from this more robust, company-wide focus on vulnerable customers, all new staff now get vulnerability training as a standard element of their training. We have also embedded a process of training all of contact centre staff, plus our HR and recruitment teams, to ensure that they are briefed to take overflow calls, if necessary.

With one in four people being affected by mental health issues, last year we worked with Mind and Alzheimer's UK to educate our call centre team; a move that has meant we have done more on mental health training than any other distribution network operator. In addition, our staff have ongoing training with Samaritan's to help them to pick up on tones in a customer's voice that would lead them to enquire whether they want to receive any additional support from charities such as the Red Cross.

Through these continued efforts, we are making great strides to ensure our vulnerable customers are both identified, and fully supported.

Peter Emery
Chief Executive Officer

Highlights



Overarching stakeholder strategy

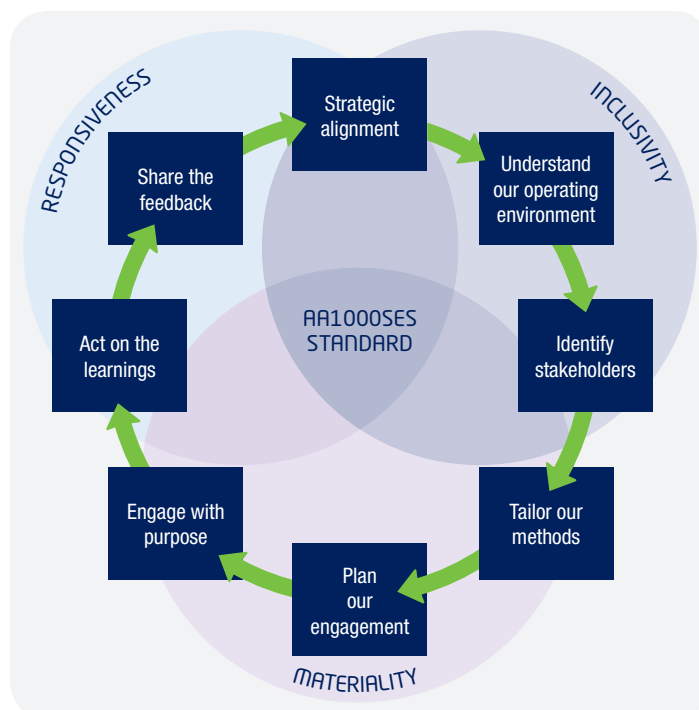
Over the last 12 months, our Stakeholder Engagement Strategy has been enhanced and is better embedded in the business, allowing for more effective engagements and integration of stakeholder feedback. Our stakeholder engagement programme is driven by our board, led by our CEO, owned by our senior management and delivered by all colleagues across the business.

Our customer vulnerability strategy

Our goal is to ensure that our services are available and made accessible to all customers equally, regardless of their personal circumstances, and to embed these values throughout all aspects of our business. We have four key categories that will support the achievement of our goal which will improve our service accessibility. Each category has proposed objectives to clearly show SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-based, Trackable) measures of success for Electricity North West customers.

This strategy is embedded in our Business Plan commitments which was constructed in conjunction with stakeholders and agreed with Ofgem.

This document describes the activity we have taken to deliver in line with this strategy in 2016/17.



1. Strategic understanding of Consumer vulnerability and embedding into business at all levels

OUR GOAL

2. Working with partners to promote the Priority Service Register

OUR MEASURES

- Use innovative ways to promote our PSR
- Increase of customers registered on the PSR year on year – agree minimum target number
- Partnerships working together to target statistically low numbers compared to UK volumes
- Work with Partners to actively promote on behalf of Electricity North West the PSR
- Registration process and what is issued – cost of a welcome pack Ensure -100% registered from suppliers are welcomed to Electricity North West

OUR GOAL

3. Embedding consumer vulnerability into our processes and procedures

OUR MEASURES

- 100% Compliance with Planned Supply Interruptions pre warned PSR Customers & family members
- Contact of Low Voltage Faults customers within the first 3 hours, all High Vulnerability within 2 hours
- SME – Working group to develop support for this group
- Nursing homes – prepared to look after their customers

OUR GOAL

4. Using data as the foundation of our strategy

OUR MEASURES

- All data held in one location and maintained and reportable to drive the contact strategy
- Work with all sectors to data share for customers in need
- Use customer insights & CRM data to prioritise contacts
- Contact minimum of 100,000 customers per annum
- Contact all High Vulnerability Customers from the PSR by April 2018

OUR GOAL

5. Managing our welfare services and Priority Service Register

OUR MEASURES

- Implement the changes following agreement and discussion of costs vs benefit with the stakeholder panel
- Ensure these are accessible
- Carry out customer survey's every year to understand the priority areas to improve from our customers

Strategic understanding of Consumer Vulnerability and embedding into business at all levels

Our goal is to ensure that our services are available and made accessible to all customers equally. This follows the aims of Ofgem's Consumer Vulnerability Strategy (CVS); to protect and empower consumers in vulnerable situations, to reduce the likelihood and impact of vulnerability, and to ensure all consumers can access market benefits.

Our strategic understanding and commitment to the role that network companies can play in tackling social issues relevant to vulnerable customers is underpinned by robust customer research, analysis of the comprehensive data held on our CRM system and insight gained from regular engagement with stakeholders through our Advisory Panels.

These inputs have been invaluable as we have developed our understanding of social issues relevant to the energy sector and those issues external to the sector which could affect vulnerability. Working with the Citizen's Advice to develop our understanding of the personal impact a school power cut can have on communities and families is one example of this. The insight we gained from the small business representatives on our Reliability Advisory Panel alerted us to the real hardship that their staff members can suffer if a business has to close for the day and there is no work is another example.

Our response to these issues requires us to review the design, planning and delivery of all services and the significant change we have made to our generator policy is an example of these changes in practice.

We have five Executive-led Working Groups focussed on improving all aspect of service to our customers. Each of these groups has 'Vulnerable Customers' as key focus areas. All changes implemented by the group must demonstrate that our service to vulnerable customer groups is either enhanced by the changes being proposed or maintained.

The Vulnerable Customer Advisory Panel continue to challenge our performance and strategic response to tackling social issues relevant to vulnerability. We're pleased to have agreed challenging targets to improve performance and increase impact with this group. We'll continue to work in partnership with them to deliver against these targets.

Our customer research and dialogue with stakeholders demonstrates that different vulnerable customer groups have particular needs and requirements. There is 'no one size fits all' and we use engagement to define and tailor our approaches.

At present, we have 348,865 vulnerable customers signed up to our Priority Services Register (PSR). We don't limit registration to types of vulnerability identified through the regulatory requirements and encourage anyone who needs this extra level of protection to register.

We train our colleagues to inform customers about the register at every interaction and also have encouraged them to register family members, friend and neighbours who will benefit from the service. Through our Leading Lights scheme we recognise and reward colleagues for going the extra mile to support our customers.

Vulnerable issues range from physical or sight impairments, chronic or serious illness, mental health issues and many other areas. Our research into customer vulnerability types showed that is our partially sighted,

hearing impaired and stair lift customers who are the most concerned if a power outage lasts longer than six hours, particularly through the winter months. In addition, customers in vulnerable circumstances, such as those with very young children, were also flagged as needing extra help and attention.

Our data on the needs of those with young children demonstrates the proactive approach our colleagues have taken to understanding instances of vulnerability. This category of 'need' has only recently been added to the register but we already have strong data on this group. As a result, we've looked at what service offerings we could implement for children under the age of five, and discussed investigating ways to understand what else could be improved upon.

We are considering carrying out annual customer surveys in collaboration with our Advisory Panels, to better understand priority areas for our Priority Service Register customers, and what we could do to improve them.

CASE STUDY

Citizen's Advice - collaboration

We have developed a project with the Citizen's Advice to promote the Priority Service Register to customers who access their website. A collective agreement has been put in place with them to refer customers who are eligible to go onto the Priority Service Register to DNOs who have agreed to be part of the wider collaboration.

They've agreed to provide details of eligible Priority Service Register customers to DNO's to proactively contact them to recruit onto the Priority Service Register which builds on the industry approach and underpins our involvement with the Safeguarding Customers Working Group.

This is a positive collaboration between all DNOs and Citizen's Advice and one which will benefit Priority Service Register customers, strengthening the link between Electricity North West's engagement and the organisation's Priority Service Register and data analysis, and reinforcing an industry-leading approach.

CASE STUDY

Priority Service Register Communications

Raising the profile of the Priority Service Register is key to ensuring eligible customers are aware of it and the benefits it offers. Our staff will also have family and friends who are eligible to join the Priority Service Register. To drive recruitment onto the Priority Service Register we have undertaken various internal communication campaigns such as family and friends. Further promotion included engaging with MPs to drive the Priority Service Register message.

During this period, we saw an increase in customers coming onto the Priority Service Register so are confident these activities drive the increase in uptake.

Working with partners to promote the Priority Service Register

Throughout 2016/17, we been developing our approach to partnerships and referral networks to identify and deliver solutions for vulnerable customers. Central to our partnership development strategy is the utilisation of the data we hold about our customers. Much of our effort in the year has been dedicated to understanding, improving and validating our data to ensure that it provides a robust basis for one to one support to customers, to inform business decision-making and to structure our partnership strategy.

Our strategy is informed by a clear understanding of which groups are represented on our Priority Service Register and our understanding of the benefits of existing partnerships. Taking this data-led approach ensures that we have both a wide range of partnerships with different organisation types and that the services we develop in collaboration with these groups deliver solutions more effectively. Our partnership with Lancashire Fire and Rescue is a good example of this.

Strengthening and improving our data also helps us to understand and respond to any limitations in our current approach. Comparing the data we hold to national and regional statistics helps identify groups which may be under, over or unrepresented in our Priority Service Register. This then informs our partnership strategy as we use this insight to build appropriate partnerships to mitigate these differences.

CASE STUDY

Your Support Your Choice (YSYC)

Your Support Your Choice (YSYC) is an adult social care agency based in the Blackburn and Darwen area. We met them at an Alzheimer's UK event in Blackburn and began our discussions about working with them. This collaboration publicised and promoted the Priority Service Register and helped us recruit its customers and service users onto the register and to reach out into a network of support across the region. This partnership has provided us with an effective conduit to a very hard to reach customer group.

Communication slides for 'People Behind Your Power' and Priority Service Register data were provided to enable communication via their onsite TV in their main office in Blackburn which would be received by many of their visiting vulnerable customers.

YSYC also placed an article in its monthly email bulletin relating to the work Electricity North West do around the Priority Service Register to further raise the profile. We also provided 2,000 Priority Service Register leaflets for its outlet and to distribute to service users to sign up to the Priority Service Register.

This was a really positive collaboration and something which reaches across a large area of our region to raise the profile of the Electricity North West Priority Service Register and benefits.

CASE STUDY

Disability Awareness Day Warrington (DAD)

We attended the Disability Awareness Day in Warrington to promote and recruit onto the Priority Service Register. The day consisted of advising eligible customers of the benefits of the Priority Service Register and recruitment. This was an effective event which allowed us to reach out to our customers and offer some dedicated advice relating to the benefits of the Priority Service Register to a high number of disabled customers.

We will foster an approach of collaboration across the next three years with the ambition to partner agencies dealing particularly with disability issues and promote the benefits of the Priority Service Register.

CASE STUDY

Lancashire Fire and Rescue

Following on from the devastation caused by Storm Desmond and Eva and crisis situations we found our customers in, we reinforced our positive contacts with Lancashire Fire and Rescue when supporting customers across our region during this time.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue undertake a Home Fire Safety Check service which includes a Smoke Alarm Replenishment programme for vulnerable customers across the North West area. We put an agreement in place to pilot a referral service of customers who contacted our Customer Contact Centre Welfare Team. Our staff now advise customers of the programme, ask if they wish to opt in and then send the details to Lancashire Fire and Rescue who would then add them to the list and undertake the safety check and replenish their smoke alarm via an agreed welfare visit. The pilot commenced in December 2016, within agreed postcode areas to test its initial success.

Our aim is to build a culture of collaboration across the North West. A reciprocal agreement was also put in place in terms of how to sign visiting customers onto the Priority Service Register and send this data to Electricity North West to obtain positive recruitment. Training was provided to the Lancashire Welfare Team regarding the benefits of the Priority Service Register to better support recruitment success.

This collaboration reaches out to the Lancashire area and offers significant safeguarding for the customers involved. It offers positive engagement for an element of non-energy related solutions for both parties which supports the welfare of all customers involved. It also works directly with partnerships to actively promote the Priority Service Register on behalf of Electricity North West.

Further meetings are planned to discuss rolling the programme out across all of the Lancashire area and to develop this approach with other Rescue Services.

CASE STUDY

United Utilities – Priority Service Register collaboration and website referral

We are working with colleagues in other utility sectors to share vulnerable customer data, ideas and best practice to establish more joined up ways of working. From understanding that other utility companies also have customers on an equivalent to the Priority Service Register, we are collaborating with United Utilities. This is a long term approach to support effective Priority Service Register recruitment.

We have agreed to signpost customers coming onto our website to United Utilities Priority Service Register to support their engagement programme and have a link and commentary on our website. We envisage further involvement in collaborative events with United Utilities to raise the profile of the Priority Service Register will follow throughout the next three years.

CASE STUDY

Royal Association of Deaf (RAD) – Future collaboration

Our customer data tells us that in respect of the national average, hearing, speech difficulties and deafness are the top five most common disabilities of our Priority Service Register customer base. It is particularly difficult to connect positively with these customers and commit to ensuring we can do this on an ongoing basis.

The use of British Sign Language (BSL) videos supports accessibility to our services and allows positive communications for our deaf and hard of hearing customers. The videos will act as a communication bridge to our deaf/Hard of hearing customers.

CASE STUDY

Stroke Association

To promote engagement in the Priority Service Register, agreement has been made with Stroke Association, Carers Network, in Blackburn & Darwen, to send out Priority Service Register literature. When directly contacting Stroke affected customers, the Carer network has agreed to raise the profile of the Priority Service Register during their on-site visits.

This approach reaches out to customers who have been affected by stroke and have limited movement via the carer's network who have direct access to high vulnerability customers across a large part of our region.

We have provided the Stroke Association with 2000 Priority Service Register leaflets and will continue to support its customers during visits.

Commendable strides have been noted with regard to Electricity North West's data management and integration within operational excellence. The organisation's dedicated Stakeholder Tracker and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools facilitate the monitoring of engagements conducted with stakeholders. In addition, their CRM tool allows for the practical and accurate tracking of information on vulnerable customers, information that is effectively utilised by the organisation in order to inform and drive customised engagement to vulnerable groups.

AccountAbility review 2017

Embedding consumer vulnerability into our processes and procedures

In last year's report, we described the implementation of our CRM system and the significant benefits that having this single, core business system provided to the Company in enhancing our ability to serve our customers and identify and tailor our support for vulnerable customers.

We've made further progress throughout the year and have ensured that there is high level of integration of our role as a network company, with wider social obligations, into our general systems and process throughout the business.

For example, we've incorporated awareness of our Priority Service Register into our recruitment process. New staff members are not only made aware of the service but are also encouraged to add details of appropriate family members, friends and neighbours to the scheme. Our Director of Strategy even made a video showing colleagues how to sign-up!

Robust use of data analysis provides us with management information which allows us to track and understand performance, understand and remove any barriers to performance and fully justify why we've chosen to address particular social issues because we can demonstrate an understanding of the value of these to our vulnerable customers.

We ensure our Executive Leadership Team are involved and kept up to date with a monthly report which is then distributed to our Senior Leadership Team for action. This ensures that decisions made are informed by the right data at the right time.

Last year, we described 'All about Eve', the video we'd produced based on customer's experience to inform frontline training and culture regarding customer vulnerability. We've continued to develop our approach and worked with a number of partner organisations whose expertise has enhanced our understanding of and ability to respond to a range of different needs and expectations.

A significant investment has been made in creating a dedicated Welfare Team. Investing monies earned through the SECV incentive, we've been able to enhance both our operational and strategic response. There is a very clear feedback loop from the monitoring and evaluation of our customer-facing teams to ensure they are identifying and responding to incidents of customer vulnerability.

Our activity is underpinned by data and research. The information we capture on our stakeholder needs is vital to understand the impact that external drivers and events can have on our vulnerable customers and to help us tailor our response to their needs. We surveyed 4,500 customers between April 2016 and March 2017.

We understand that vulnerable customers want to communicate with us using their preferred channel. We've developed our website to include Business Sign Language (BSL) videos and an online fault form and we plan to introduce 'chatbot' later in the year to enable customers to use Facebook to share their concerns and enquiries with us.

And our staff continue to 'do the right thing' day in, day out for our customers. This is recognised through our Leading Light internal recognition scheme and through our monthly Executive-level reporting to ensure that these efforts are visible and valued at all levels of the business.

CASE STUDY

New needs codes roll-out

We've played a positive role at the Energy Network Association (ENA) Safeguarding Customers Working Group, participating in driving the change to the vulnerable codes to ensure they are aligned to customers' vulnerability types and expected industry guidelines.

We understand the new additions to the Priority Service Register and what these changes mean to us. We committed to change our internal systems to ensure we can provide and receive industry data in order to refresh customer data.

A robust communication programme relating to the industry changes has been delivered within Electricity North West to ensure knowledge of the changes has been understood by all operational staff. This is further supported by internal communication articles within our internal communications channels; Newswire, Connect and Yammer.

Our Training Programme includes updates to all Contact Centre staff on the industry changes and what that means for us as a business and for our customers. This allows direct feedback sessions to be undertaken to ensure understanding of the impact of the changes.

Further training is planned throughout the standard training programme which will support enhanced understanding of the codes. This training will influence how we deal effectively with our customers and underpin our understanding of their varying needs.

CASE STUDY

Doing the right thing for Bury Hospice

We were approached by Bury Hospice as it was concerned at the prospect of losing power. We agreed to provide advice regarding Priority Service Register customers and how to support them in a power cut. During the visit, we gave advice on generation, a community approach to Priority Service Register and resilience plans. This visit really helped the Hospice both to understand its own commitment to its residents and to set up its own support mechanism.

Julie Kilgallon – Hospice Manager said:

'Following a query raised with Electricity North West with regard to resilience and emergency planning in the event of a power cut. I was visited by Pete Smith, Welfare Team Manager. He was very helpful and knowledgeable, giving us the appropriate advice and guidance on registering the Hospice on the Priority Services Register. He explained in detail how Electricity North West would help the Hospice in the event of such an emergency, including practical/welfare and medically dependent equipment. We feel more assured now that in the event of a power cut or serious outage that we would have the support needed to keep our Hospice running.

Pete also gave me advice which could be passed on to our patients in the community who were not aware of the help available to them from Electricity North West. Our patients can be vulnerable and live alone and dependant on medical equipment and oxygen at home. Pete left me with some information leaflets and forms which we can hand out to our patients who were not aware of the Priority Services Register and the help the Electricity North West could offer them.'

CASE STUDY

Working with the Samaritans to help our staff support those suffering bereavements

When undertaking pro-active calling with Priority Service Register customers, we identified that advisors were increasingly dealing with many sensitive issues including bereavement. These interactions with our customers are challenging for both our customers and agents. We realised that staff needed support from a professional organisation, so we approached the Samaritans who have professional insight and knowledge to train our staff.

Ensuring our staff have the skills and confidence to deal with customers is important. Gaining support from the Samaritans enables our agents to become equipped with the agility to react to sensitive situations our customers may raise. The course focuses on providing strategies for the advisors to de-escalate difficult circumstances and understand difficult feelings and circumstances e.g. anger, aggression, bereavement and loss.

Further focus is on advisors being able to close off calls positively and effectively. This will allow contacts we have with our customers to be managed professionally and ultimately offer an empathetic approach to the customer journey of our customers. There is a considerable cost of each session which confirms our commitment to understanding our customers.

CASE STUDY

Priority Service Register newsletter

This year, we created our first newsletter for our Priority Service Customers to reach out, connect and provide effective winter advice. Across the winter period we delivered the newsletter to over 29,000 customers. The newsletter builds on our existing work in keeping our customers updated to the services we offer and additional support including energy efficiency advice, preparing for winter and what to do in a power cut.

Our aim is to continue this communication with our customers to ensure they know both who we are and what we can do to help. We also want to offer customers some insight into the work we do and have some light-hearted communications and editorials which are not fully energy focussed such as recipes and crosswords.

Throughout the year, we will direct the newsletter at areas of our customers in vulnerable situations and who may be hard to reach like those with Hearing or Speech difficulties (including Deaf). These communications will provide accessibility to our services for all our customers.

Using data as the foundation of our strategy


Knowing who our customers are, and what vulnerability type they fall into, is important to ensure that we provide the most effective support, particularly in times of a power cut. In 2015, we launched a bespoke Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which has enabled us to embed our Customer Vulnerability Strategy into our systems and processes and improve way in which we engage with our vulnerable customers.

The enactment of the General Data Protection Regulations in May 2018 may require us to change the manner in which we collect and utilise data. We're working with our legal advisors to ensure we maintain the highest standards of customer service and partnership working whilst complying with this new regime.

Our CRM system allows us to:

- Immediately identify vulnerable customers during a power cut
- Record transient vulnerability
- Record multiple contact numbers for vulnerable customers
- Prompt our call handlers to enquire whether inbound customers need additional support
- Compile a single, streamlined data repository

Our data-led approach to partnerships has allowed us to create comprehensive targets and a plan of action on which groups to target for inclusion on our PSR. This ensures that our partnerships produce tangible outputs and positive outcomes for our customers in the North West.

PSR Category	Number of Customer Registered in Electricity North West Area 2016/17	% Nationally of Customers Registered in a Similar Category	% of Overall ENW Population 2016/17	Target Number based on National Statistics	Number to Hit Target	Specific Services Available	Sample 2016/17 Additional Activities	Partners
Hearing/speech difficulties (inc. Deaf)	42509	20.00%	0.79%	1,080,000	1,037,491	Social media, Register your fault webform, text updates, Chatbot, minicom	RNIB partnership to develop our Web site Introduction of Sign language for videos on web - PSR and Fault Commencement with Chatbot	 supporting blind and partially sighted people
Pensionable Age	230845	17.70%	4.27%	955,800	724,955	Winter Planned Supply interruption times	PSR Newsletter Winter Rules for PSI	
Unable to answer door + restricted movement & Physical Impairment	133638	14.00%	2.47%	756,000	622,362	Next of kin contact service Door step service Password service	Mobility Awareness events - Stroke Association collaboration Introduction of Door Step Visit	
Mental Health, including dementia and developmental conditions	21079	8.00%	0.39%	432,000	410,921	Emotional Support during a power loss	Additional Training for Contact Centre Agents to support with Alzheimers, Samaritans, Training	
Oxygen Concentrator	16705	7.00%	0.31%	378,000	361,295	Air liquide		
Families with young children 5 or under	1891	6.00%	0.04%	324,000	322,109	Regular additional communication	Update of all literature and website to reach out Embedded the change within the business Actively include in the contact centre script to promote	Our education partners
Unable to communicate in English	6525	2.00%	0.12%	108,000	101,475	Big word translation contract in place, use of mobile apps to translate on the door step	Refreshers across the business	

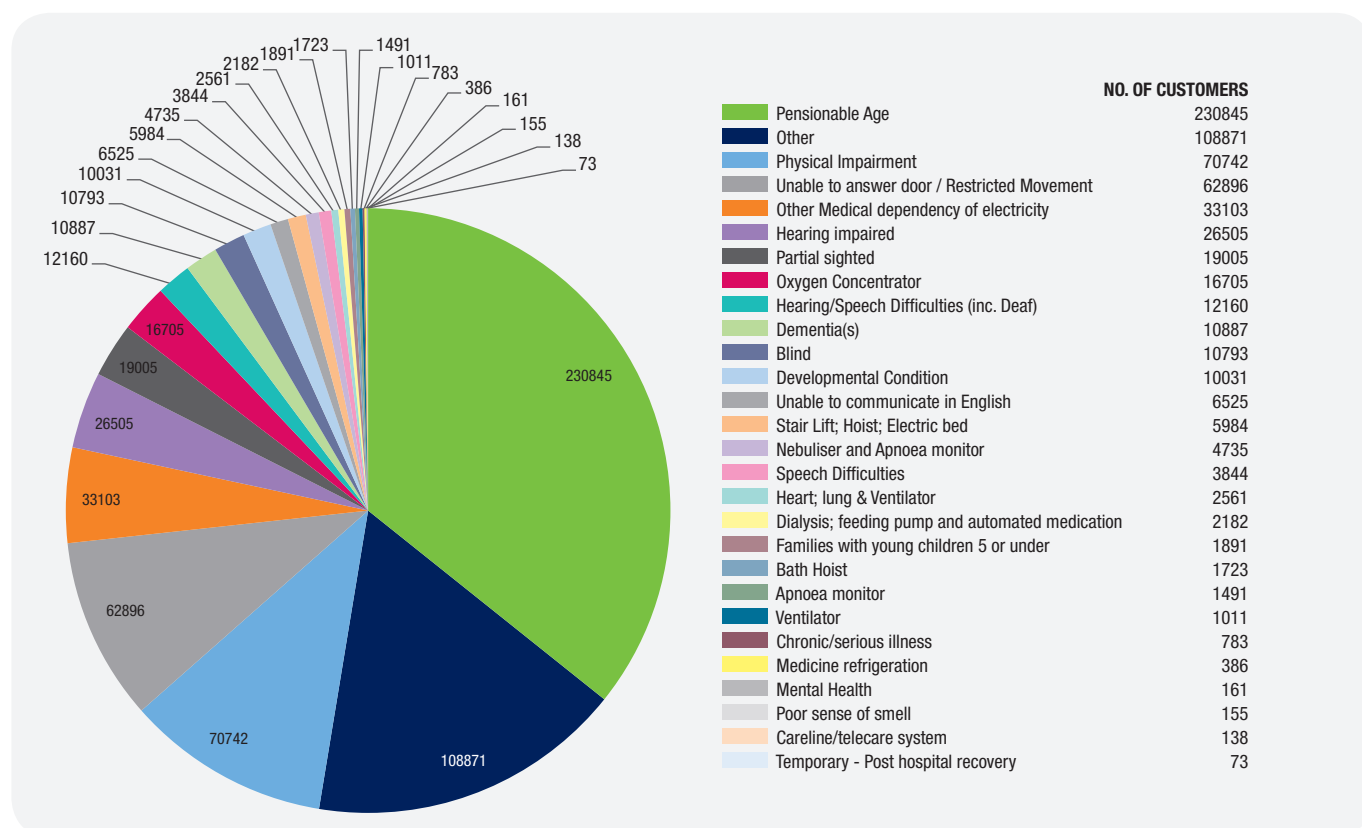
All of the above are included within the standard offering for Password service, vulnerable welcome packs, Winter and STORM warning texts, British Red Cross Support, Generation for PSI's based on our policy and requirement for a Door Step visit from Electricity North West

We're committed to engaging with our stakeholders to improve the data and information that we hold on vulnerable consumers and to use this data in a strategic way to build the right partnerships and services to support our vulnerable customers, to review and improve our performance and to identify any gaps or risks in our existing approach.

Utilising our Advisory Panels and our partnership strategy, we have a broad and inclusive range of stakeholders and we use our data to ensure that we have the right partnerships in place to help us deliver, improve and plan for our customers' needs and expectations.

We've made good progress in closing data gaps and we have processes in place to manage and deal with any data source consistency issues.

Vulnerability consumer data as of 31st March 2017



Our Welfare Team deliver our strategy for Priority Service Register recruitment and refreshing customer data and form part of the pro-active contacts we make directly with our customers.

Over the last year, we have been able to build on the existing Priority Service Register work we have undertaken with our customers and

increase the recording and refreshing of our customer data with over 179,243 proactive contacts being made from April 2016 to March 2017.

A three-year plan has been introduced which will focus on high vulnerability customers initially. Further engagement will be with medium to low vulnerability customers and other areas of our customer base.

Managing our welfare services and Priority Service Register

Understanding and responding to the ongoing needs of vulnerable customers

Understanding the impact that external drivers and events can have on vulnerable customers can really help us to tackle issues external to the sector whilst providing core and tailored support. Our CRM is invaluable in enabling us to record transient vulnerability, when a customer is only vulnerable for a relatively short time (hospital out-patients; elderly customers in winter months, etc.). By recording an estimated end point for a customer's vulnerability, the CRM system prompts our call handlers to call them at that point in order to update both their progress and our records, taking customers off the list when they are no longer vulnerable.

Over the past 12 months, we have enhanced the way we support our vulnerable customers during power cuts, and given customers advanced warning of the arrival of severe weather. This provides us with the opportunity to better understand needs and to support customers in preparing for and responding to such event.

Steps in place to respond to vulnerable customers include:

Priority Service Register induction pack

Our induction pack for PSR customers ensures that when customers sign up, they are fully aware of the services available to them.

Standard offering

- **Home visits** - We have a number of 'customer champions' who work across the North West, who can provide home visits and offer help and advice at any stage.
- **Welfare packs** - Our welfare packs are made up of items which can help you cope without power, such as blankets, hot flasks, analogue telephones, glow in the dark torches.
- **Regular communication** - If your power goes off, we will keep you up to date with our progress via your preferred method of contact and let you know when we expect to restore your power.
- **Nominated contact** - You can also nominate a friend or family member to receive updates on your behalf or in addition to you.
- **Generation** - If you rely on electricity for medical equipment, we will (where available) be able to provide backup generation for you.
- **Oxygen backup** - We have a partnership with Air Liquide UK, who provide back up cylinders for anyone who is oxygen dependant.
- **British Red Cross** - We have a strong partnership in place with the British Red Cross who can help with welfare service provision including hot drinks or just a friendly voice on the phone.

CASE STUDY

Securing supplies for vulnerable customers through our enhanced generator policy

Embedding our support for vulnerable customers throughout the organisation is key. This covers everything from our offering to Priority Service Register customers in the event of an emergency, but also supporting customers with additional requirements during planned outages. Our updated Generator policy demonstrates how consideration of vulnerable customers is embedded throughout the organisation, from our customer team, through to our front line employees.

Design engineers must consider the impact of planned supply interruptions on different customers groups. The integration of our CRM into our investment and maintenance processes provides these engineers with the information they need to appropriately plan for, manage and mitigate the impact of an interruption on vulnerable customers. This following criteria is applied:-

	Spring Summer Autumn Temperature > 5C		Winter <5C		Extreme weather < 2C
	Duration < 5 Hours	Duration >5 Hours	Duration < 5 Hours	Duration >5 Hours	Any Duration
More than 10% of customer subject to PSI are Highly Vulnerable*	Allow PSI	Use generator or individual generators for specific customers	Use generator	Use generator	Use generator
More than 20% of customers subject to PSI are Vulnerable	Allow PSI	Use generator or individual generators for specific customers	Use generator	Use generator	Use generator
All other scenarios	Allow PSI	Allow PSI	Allow PSI	Use generators to limit PSI to a maximum of 8 hours	Use generator

High Vulnerability means anyone with electrical equipment requirements for their specific condition or medicine requiring refrigeration and with the conditions set out in the Draft Needs Codes.

CASE STUDY continued

Other considerations include:-

- Where use would limit the number of PSI experienced by an affected customer in a year to a maximum of two.
- If the weather is likely to be particularly cold (<2C) in line with the matrix overleaf.
- In circumstances where the PSI would cause particular hardship such as a nursing home, a school or a small business. These should be individually approved by the appropriate Area Manager.
- Where the total cost (direct and carding) of the work would be higher if generators were not used.
- Where the number of vulnerable or Highly Vulnerable customers impacted is excessive in line with the matrix below.

CASE STUDY**Better colleague through partnership with Alzheimer's UK**

Last year, we also worked with Alzheimer's UK to educate the Electricity North West team about mental health issues, something which affect one in four people.

The importance of understanding this disease is helping our colleagues recognise signals when they speak to a customer to support them.

Providing our colleagues with the skills and confidence is crucial as these conversations can be misunderstood and create stress and anxiety for both our customers and colleagues.

It is encouraging to be part of a stakeholder panel that acts on making improvements so quickly, the introduction of British Sign Language videos is a great example of an issue being highlighted and acted upon with the prioritisation it deserves.

I look forward to seeing even more improvements in the months and years ahead.

Clare Redfern, Stockport Council

Training Programme Updates

Continual Learning Programme

We ensure all customer facing staff receive direct training on consumer vulnerability to the highest standards possible using a variety of learning styles. We now include the introduction of a structured training cycle which is mapped into an annual training diary. There are scheduled refresher training sessions to reinforce the learning for all agents. Our review includes producing an annual training module to ensure a clear identifiable quality function which is fit for purpose and up to date.

We provide an innovative training programme which includes the delivery of compulsory key tool box talks which offer best practice, hints and tips to our agents to aid their communications with our customers. There is a variety of learning techniques which also includes the introduction and expansion of e-learning to underpin core and refresher training modules.

Particular focus would also be placed on coaching and mentoring staff throughout the training and live environment. This will instil peer to peer coaching methodology and provide a culture of life-long learning.

Training is centred on the role of a front-line Customer Service Advisor and includes a robust new starter programme. Phase 2 training is delivered in alignment with the overall training programme with support from the subject experts across the business. Training consists of multiple modules spanning over four weeks based on full time delivery, which extends to six weeks if there is a business requirement to run part time training.

The training programme provides a safe learning environment in which to develop key learning outcomes for the role. The development of the training programme will ensure that we meet the learning needs of the business.

CASE STUDY**Local champions supporting vulnerable customers**

We sent more than 250 packs to vulnerable customers during the storm periods and we have dedicated Customer Champion staff at each of our 14 depots to ensure the efficiency of the delivery and inventory. The Vulnerable Customer pack we developed in consultation with customer includes the following items:-

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Flasks | • Glow Torches |
| • Thermal Mugs | • Analogue Phones |
| • Blankets | • Priority Service Register Leaflets |
| • Gloves | • Additional Support Leaflet |
| • Hats | • Envelopes (Large) |
| • Fridge Magnets | • Envelopes (Small) |
| • Pens | • Key ring torches |
| • Note Pads | • Carrier Bags |
| • Hand warmers | |