



Part 3

Consumer vulnerability approach, initiatives and outcomes

2018-19

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Consumer vulnerability approach, initiatives and outcomes

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Northern Powergrid is about more than just “keeping the lights on” we are a vital part of the communities we serve. Those communities include people who have to cope with a wide variety of vulnerabilities. We want to understand how we can help to minimise the impact of these vulnerabilities on individuals who rely on our services.

The clear purpose of our Consumer Vulnerability approach is to deliver the best possible support to our vulnerable customers. That requires us to have a detailed understanding of their needs. In the following pages, we have sought to demonstrate how this is the fundamental driver in everything we do.

These services are not a ‘bolt on’ to our work. Supporting vulnerable customers is at the heart of our service delivery, ensuring that everyone across the business knows that it is our responsibility to help those who need us the most, in everything we do.

My executive team and I, together with the input of our Social Issues Expert Group as critical friends, continue to challenge ourselves and our colleagues to achieve more in this area. We know that it is our front line colleagues who deliver the lion’s share of the continuous improvement we achieve – they are the critical players.

As well improving our service delivery, we have invested in a better understanding of vulnerability, making sure it remains up to date and reflective of the realities of our region. Direct engagement with our customers has helped us to understand how we are doing and to refine our approach to better suit particular the challenges they face, e.g. new mental health support plans outlined on page 3.

Partnerships are key. They amplify the positive impact we can have. We have extended our network to include 70 new community partners sharing our PSR animations directly to encourage registrations. We have partnered with local authorities for welfare provision during weather-related events, and with Northern Gas Networks to deliver our Community Partnering Fund and to tailor support across vulnerable and hard to reach groups.

I am proud of the social programmes that our team deliver to vulnerable customers. Continuing to improve our understanding of vulnerability in our region, enables us to deliver even better support for those who need us most.

Phil Jones
President and CEO

2018/19 highlights

90.6%
overall satisfaction
with PSR service

93.68%
PSR customers back
on supply within 6
hours

£367,395
savings for customers
through Powergrid
Care

70
new organisations
supporting PSR health
campaigns with a
reach of 246,233

60%
increase in mental
health PSR
registrations

2019/20 priorities

Strengthening relationships with utilities to ensure customers receive a joined-up PSR service

Targeting new partnerships to increase our access and support for those that are hardest to reach

Defining the social legacy for our work programmes

Future proof our plans

Preparing for the energy transition and how our region is set to change, we are focusing on developing our core service offering now so we can be well prepared and fit for the future to address the changing and increasing needs in our communities.

Through our research we know that:

- ▶ North East and Yorkshire regions continue to achieve **below-average economic growth**.
- ▶ 24.5% of our customers aged **16+ have no qualifications**.
- ▶ By 2030, the **65+ age-groups will have grown by 25%**.
- ▶ **Chronic kidney disease is higher than the national average** in both the North East (4.5%) and Yorkshire (4.6%).
- ▶ The number of people with **dementia** in the UK is forecast to increase to over **1 million by 2025**.
- ▶ Most local authorities in our area are projected to have a **higher Old Age**

Dependency Rate (OADR) than the **national average**, particularly in rural areas.

- ▶ The need for **palliative care** is likely to increase over the next decades with **many receiving care at home, with an increased reliance on electricity**.
- ▶ With the development of the **Internet of things and migration to full digital telephony** (by 2025), additional pressures might be placed on electricity provision for the vulnerable.

We work hard to understand exactly what this will mean for the people and the communities we serve. Over the last year we have been adapting our plans to respond to this through:

- ▶ Comprehensive review and re-focus of our strategy with the Executive and Social Issues Expert Group (SIEG) to develop stretch targets for affordability support, vulnerability and education, including safety, STEM and diversity.

- ▶ Delivering our Resilient Homes innovation project in partnership with National Energy Action, ensuring it better supports longer-term social issues like affordability as well as uninterrupted supply for electrically medically dependent customers.
- ▶ Social inclusion shaping our future plans – working with expert stakeholders and SIEG, we are developing our understanding of what social inclusion will mean practically for all aspects of the transition to Distribution System Operator (DSO) including transport, warm homes, flexibility and resilience.
- ▶ Strengthened our PSR recruitment strategy to target most at risk and areas of increasing vulnerability.
- ▶ Working closely with service delivery partners to ensure we are alert and responsive to changing customer needs like Universal Credit.

Consumer Vulnerability strategy

Our Consumer Vulnerability strategy is central to what we do and our principal aim remains clear – to provide the best service to our vulnerable customers. Our engagement tells us that we are doing the right thing, so our focus remains on embedding our services, giving our colleagues the confidence and tools to deliver an excellent tailored service and setting stretch targets for continued improvement.

Defined customer group	Our role
▶ Customers who need extra support when accessing and receiving our services or as a result of a power loss or interruption.	▶ To provide tailored support to their needs during a power cut and when accessing our wider services, for example connection.
▶ Customers experiencing vulnerabilities which Northern Powergrid has a legitimate role in addressing, reducing or supporting.	▶ To develop innovative ways to support our customers and communities experiencing affordability and wider societal issues with an aim of reducing vulnerability in the future.
▶ Customers who are less able to represent themselves or their interests in energy matters.	▶ To give our customers a voice – acting as an advocate when discussing industry policy and to share best practice.

Our aim

To provide the best possible support and assistance to our vulnerable customers, informed by a detailed understanding of their needs.

Our key objectives			Our enablers	
1. Expanding our understanding of vulnerability	2. Increasing access to the hard to reach	3. Improving our services	4. Developing our people, capacity and culture	5. Developing our partnerships
<p>▶ Our understanding of vulnerability is even stronger this year through in-depth research with customers experiencing vulnerability in health and mental health (page 3), close work with partners to understand changing needs (pages 7 to 9) and future proofing our plans (page 1), our PSR survey (page 3) and our Experian data. We have used this insight to target PSR recruitment (page 3), align and improve restoration performance (page 5) and tailor our proactive communications approach (page 5).</p> <p>▶ Many of our most vulnerable customers are the hardest to reach, particularly those where communications issues are a barrier to accessing or understanding our services. The work that we do with community partners who specialise in offering tailored services has enabled us to deliver effective ways to reach people with different communications barriers and challenges (page 8).</p>			<p>▶ Through our volunteering programme, training and sharing insight, our colleagues have a much richer understanding of the day to day challenges our customers may be facing and are confident to respond with empathy in delivering the support they need (page 10).</p> <p>▶ We have recruited new partners to increase the reach of our communications, deliver services and target recruitment. Sharing data and training has helped build the capability of our partners, enabling them to provide an enhanced service to the communities they support (page 9).</p>	

An integrated approach that directly supports our communities

Whilst we stay focused on the here and now, we also seek to take a longer-term view on how we can best serve our communities, particularly those with a high number of vulnerable customers. The insight provided from our Experian social mapping tool coupled with the opportunities identified within our tower blocks rising mains programme has led to heightened focus on the social legacy we leave within communities as we execute our investment programme.

Working with our operational colleagues, we have developed the links between the social characteristics of an area – the work types, the local issues – and linked these with our work planning process. Now, early into the planning stages, we identify the type of social

initiatives that would deliver tailored support for the local community and in doing so we can build trust while we are directly impacting our customers during the delivery of our work.

Firmly embedding our community initiatives within the delivery of our investment programme ensures that this is not a bolt-on activity but firmly resonates with both our colleagues and customers. There is heightened awareness and engagement at that time ensuring a greater impact and also this long-term planning permits the most cost-efficient delivery for the greatest returns.

Refreshed approach to PSR recruitment

Our refreshed PSR recruitment strategy sets our direction for recruiting and retaining PSR customers, improving general awareness of Northern Powergrid and our enhanced service offer. Our principal aim is to inform and recruit customers onto our PSR; building good relationships so we are able to retain customers, particularly through our data cleanse process. In order to achieve this, we have set three key objectives:

1. Using Experian data to identify and recruit the most 'at risk' customers in our region, bridging vulnerability gaps.	2. Aligning PSR recruitment campaigns to work programmes to increase impact of recruitment in the most vulnerable communities.	3. Increasing awareness of the PSR among vulnerable groups and communities to ensure it is accessible to all.
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Changes in needs, circumstances, environment and other factors require ongoing work to understand existing and future needs. We do this through research, data analysis and ongoing engagement with vulnerable customers, community partners and experts. We have reviewed and expanded the membership of our long-standing SIEG. This has increased the breadth and depth of the vulnerabilities represented and further strengthened input into our strategy, policies, practice and service delivery.

Understanding complex needs

As health and mental health needs are complex and multi-faceted, we have invested in independent, in-depth research. This has given us a deeper understanding of vulnerable customers' circumstances, day to day challenges and requirements. The research focused on their world, their needs during a power cut and evaluated our current services. Our research partner carried out in-home, paired interviews with 24 customers across six locations in urban and rural areas within our region. This has given us a much better insight into the challenges. Here are just a few examples of the insights we have gained and how we are responding:

Insight	What we are doing
For mental health conditions, there is a need for immediate and proactive communication, reassurances and empathy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Aligning our proactive communications approach to contact this vulnerable group within the first hour of an unplanned power cut. ▶ To build on existing training, we will be investing in specific mental health training for all contact centre staff.
For people with mobility issues who rely on electricity for hoists, stairlifts, beds etc. the first hour of a power cut is critical and alternative accommodation would be very challenging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In order to keep people in their homes, our 72 rapid response engineers have been equipped with mobile generators to connect quickly whilst we are getting the power back on.
Relevance and eligibility of PSR is less obvious to those with mental health conditions and not intuitive to what additional services would be appropriate, as needs are more about communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ We used a real life case study to develop our PSR mental health and health campaigns to communicate real life examples of a need and the service offering (see below).

Using data to effectively target recruitment

Continuing our work with Experian, we've used our data to give us an informed view for targeting future recruitment. Our refreshed PSR recruitment strategy sets out our principal aim "to inform and recruit customers onto our PSR and then to build good relationships to retain customers". We've identified areas with a higher prevalence of vulnerabilities and focused our recruitment in response.

SCALED UP

CASE STUDY

Approach to health and mental health PSR recruitment



REPLICABLE

The issue

1.66 million households in our region have health and mental health indicators. Only 20% of these households were on our PSR.

What we did

Using our data, we developed a strategic PSR health recruitment campaign and pinpointed the most 'at risk' customers and communities, along with identifying their preferred media and communications channels. In doing so we:

- ▶ Interacted directly with a target audience of over 1 million households in West and South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear (641,000 health-impacted households, 61% were on social media).
- ▶ Created targeted and relevant communications, including six animations featuring emotive and hard-hitting narratives using the actual words of real vulnerable customers with physical and mental health needs.
- ▶ Targeted 220 new community partners via phone, Facebook, LinkedIn and twitter.

This resulted in:

- ▶ 485% increase in PSR recruitment on the 2018 average and 792% up on the 6-month average.
- ▶ 70 new community partners established who posted the animations/associated information, directly reaching a potential audience of 239,333.
- ▶ 199,000 views of the animations to date – raised awareness and reach.
- ▶ 2.7 million impressions with the target audience reaching them more than once, 20% of the customers had a direct interaction with NPg at a cost of 18p per interaction.

As a result of our engagement with NHS England and North East NHS Trusts, we are piloting referral approaches with:

- ▶ City Hospital Sunderland NHS Foundation Trusts where patients discharged via occupational therapy and issued with home medical equipment are being issued with PSR information in their discharge packs.
- ▶ North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust who have developed a PSR information leaflet which is being delivered to all patients.

Outcomes and benefits

- ▶ Increased number of customers experiencing health and mental health issues can now access pro-active support.
- ▶ Vulnerable customers are receiving PSR information through trusted community partners and NHS organisations – minimising their anxiety.
- ▶ Increased relevance of eligibility through real life case studies that resonate with our customers.
- ▶ Tried and tested communication and targeting approach that is cost effective and will be replicated.

Managing our data

Accurate data is essential to ensure we understand who our customers are and their needs to tailor and target our support. Our focus this year has been around maximising the use of available data within the business and sharing data with partners to target and strengthen our reach and services.

Our consumer vulnerability data strategy is in place and is reviewed annually by our Executive to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The component parts are:

Data acquisition – Our key channels for data acquisition are through supplier data flows and Experian vulnerability and social data. We work closely with local referral and community partners to identify and reach those most in need rather than inefficiently acquiring that data.

Data management – To ensure that we hold up-to-date, quality information allowing us to provide the best level of support, we ensure

no individual record goes for more than two years without review. This is through day to day interactions where we take the opportunity to check and update details and through our data cleanse process which involves three contacts through multiple channels over a six month period.

Data privacy is a key concern for our customers and our data management processes have robust checks and balances

in place to ensure that we manage and use our data in a compliant and responsible way.

Effectively using our data – By making our data accessible across the business, we can ensure that it is constantly informing our approach and services.

Sharing our data – Recognising we share our customers and communities with many other organisations, we share our data with key partners.

NEW

CASE STUDY

Industry data sharing and robust management



REPLICABLE

The issue

- ▶ 92.7% of PSR registrations come from supplier data flows.
- ▶ Only 51% of PSR customers are aware of how they have been registered.
- ▶ Last year we uncovered a potential issue when processing large volumes of PSR removals – with no consistency of process across suppliers for deletion flows.

- ▶ Water companies have very low numbers of PSR registrations.

What we did

We raised the issue of inconsistency in approach with DNOs and suppliers at the Customer Social Issues Working Group. Resolving this issue and joining up approaches for PSR recruitment and communications with suppliers is ongoing. Industry discussions are underway to agree a best practice approach for sharing data and validating customer information.

Suppliers were asked to complete a survey to help us understand the impact a large volume of deletion flows could have.

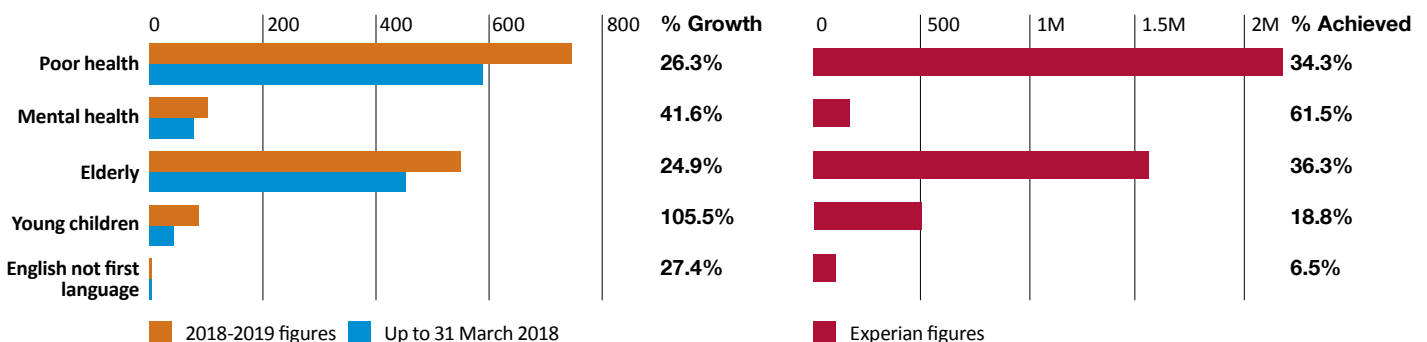
We redesigned our enduring data cleanse process, maximising the number of contact attempts made to customers based on priority need. This was retrospectively applied to any records cleansed with a non-response result since the change in the data flows, c.134,000 household have been “re-cleansed” under this process.

If we receive a deletion flow for our highest priority PSR customers, we contact them directly before deleting. We have also refreshed our PSR recruitment strategy to keep customers better informed. We are actively involved in the national project to begin PSR data sharing with water companies by April 2020. Working with Northumbrian Water, we are piloting and testing two way data sharing in preparation for ‘go live’.

The outcomes and benefits

- ▶ A joined-up industry approach which reduces confusion and simplifies access to a comprehensive range of enhanced services.
- ▶ We are retaining informed customers on our PSR, to whom we can deliver proactive support.

Our vulnerable customers (PSR elements in thousands)



902,000
Total PSR

227,740
New registrations

27%
Increase compared to 2017/18

90%
We hold an alternative contact for over 90% of our customers

405,908
Proactive contacts with PSR customers

Our core services

“Understanding and responding to the needs of our customers, particularly those who may be more vulnerable, is at the heart of what we do every day. The impact of a power cut can be different depending on an individual’s circumstances, so it’s key our teams have the right skills to identify this and are empowered to take action to deliver a service that best meets the needs of the customers they are supporting.”

Neil Applebee – Director of People and Customer Service

Our understanding of vulnerable customer needs has transformed the services we offer and the way our business responds. This year, we have worked hard to embed those services, deliver on our PSR commitments and measure and report on our performance. Our performance to date tells a strong story but there is always room for improvement.

We believe we have the right metrics in place and this puts us in a good position to consult further in 2019/20 on offering a defined core service which is measured like any other. Our continuous engagement shows our customers’ priorities during a power

cut remain unchanged; we should get the power back on as quickly as possible and communicate well with them. Our focus for 2018/19 has been on improving restoration times for unplanned power cuts with the introduction of our ‘six steps to success’ improvement plan and enhanced generator provision, aligned to our vulnerability matrix. The improvement plan guides our operational teams in establishing the best restoration strategy for each unplanned power cut and has appropriate escalation processes in place for generator provisions.

2018/19 progress

- ▶ Metrics agreed and reported with accountability within each of our nine operating zones.
- ▶ Implemented improvement plan for unplanned power cuts including new escalation process and enhanced generator provision.
- ▶ Mobile generator provision embedded across all zones.
- ▶ Commitment to restore power to single premises within three hours of arriving on site.
- ▶ Service improvements for planned power cuts, including tailored communications, deployment of Customer Support Vehicles and upgrades to Planned Power Cut system.
- ▶ Partnering with LAs for welfare provisions during weather related events.

Our PSR service commitments

As we set out last year, our service commitments are based on stakeholder and customer feedback.

ENHANCED

Commitment	Target	2018/19 performance
We will minimise disruption wherever possible (avoiding impact).	▶ We will not conduct any planned works affecting PSR customers when the temperature falls under 0 degrees.	▶ 80 jobs deferred due to low temperatures.
In the event of a power cut we will restore power as soon as possible.	▶ 90% of medically dependent customers restored within 6 hours.	▶ 86.1%
	▶ 98% PSR customers restored within nine hours.	▶ 96.9%
We deliver tailored services that meet the needs of our vulnerable customers.	▶ 95% medically dependent customers contacted within 3 hours of an unplanned power cut.	▶ 80.1% New metric counted from January 2019.
	▶ 91% overall satisfaction with PSR services.	▶ 90.6%

Quality assuring our services

We have c.110 frontline colleagues within our Contact Centre and Customer Care teams who are assessed under our quality assurance framework. It has been designed to encourage our colleagues to have polite, friendly and helpful conversations with customers, with a huge focus on personalisation and ensuring we meet their requirements particularly for those customers in vulnerable situations. The framework is aligned to industry best practice, and this year

we were named number one in the UK Top 50 Companies for Customer Service following 100 mystery calls to test the responsiveness of our 24 hour Contact Centre.

Over this 12 month period we have completed over 5,000 observations, the target score is 8.5 out of 10 and we consistently deliver 9 out of 10. These assessments are used to deliver personal coaching for individuals to help them improve the quality of their interactions with our customers and the service we provide.

“Proactively contacting customers allows us to capture the most vulnerable, who may not have support at home. It is a great opportunity to have a chat, offer support and make a difference to their day.”

Chris Lynch – PSR Coordinator

“Northern Powergrid pulled out all the stops. The customer service van which arrived is such a valuable asset to have, as without the small generator they had on board to inflate my mother’s airbed, she would have been left in the chair all day and night”.

Customer – Pontefract

“I cannot thank Northern Powergrid enough for fast tracking the service alteration work necessary to enable us to provide downstairs toilet facilities for my ill husband. I wouldn’t have known where to start as we have all been under such stress lately. Your compassion as a company is impressive, I am over the moon with the service provided and the kindness you have shown me and my family”.

Customer – Harrogate

EMBEDDED

CASE STUDY

Keeping customers comfortable and in their homes



The issue

Customers with mobility issues who rely on electricity for equipment prefer to remain in their home in the event of a power cut. Customers experiencing mental health issues often are afraid to leave their homes.

What we did

We have invested in over 100 small generators and equipped each of our **72 rapid response engineers** with a mobile

generator to provide immediate welfare support.

Outcomes and benefits

- ▶ Customers can remain in their homes during a power cut.
- ▶ Minimised disruption and anxiety for vulnerable customers.
- ▶ Northern Powergrid staff feel better able to provide immediate support to vulnerable customers, reducing their anxiety.

"It's fantastic to be able to offer this service, it certainly gives me peace of mind to provide a level of comfort until a permanent repair is completed." **Richie Robinson** – Rapid Response Engineer.

Measuring our vulnerable customer support

Our engagement

Every year we independently survey 2,400 customers on our PSR register to assess our performance, their satisfaction with our services and identify emerging needs and improvements.

We gain regular insight of what our vulnerable customers are saying through weekly analysis of PSR customer feedback (Broader Measure of Customer Service).

Results

- ▶ **9.2/10** satisfaction at ease of contacting Northern Powergrid.
- ▶ **8.5/10** satisfaction that their situation was taken into account.
- ▶ **8.2/10** satisfaction, unplanned power cut.
- ▶ **7.7/10** satisfaction, planned power cut.

Our response

- ▶ **7,678** customers contacted us via our dedicated PSR number.
- ▶ **16,298** PSR customers bypassed 105 IVR and talked directly to an agent.
- ▶ Further training and assessment sheet developed for colleagues supporting PSR customers.
- ▶ Improved pro-active contact approach for PSR customers.
- ▶ Complete the upgrade of our planned power cut system in 2019 including use of data, improved detail and frequency of communications and triggers for enhanced support.

Enhanced, tailored services

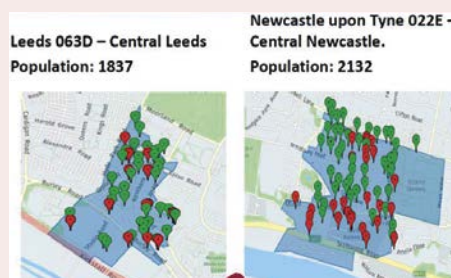
Although all of our research and engagement continues to tell us that our highest priority should be to restore power as quickly as possible, we continue to have a raft of enhanced services in place, delivered through our frontline teams and community partners.

Our performance against 'potential' demand for our enhanced service suggests that there is minimal take-up and our research tells us that 58% of customers surveyed would not want any enhanced support. But we still feel it is important that we have these options in place so we can respond with a tailored approach when customers need and want it.

SCALED UP

CASE STUDY

Data sharing to improve services



The issue

Our customers and communities are shared with other, more local, organisations which may be better placed than us to offer support where necessary, however; to be effective they need better access to our customer information/PSR.

What we did

- ▶ Updated our stakeholder maps with a new

PSR layer, which highlights those PSR customers affected by live planned and unplanned power cuts.

- ▶ Customer records are shown at household level by priority (not needs code – safeguarding data) to ensure we're safeguarding our data.
- ▶ Worked with the Cabinet Office to determine an appropriate use of their Resilience Direct system to proactively share data with other emergency response organisations.
- ▶ Data and PSR information is updated quarterly and can be accessed securely by Local Authorities, utility companies and emergency services via the Resilience Direct platform.
- ▶ Following successful working partnership with Gateshead Council to support vulnerable customers during the Beast from the East, we have scaled up this approach and developed our Local authority Welfare Provision – an agreement with each of the 33 Local Authorities in our area to provide welfare support to customers affected by

an escalated event. Our Memorandum of Understanding was officially launched at two Local authority events in February 2019 alongside our improved data sharing practices.

Outcomes and benefits

- ▶ Updates to the Resilience Direct End User Agreement have strengthened GDPR compliance of all users.
- ▶ 125 organisations now have access to our improved stakeholder maps.
- ▶ Our partners are better informed and placed to support our shared vulnerable customers and communities.
- ▶ This concept was put into practice in November 2018, when a long-duration fault impacted over 70 adults and 30 children. Working with Sunderland Council and the Salvation Army, we set up a local support centre, providing somewhere warm to go and we provided hot food and drinks. Feedback was extremely positive and customers felt supported.

Holistic approach to addressing fuel poverty

We work with expert agencies delivering tailored programmes and support which address issues of affordability, energy efficiency and fuel poverty with our most vulnerable customers and communities. Two of our flagship affordability programmes – Powergrid Care and Energy Heroes – continue to provide a more holistic approach to addressing issues of affordability and energy efficiency.

EMBEDDED

Powergrid Care

Now in its fifth year, our Powergrid Care programme is fully embedded and we have seen an increase in impact. As the maturity of the relationships we have with these strategic partners deepens we are able to deliver a more efficient service and respond to the changing needs of the communities they are serving. We know vulnerable customers often prefer a single, trusted point of contact to support them and provide advice. Using this learning, Powergrid

Care provides access to advice and support, covering areas such as debt and energy efficiency, through our core service partners (Citizens Advice Leeds and Newcastle, Trussell Trust, Relate and Green Doctor) who already have direct contact within our local communities. The service responds to the personal needs identified by our customers and helps them receive relevant, holistic support.

2018/19 developments

- ▶ Citizens Advice (CA) contracts have been extended to three years, allowing them to plan longer term and deliver stronger outcomes.
- ▶ CA Leeds is developing a West Yorkshire hub, comprising Leeds, Wakefield, Kirklees, Calderdale and Bradford, to enable more beneficiaries to engage with their local CA.
- ▶ In Hull, we've engaged CA and Green Doctor and, through a partnership with Yorkshire Water, they hope to offer water-saving measures/advice in addition to existing energy interventions.
- ▶ In Newcastle, the first city to fully roll out Universal Credit, consumers have experienced more acute financial pressure – the hardship fund we introduced last year was an essential tool for the most vulnerable clients and we invested in further training for debt workers to address this.
- ▶ CA Newcastle has engaged with agencies such as Shelter, Action for Children, LAs and social services to build a North East Energy Advice hub, leading to an additional 40 referrals per month out of Newcastle.
- ▶ As the model has become embedded, and we have worked across the partners and with wider stakeholders like MPs to raise awareness of the services available, we have seen a significant increase in reach and service recipients at no additional cost.

Outcomes and benefits

- ▶ **2,749** customers received holistic advice and support directly – an increase of 63% in 12 months.
- ▶ **841** overall PSR registrations – signed up through trusted channels and with improved understanding of PSR services on offer.
- ▶ **67** households switched supplier or tariff to reduce their energy bills.
- ▶ **£133.64** benefit per customer.
- ▶ **£367,395** overall customer benefit – an increase of 34% in 12 months.
- ▶ **2,738** received other services (such as CO detectors, dehumidifiers, blankets, hot water bottles), improving their resilience.

CASE STUDY

Mr T and the Green Drs

The issue

Mr T lives alone in social housing with a very low income. During the visit it was clear to see Mr T was:

- ▶ Vulnerable: along with living alone at an old age he was timid, shy and not very positive.
- ▶ Struggling to make ongoing payments: due in part to a low state pension but mainly a high debt repayment.

What we did

- ▶ Performed an energy switch.
- ▶ Installed radiator panels, lightbulbs and a bottom brush for his door.
- ▶ Referred him on to Bradford Family Action to look at ways of improving his income.
- ▶ Referred him on to Innchurches to apply for a grant.
- ▶ Referred him for white goods donation from Northern Powergrid.

The outcome/benefits

Working with wider partners to provide an effective holistic service has significantly improved Mr T's living situation and his mental health:

- ▶ Energy switch saved him £160 on energy bills, enabling him to make his debt payments.
- ▶ Installed energy saving measures.
- ▶ The white goods that were donated enabled Mr T to be more comfortable spending time in his home and to be self-sufficient, which in the long run will have important health benefits.

EMBEDDED

Energy Heroes

Working with local schools in deprived areas, we're educating children and their families about energy efficiency, fuel poverty and climate change issues, whilst improving numeracy and science skills.

Now in its fourth year, this practical, hands-on programme works directly with year five children through tailored lessons, with schools through energy audits and assemblies and wider communities through efficiency information and community events.

2018/19 developments

- ▶ This has been a successful programme which we are keen to continue to support and roll out, our focus in the final pilot year has been around understanding the legacy of the programme and how the schools could continue to educate on energy efficiency once the programme has ended.
- ▶ We have:
 - Set in our Social Responsibility strategy, demonstrating our commitment to reaching over 300 schools in our most vulnerable areas by 2023.
 - Signed up a pupil referral unit to take part this year.
 - Used Experian data to identify which schools will benefit. Programmes will be delivered initially in Durham, Leeds and Kirklees.

Outcomes and benefits

- ▶ **30** schools and **1,200** children with improved data handling and problem solving skills.
- ▶ **£12.92** per £1 spent – cost benefits of scheme.
- ▶ **£342,360** total financial benefits to customers.
- ▶ **8,400** people reached through Energy Extra proactive community outreach, supported to:
 - reduce their fuel bills.
 - encourage a responsible attitude and desire for low carbon living.
 - better understand the benefits of reducing CO₂ emissions.

Innovation projects developing future services

Innovation partnerships are essential to support our continual learning, ensure our services are current, responsive and fit for purpose and maximise the opportunities new technologies offer.

Community Partnering Fund

Now in its fifth year, our Community Partnering Fund supports projects which deliver against any or all of our social objectives. Following joint assessment across our individual funds last year we have now merged funds with Northern Gas Networks (NGN) to ensure a more holistic

approach, maximise opportunities and deliver the best possible impact for our shared customers.

The fund is now £100,000 annually and offers grants of up to £10,000 for community organisations and charities to pilot and

deliver services to support customers across a range of vulnerabilities and wider social needs. These partnerships help us to increase understanding of specific vulnerabilities, identify emerging trends and innovative practice through a low risk investment approach.

2018/19 developments

- ▶ We've worked closely with partners to set agreed metrics and outcomes based on successful proposals.
- ▶ We are offering volunteering, training, data sharing and other capacity and capability building opportunities to all applicants.
- ▶ We have organised events to share best practice with previous recipients and to encourage information sharing between beneficiaries.
- ▶ Seven projects awarded funding in October 2018, including Toranj Tuition, a STEM project working with refugee and asylum seeker families, and Radio Asian Fever, promoting PSR and energy saving messages in South Asian languages.
- ▶ Our 2017/18 beneficiaries have achieved:
 - 3,847 reach and tailored support across vulnerable and hard to reach groups.
 - 250 volunteers activated and 12 partner staff members trained to deliver services directly.

Outcomes and benefits

- ▶ Driving local innovation through working with organisations who have in-depth knowledge of the areas, issues and individuals they support.
- ▶ Comprehensive training and support programme for partners across a range of social issues, including attendance at Relate workshops and social mapping webinars.
- ▶ Previous partners invited to participate in the funding panels as well as sharing best practice with successful and unsuccessful applicants.
- ▶ To address a gap in our Social Issues Expert Group (SIEG) around rural isolation, a community partner has accepted our invitation to join and represent rural communities.
- ▶ An open and transparent approach to identifying potential partners, allowing us to assess like-for-like solutions in a managed way.
- ▶ Innovative projects, delivering tailored customer benefits and learning that we can share with wider partners and potentially scale up if successful.
- ▶ Merged fund has led to:
 - More frequent (bi-annual) application rounds, maximising interest.
 - Increased reach and shared learning for Northern Powergrid, Northern Gas Networks and beneficiaries.

NEW

CASE STUDY

Partnerships addressing hard to reach communication challenges



The issue

We have **598,000** households in our area who experience communication challenges which can be a barrier to accessing energy related services like energy efficiency advice, switching and our PSR.

Experience through our partners tells us that the most effective way of reaching and supporting these individuals is through a trusted partner within their community who is able to respond to their specific needs and challenges.

What we did

We supported a number of projects through our Community Partnering Fund with NGN to explore effective ways to reach people with different communications barriers and challenges:

- ▶ Deaf Advice team at CA Sheffield, a unique service, and an exemplar within CA nationally, provides advice using BSL. The service reaches people from across West Yorkshire. The grant funded a three-hour workshop, providing clients with energy switching advice and information about the PSR. Face-to-face sessions were also offered.
- ▶ Thornton Lodge Action Group, serving one of the most deprived communities in Huddersfield, predominantly made up of Pakistani Muslim groups who struggle to access various services. The project focused on alleviating hardship associated with fuel poverty by developing IT and internet skills enabling local residents to be up skilled and self-sufficient.
- ▶ Radio Asian Fever, funded in October 2018 as part of our new fund, will be delivering a series of programmes in South Asian languages around fuel poverty and the issues it creates to households who do not have the means to access other methods of support.

The outcomes and benefits

- ▶ Face-to-face advice given to **482** clients who have experienced communication challenges to improve their access to energy saving measures and the ability to switch tariffs.
- ▶ Training two volunteers to deliver energy advice in BSL and employed an outreach worker to deliver programmes in South Asian languages and raise awareness in the local communities.
- ▶ Savings of **£2,589** for 14 BSL clients, approx. **£185** per client.
- ▶ Taken the learning to improve access to information and services for BSL customers through:
 - Videos on energy saving and how to register for PSR uploaded to both CA Sheffield and Northern Powergrid's web and social media sites and we've added BSL translators to our health campaign animations that we continue to share.
 - BSL will now be included in a communications handbook for customer-facing/frontline colleagues.
- ▶ We continue to assess and share the learning from all projects to improve our own and partners' services and accessibility.

Our partners are key to delivering the right services and support to our most vulnerable customers and communities. Only through these close working relationships – sharing knowledge, understanding,

data, experience and resources – can we identify, reach and meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our region.

Our partnership approach

Recognising that our partners are in a unique position working directly with and in communities, we work with them to support them in delivering a number of key services and functions. With clear roles,

we're able to deliver what we respectively do best whilst collaborating to build capacity and capability on both sides to deliver better outcomes for our customers.

Our role	2018/19 activity and improvements
Setting the strategy to find scalable, sustainable approaches across vulnerabilities and wider social issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reviewing and agreeing social strategy to set stretch targets and future proof our approach in line with current and emerging needs e.g. challenging partners to target activities in our most vulnerable areas.
Leadership – holding ourselves up to scrutiny and account by the sector and to our customers in terms of how their money is spent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Engaging in deliberative sessions with partners to scope appetite for breadth and depth of our intervention in addressing social issues. ▶ Awarding funding to partners who can demonstrate the “social legacy” or sustainability of projects beyond direct intervention.
Commissioning projects and services through a robust project management/decision making process based on required outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Regular engagement with partners to set targets and embed our standardised reporting framework, enabling us to better define project outcomes based on need/data and monitor outcomes and project success.
Setting a robust reporting, monitoring and evaluation framework which delivers the best outcomes for our customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Fostering open dialogue between ourselves and partners to communicate social changes which impact customers e.g. roll out of Universal Credit.
Capacity building through training, sharing information, encouraging collaboration, disseminating learning and best practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Relate training – 89 partners equipped with skills to identify relationship related vulnerabilities and how to respond. ▶ Sharing vulnerability data – 21 partners at six webinars. ▶ Community Partnering Fund (CPF) learning events – partners learning from each other, Northern Gas Networks and Northern Powergrid every six months.

ENHANCED

CASE STUDY

Building partners capacity and capability



The issue

Partners have limited access to current training, data and wider resources.

As vulnerabilities emerge, local specialists can struggle to keep abreast of new learning, approaches and best practice.

Our partners and volunteers are often time poor.

What we did

Between July 2018 and February 2019, Relate delivered 9 workshops, attended by 89 community professionals and 24 Northern Powergrid colleagues, where attendees were trained in recognising and responding to vulnerable customers experiencing relationship issues.

Due to the success of the programme, two more partner sessions are planned for May 2019, to cover gaps where we had reached capacity. Training sessions also raised awareness of PSR and refreshed knowledge.

In conjunction with Northern Gas Networks, we have developed a BPEC training qualification for partners and volunteers around fuel poverty, energy efficiency and how to apply this training when working with vulnerable communities.

We held webinars to explain and demonstrate our social mapping tool and share specific data. Twenty-one representatives from different community organisations attended the six webinars, including Age UK Bradford, North Yorkshire Fire Service, NHS East Riding of Yorkshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Together Housing Group. Participants were invited to send us questions beforehand to allow us to interrogate the system and answer their specific queries and needs.

Outcomes and benefits

- ▶ An increase in requests for PSR registration forms in the locations of the workshops, increasing the number of trusted partners offering enhanced services to hard to reach customers.
- ▶ Partners are able to focus their work, tailor their services and strengthen funding bids, using the social mapping data which was previously not available to them.
- ▶ We now have a much wider network of over 400 community contacts, across a broad section of our region, to consult with and to capacity build eg. Training and information sharing.
- ▶ Training leading to holistic and sustainable support in local communities beyond initial funding.

“It has been invaluable working alongside Northern Powergrid who has greatly supported our work with vulnerable clients across Middlesbrough. The funding, resources and expert advice has enhanced the Affordable Warmth service we offer increasing capacity for home visits, improving the knowledge of our advisors and ensuring that residents who need extra support are registered with the Priority Support Register. We are grateful for the support and look forward to continuing our partnership into the future.”

Amanda Megson, Affordable Warmth Officer, Middlesbrough Environment City

“I will share what I have learnt with our staff and volunteers, to empower our clients.”

Relate workshop – Eliza Clayton, Hospital to Home Manager, Age UK Leeds

“A really useful session, the data can be used to help us identify the most vulnerable residents in our communities, helping us target appropriate fire prevention support to them.”

Cleveland Fire Brigade

“It’s not always about money and funding – it’s about trust and sharing thoughts.”

Shona Alexander, Chief Executive, Citizens Advice Newcastle

Senior management and Executive leadership

To ensure that consumer vulnerability is embedded not just in our strategies, policies and processes, but also the culture of the business, our Executive lead by example and hold their senior management teams to account to consider and deliver for vulnerable customers. This drives local accountability and responsibility for looking after vulnerable customers across all business areas. A revised reporting framework is in place in support of this new model to provide regular updates on our metrics, increase visibility and challenge performance.

Our Executive continue to play a lead role in our Social Issues Expert Group (SIEG) meetings and our experts are able to present challenges and receive direct feedback.

This has been vital in strengthening the Executive's understanding of how we are best placed to provide support across all of our key business activities.

Our model focuses on the following areas:

- ▶ Our PSR commitments and performance monitoring.
- ▶ Departmental delivery plans to improve service provision for vulnerable customers across all business activities.
- ▶ Investing in our people through training and providing the right equipment to support vulnerable customers.
- ▶ Increased support of our wider programme through volunteering activities.

"Keeping the lights on is about more than engineering. It's about ensuring that our teams understand the communities we serve, being focused on respecting the different needs of our customers and minimising disruption wherever possible. Ensuring that our frontline teams understand and are able to identify and deliver our priority service commitments every day is something I am committed to supporting now and in the future."

Andy Bilclough –
Director of Field Operations

Building the capacity and capability of our colleagues

Our colleagues are trained to recognise vulnerabilities. They have the tools available and the autonomy to respond with a service tailored to the situation to ensure they do the right thing for our customers.

In 2018/19, we:

- ▶ Achieved our 100% target for all colleagues completing our bespoke Consumer Vulnerability training.
- ▶ Built our vulnerability training into our company-wide refresher programme – to ensure 100% of staff are trained now and in the future.
- ▶ Issued more than 1,000 PSR toolkits to our field staff – supporting them to support our vulnerable customers.
- ▶ Launched our 'Best Welcome'; 165 new colleagues have completed our company-

wide on-boarding experience which outlines our Consumer Vulnerability matrix, and the associated support services, as well as a detailed explanation of PSR eligibility and gave an overall satisfaction score of 9.2/10.

- ▶ All new colleagues complete either online vulnerability training or PSR specific training session if they undertake a frontline customer-facing role.

Tools and training for 2019

- ▶ Our 'Customer First' training programme will be delivered to 100% of our people in 2019; the training will focus on improving customer service across the board with a continual thread and emphasis in recognising and supporting vulnerable customers.
- ▶ Developing a PSR registration solution that enables our colleagues to register customers remotely onto the PSR through an SMS text messaging service that automatically registers the customer within our CRM system and generates a welcome pack.

- ▶ Developing a reporting tool for use by our people who have provided on-site support for vulnerable customers – any support given is automatically recorded against the customer's record within CRM.

"I have a heart problem but they kept me informed. Everything went fine: they even sent me a phone that I can use if my power ever goes off again."

Northern Powergrid customer –
unplanned power cut

"Northern Powergrid knew that my wife has to keep medication in the fridge and a guy knocked on the door and explained what was happening. Nothing could have been done better."

Northern Powergrid customer –
planned power cut

ENHANCED

CASE STUDY

Increasing understanding through volunteering and partnerships



The issue

Whilst training colleagues and giving them the framework, tools and autonomy to do the job will build their capacity and capability to support our vulnerable customers, it does not always capture hearts and minds in the way that real life experiences can.

What we did

Whilst we have supported employee volunteering for many years, over the last 12 months we have increased our emphasis

on providing colleagues with opportunities to volunteer across all our embedded partnerships, Community Fund Partners and local community partners. Whilst many of our 2,500 colleagues already volunteer in their local communities this helps them to see our vulnerable customers, the issues they are experiencing and the support our partners can offer.

This emphasis on skills based and consumer vulnerability volunteering has seen colleagues volunteering with food banks, Green Dr, Citizens Advice, Watt a Community – our community STEM and PSR education programme – and many more.

Over 316 colleagues have volunteered 8,514 hours to support our partners or their own local communities this year.

The outcomes and benefits

- ▶ Creating a culture of local engagement, support and understanding.
- ▶ Increasing the understanding of our colleagues through first-hand experience

to understand the services on offer and increase their referrals for vulnerable customers to them.

- ▶ Colleagues feel pride in our work.

"This helped influence and strengthen the partnership and helped NPg staff really understand fuel poverty."

Shona Alexander – Chief Executive, Citizens Advice (CA) Newcastle speaking about Northern Powergrid colleagues volunteering."

"My day at Citizens Advice has given me an appreciation of the various problems that people in our community face. With just a little helping hand and a steer in the right direction, it's possible to help people and their families. It's good to know Citizens Advice is doing just that."

Siraj Shaik – Design Engineer