

Together we have the energy to transform our communities

# Our Consumer Vulnerability Activity and The Outcomes We Have Delivered

## Part Three

Ofgem Stakeholder Engagement and Consumer Vulnerability Incentive 2019/20



Electricity North West Limited  
Registered number 02366949

**electricity**  
**north west**  
Bringing energy to your door

# Welcome to our Part Three submission to Ofgem's Stakeholder Engagement and Consumer Vulnerability (SECV) Incentive for the regulatory year 2019/20.

Electricity North West is one of 14 distribution network operators (DNOs) in Great Britain regulated by Ofgem. Although we are the smallest, serving a population of five million and 2.4 million customers, our ambition and performance is impressive.

We champion the region we serve and we're proud that our network keeps our customers' lives running by making sure the electricity flows safely for every minute of every day, whether they're awake – or asleep.

We're responsible for maintaining and upgrading 13,000 km of overhead power lines and more than 44,000 km of underground electricity cables and much more across Cumbria, Lancashire and Greater Manchester. This covers a diverse range of terrain and communities, from isolated farms and villages in rural areas such as the beautiful Lake District, parts of North Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Cheshire; to towns and cities with heavy industry and large urban populations, including the bustling city of Manchester.

2019/20 is the fifth year of the eight-year Business Plan period called RIIO-ED1. This stands for Revenue = Incentives + Innovation + Outputs (Electricity Distribution 1). It is the regulatory framework set by Ofgem which drives network companies to engage proactively with stakeholders to anticipate their needs and deliver a consumer-focused, socially-responsible, and sustainable energy service. Ofgem's SECV Incentive is an annual scheme and our response is divided into three parts:

**Part 1:** Our stakeholder engagement and consumer vulnerability strategies. This provides the evidence required that we have met Ofgem's minimum requirements.

**Part 2:** Our stakeholder engagement activity and the outcomes we have delivered.

**Part 3:** Our consumer vulnerability activity and the outcomes we have delivered.

## Our region



## Table of contents

- 1 Introduction from our Customer Director
- 2 Summary of our outcomes and initiatives
- 3 Enhancing our culture of consumer vulnerability
- 4 Enhancing our understanding of the vulnerability challenges of the North West
- 6 Continuously improving and refreshing our data
- 8 Delivering joined-up services with trusted partners
- 9 Building and maintaining a resilient network
- 10 Tackling fuel poverty

## Key

These symbols reflect our 2019/20 activities



### New

Initiatives which were introduced in 2019/20.



### Enhanced

Examples of where we have improved our approach this year.



### Embedded

Holistic approaches embedded in our business.



### Hard-to-reach

Initiatives which best serve the specific interests of hard-to-reach stakeholders.



### Innovative

Best practice that could be replicated across the industry and/or initiatives which are exemplary when benchmarked against other electricity networks.



## Introduction from Stephanie Trubshaw

Customer Director at Electricity North West

**The objective of Part Three of our SECV submission is to communicate the nature and scale of outcomes being delivered as a direct result of our embedded strategy, strategic investment and diverse range of activities and outputs.**

I am proud of what we have achieved as a business this year, the positive culture that has supported the scaling of ambition and the desire our colleagues show to continuously improve. As a relatively small DNO we have leveraged our agility to change and adjust course quickly and drawn on strong alignment and direction to achieve momentum around important initiatives.

Our embedded approach has delivered several 'industry firsts' and delivered outstanding customer satisfaction, enabled us to significantly close the gap on Priority Services Register (PSR) registrations and reach more vulnerable and fuel poor customers in the North West than ever before, delivering a total social benefit of £11.1m this year.

In the table below, we have differentiated between the total benefit resulting from activities delivered this year, and a smaller number of activities where the benefits are likely to be realised over the next eight years. All the costs associated with delivering these activities have, or will be, wholly incurred by Electricity North West, therefore we have been able to calculate a multiplier of benefit for every £1 invested.

Over-and-above our SROI calculation, willingness-to-pay research has indicated that consumers place a higher value on the 19 activities we delivered this year than the cost to provide them, resulting in £13.2m of additional benefit. We always strive to find the most efficient way to deliver these services, as we know that ensuring the affordability of consumers' bills is a top stakeholder priority.

Part Three	Time period	Activities	Benefit £m	Cost £m	Multiplier
	Benefits delivered this year	19	£11.1	£0.7	15.8
	Future benefits enabled	3	£38.4	£18.1	2.1

Our stakeholders tell us that vulnerability during power cuts must be our paramount concern. What we want to achieve is encapsulated in our **consumer vulnerability strategic goal**:

**Our strategic goal is to ensure no customer or community is left vulnerable during a loss of electricity, by barriers to the services Electricity North West and our trusted partners provide, now and in the future.**

Stakeholder engagement is critical to us achieving our strategic goal, therefore we invest in an enduring and highly effective programme which is used iteratively to test and refine the 'pillars' (activities) that support our goal to ensure they remain appropriate, relevant, and able to meet the needs of vulnerable consumers. We have structured Part Three of our submission to demonstrate the outcomes that each of these pillars are contributing towards achieving our strategic goal.

Our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel, led by an independent chair, provides oversight and scrutiny of our activities. This is a key method through which we engage with our stakeholders in addition to industry forums, market research and real-time feedback from customers gained through our everyday operational activities. Our stakeholder engagement strategy has Executive Leadership Team buy-in which is reflected through our sponsorship and active participation in engagement activities, the support achieved from employees and the transformation taking place within our business.

We have consciously taken a more joined-up and targeted approach to partnerships and collaborated with United Utilities, Cadent, and Northern Gas Networks to share best practice, avoid duplication and support each other's activities in the North West (see below for more details). This has significantly increased the efficiency with which we achieve outcomes, thereby returning greater value to our customers.

**But we know we cannot stop there.** Stakeholder engagement will continue to play a critical role in helping us shape initiatives, and as we move forwards, it is critical that we continue to ensure that every pound spent is targeted in the right areas at the right time.

**Stephanie Trubshaw**  
Customer Director

### Consumer vulnerability pillars

<b>1</b>  <b>Use data to ensure we understand the vulnerability challenges of the North West</b> Page four	<b>2</b>  <b>Continuously improve and refresh customer contact data through accessible channels</b> Page six	<b>3</b>  <b>Manage trusted services that deliver tailored support to our Priority Services Register customers</b> Page eight	<b>4</b>  <b>Build and maintain a resilient network across the North West supporting vulnerable communities</b> Page nine	<b>5</b>  <b>Tackle poverty by working in partnership with various referral and fuel poverty schemes</b> Page ten
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NEW / HARD-TO-REACH



## Co-ordinating trusted services across utilities for our PSR customers

### What we heard

In our Regional Stakeholder Workshops expressed a desire to see us delivering support and key messages through effective and trusted collaboration with other partners, taking care to avoid duplication with other utilities or social services.

### What we did

Working with Northern Gas Networks (NGN) United Utilities and Cadent we co-created 'Utilities Together' a multi-utility forum to share best practice in partnership work and to support each other's activities. We heard that NGN and Cadent provide support to dementia sufferers who can have a locking cooker valve fitted to their cooker to stop it being turned on. As a result, we have complimented this support by trialling a free electric socket cover to further improve safety. We also jointly funded a campaign with United Utilities to promote the PSR and energy efficiency advice.

Partner	Type	Investment	Priority Local Authority areas reached
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Independent pharmacies	Referral	£15,000	Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Oldham, Preston, and Rochdale.
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**Outputs delivered:** This year we included key PSR and energy efficiency messaging on 400,000 pharmacy prescription bags and distributed 60,000 PSR leaflets across 200 independent pharmacies in the North West.

### Outcome

A multi-agency approach has enabled a cost-effective method of connecting more customers to vital support. Our pharmacy campaign raised awareness and delivered a socio-economic benefit of £1,093,623 – a multiplier of x26 for every £1 invested.

# Summary of our outcomes and initiatives

In this section we introduce key performance highlights which encapsulate our five consumer vulnerability pillars and support our strategic goal. The diverse range of outputs our achievements have been derived from are summarised in the table of 2019/20 initiatives. The summary table is a useful tool for understanding how our consumer vulnerability outcomes map onto Ofgem's SECV Assessment Criteria.

## 2019/20 initiatives

In the table opposite, we have indicated the maturity of our activities, from new to embedded, in addition to signposting innovative approaches and projects which have significantly enhanced access to our **hard-to-reach stakeholders**. We have articulated the Social Return on Investment (SROI) returned for every £1 invested in our initiatives as a multiplier – an accessible and comparable metric used throughout this year's submission. More detail on the complementary role Willingness-to-pay research and SROI have had in assessing the full scope of benefits is included in Part One, page seven.

## 2019/20 highlights

### Pillar 1 Enhanced understanding

- ★ PSR gap reduced by 15% in Blackpool



### Pillar 2 Refresh data

- ★ First DNO to invest in virtual workers



### Pillar 3 Tailored support

- ★ Befriending provides companionship for isolated people



### Pillar 4 Increase resilience

- ★ First DNO to offer a Business PSR



### Pillar 5 Tackle Poverty

- ★ Innovative channel to target Universal Credit claimants



Our Priorities	Initiative	Page	New this year	Embedded	Innovative	Hard-to-reach	SROI multiplier
	<b>Consumer Vulnerability Champions inspire behaviour change</b> • Eight champions support frontline engineers spot unseen vulnerability	3	✓			✓	+32% referrals
	<b>Executive-led engagement on mental health</b> • 7% annual increase in colleague utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme	3		✓			+4% colleague CSAT
	<b>Contact Centre Ninjas influence outstanding PSR call quality</b> • 94% PSR call quality sentiment achieved	3		✓			+15% call quality
	<b>What our data tells us</b> • Tailored service provided to vulnerable customers delivers 89% PSR Customer Satisfaction	4		✓			£83 benefit per member
	<b>New ways to reach and maintain a 10/10 service</b> • New chatbot channel and improved accessibility	5		✓			Inclusive service
	<b>Targeted interventions using social data mapping</b> • 'PSR gap' reduced by 15% in Blackpool	5		✓		✓	x10
	<b>Driving industry-wide change in PSR data collection</b> • Individual PSR data collection and tailored services	6		✓	✓		Tailored support
	<b>Improving existing PSR data through proactive communication</b> • 88,905 new PSR customers • 597,671 existing PSR customers proactively contacted • 90,504 dormant PSR records removed	6		✓			x17
	<b>Enabling a one-stop shop for customers</b> • Joined-up PSR registration service across utilities	7		✓			Improved efficiency
	<b>Making every customer contact count</b> • Reached 132,245 at no additional cost to customers and signed up 4% to the PSR	7		✓			x20
	<b>Cleansing our data 24/7 with virtual workers</b> • Virtual workers ('bots') cleanse PSR database	7	✓		✓		x4
	<b>Co-ordinating trusted services across utilities</b> • New 'Utilities Together' forum established • 400,000 co-branded pharmacy bags	1	✓			✓	x26
	<b>Targeting more support through our partnership network</b> • 80% of partnership investment allocated to priority areas	8		✓		✓	Improved efficiency
	<b>Alleviating cold homes in Lancashire</b> • 2,028 affordable warmth referrals improve customers' health and well-being	8		✓		✓	x10
	<b>Ending social isolation with companionship</b> • 583 isolated customers befriended	8	✓			✓	x5
	<b>Enabling smarter network investment decisions</b> • New industry segmentation model developed	9		✓	✓		Improved efficiency
	<b>Ground-breaking 'Smart Street' cuts bills</b> • Roll-out informed by fuel poor postcodes and delivers up to £60 annual energy bill savings to customers	9		✓	✓	✓	x2
	<b>First DNO to introduce a Business PSR Register</b> • Resilience enhanced for 1,641 businesses	9		✓	✓	✓	x22
	<b>Making sure no one will be 'worst-served' by 2023</b> • 82% reduction in worst-served customers	9		✓	✓		Improved resilience
	<b>Eliminating language-based barriers</b> • Language barriers overcome to reach 1,500 in Kashmiri community with energy efficiency advice	10	✓			✓	x10
	<b>Improving access to energy efficiency support</b> • 1,589 energy efficiency interventions	10		✓		✓	x11
	<b>Empowering young people to inspire behaviour change</b> • Youth engaged to become community 'Eco Warriors'	10	✓			✓	x4

# Enhancing our culture of consumer vulnerability

We have embraced and embedded a culture where everyone who works at Electricity North West is actively involved in engaging with our stakeholders and supporting our vulnerable consumers. The initiatives described in this section demonstrate just some of the many ways that this culture has benefitted our communities.

NEW / HARD-TO-REACH



## Consumer Vulnerability Champions inspire behaviour change

### What we heard

**Our frontline engineers told us they care deeply about supporting consumers in vulnerable circumstances and would like help to spot unseen vulnerability and obtain expert guidance from colleagues to support with referrals.**

### What we did

We created a team of eight Consumer Vulnerability Champions (CVC) who act as a contact point between the customer welfare team and our operational colleagues. Each Champion has different focus areas including supporting energy efficiency, connections, fundraising, partnerships, PSR promotion, and colleague training. They have delivered 300 hours of training initiatives, identified new channels and partnerships to promote our PSR and overseen quarterly company-wide 'Welfare – What's happening' communications.

Recently, following a power cut in Middleton an engineer contacted a CVC to express concern about an elderly lady that he had spoken to during

his investigations. It was apparent that this lady was living alone and appeared to have blood on her face. The engineer felt that there were potential safeguarding issues, so we instructed one of our trusted partners to visit her at home on the same day to offer appropriate tailored support.

### Outcome

Colleagues are now more alert to and better able to identify consumer vulnerability. This has increased confidence to mitigate its causes or alleviate its symptoms through available support services. This year the proportion of energy efficiency referrals made to our partner Energy Saving Trust increased by 32% as a direct result of the CV Champions' efforts.

### Clare Hynes, CV Champion, said:

**"I speak to customers living in fuel poverty daily. I believe we have a social obligation to support our customers always, not just when they are involved in a power cut. My role has empowered me to make a real difference and knowing that my actions are having such a positive effect makes me feel proud."**



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## Contact Centre Ninjas influence outstanding PSR call quality

### What we heard

**Our communication preferences research tells us that 75% of our vulnerable customers prefer to report a power cut on the phone. During one of five Call North West skills training forums which we hosted, a best practise network for call centres in the region to benchmark performance across service industries (not just utilities), we heard that learning from call agent peers has a positive outcome on delivering exemplary call handling performance.**

### What we did

We created a development opportunity for frontline call advisors to join a new 'ninja' transformation group. The Ninja group is made up of six colleagues from different teams across the Contact Centre who are tasked with analysing the root causes of customer dissatisfaction, showcasing best practice, mentoring colleagues, and developing incentives to positively change behaviour. The ninjas launched an incentive on PSR call quality scores drawing on data collected through real-time feedback from customers, Ofgem's Broad Measure of Customer Satisfaction survey, and internal monitoring. Agents were rewarded with points for exemplary individual performance. Seven of our agents achieved 'ninja status' by year end, all of which achieved over 90% call quality and the largest proportion of 10/10 scores from customers.

### Outcome

Our PSR call quality score has improved from 79% to 94% since the initiative was launched. A survey conducted with frontline call agents demonstrated that our Ninja group have created awareness and appreciation of their role and have been successful in developing a safe environment for colleagues to receive positive challenge and support to improve their performance to an exemplary standard.

### Ellie Duckworth, Ninja, said:

**"It has become a part of our culture to challenge and adapt quickly to improve customer satisfaction. One of the most rewarding daily tasks is called a Ninja Shout Out. This gives us the opportunity to highlight great work throughout the day as colleagues are empowered to go above and beyond for customers in vulnerable circumstances."**



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## Executive-led engagement on mental health

### What we heard

**Mental ill health is estimated to cost the UK economy £94bn a year, according to recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development figures. Policies addressing wellbeing at work can increase productivity by as much as 12%, whilst equipping colleagues with the skills to 'spot the warning signs' earlier and better support their peers and the customers they serve.**

### What we did

Recognising that we should lead by example, in March 2018 we created and communicated our vision for each individual to leave work as happy and healthy as when they arrived – if not better. This vision is implemented through our long-term wellbeing strategy, of which mental health is a core component. This drives a programme of executive-led activities which are overseen by a member of the Senior Leadership Team and supported by 50 volunteers and trained mental health champions across the business whose key areas of focus are:

1

Reduce stigma and tackle discrimination

2

Empower colleagues to maintain and improve their wellbeing

3

Intervene if we see signs of mental ill health and take steps to support and rehabilitate

This year we benchmarked our programme with organisations such as United Utilities, Manchester Airport Group, and Barclays, and talked to our colleagues about how we could improve. We heard that men in particular find it hard to talk about their mental health at work. In response we made a commitment to change how we think and act about mental health in the workplace and signed the Time to Change Pledge. This led us to increase the scale and ambition of our outputs; partnering with the charity Mind to launch a manager's toolkit, refining our people policies, and entering into a three-year strategic partnership with Mate in Mind, a registered UK charity established by Health in Construction Leadership Group, to promote a culture of positive wellbeing.

### Outcome

Colleague satisfaction reported in our Pulse Survey has increased by 4% and the volume of colleagues accessing our Occupational Health and/or Employee Assistance Programme has increased by 7%.

### Steph Haywood, Mental Health Champion, said:

**"Our goal is to ensure everyone feels comfortable talking about their mental health, without being judged. Signing the #TimeToChange pledge has allowed us to start challenging mental health stigma. Getting people talking is the first step towards meaningful change."**



Pillar: Use data to ensure we understand the vulnerability challenges of the North West

# Enhancing our understanding of the vulnerability challenges of the North West

Our data currently shows that over 32% of the population in the North West – 1.6 million people – are eligible for registration on the PSR, however, 19% are registered, resulting in a 13% gap. In this section we illustrate how we are using data to understand the drivers and types of vulnerability in our region, developing tailored services to support customers and prioritising those who are most in need.

## Key outcomes derived from our expert understanding:



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## What our data tells us

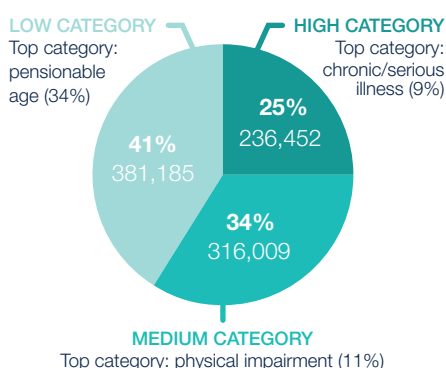
### What we heard

Extensive engagement with subject matter experts, including our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel, insights from our partners and customers in vulnerable circumstances has proven that vulnerability is complex, multi-layered and presents in many guises. It can be temporary, sporadic or permanent in nature and can be caused or exacerbated by our activities such as supply interruptions. It's a fluid state that needs a flexible and tailored response, based on an understanding of customer's needs. Not all vulnerable customers' needs are equal, so we should prioritise our efforts on a risk basis.

### What we did

We conduct an annual review of our PSR data to understand trends in our current membership. This helped us to identify different customer segments and the types of support needed, which informed the development of services to meet these changing needs. We've used 29 Ofgem vulnerability needs codes and applied our understanding of the circumstances associated with each code to classify its severity as low, medium or high. We've then tailored services to meet the needs of customers that have a condition or circumstance that requires us to manage or communicate with them differently during a power cut. The profile of our current membership is summarised below:

### Volume of 933,617 PSR customers by vulnerability severity



Our risk-based approach to grading vulnerability is informed by the impact of a power cut on a customer living with a condition or circumstance which is informed through in-depth qualitative research. We use it to inform our prioritisation of customers for tailored communication and support and the partnerships we have in place to deliver services. We've developed and refined these services in consultation with our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel and primary research with our PSR members.

Tailored service provided to vulnerable customers - exceeding Ofgem's requirements	High category	Medium category	Low category
Frequency of proactive contact to refresh PSR data	100% annually	1/3 annually	1/3 annually
Written advance notification of planned works	✓	✓	✓
Proactive calls 6 days and 1 day ahead of planned works	✓	✓	
Reminder SMS 1 day ahead of planned works	✓	✓	✓
Proactive updates during an unplanned power cut	Called	SMS	SMS
Proactive adverse weather alerts	✓		

### Outcome

We continuously measure PSR customers' overall satisfaction with our tailored services (see table above) across all contact types; planned and unplanned supply interruptions and general enquiries. This year, the 907 customers who responded have scored us 89% on average, of which 60% couldn't fault us with a 10/10 score.

### A PSR customer said:

"Electricity North West is the first utility to truly understand my chronic illness and restricted mobility, especially when I'm without power at night. They helped me realise that I can use my stair lift during a power cut via a manual mode and spoke to my daughter to ensure I was safe with frequent and reassuring communication."

### Continual learning

This year we benchmarked our prioritisation with United Utilities and shared the learning with our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel as part of an ongoing feedback loop. The panel accepted that the codes already ranked as high priority were legitimately categorised as they all involved a dependency on electricity for medical equipment. However, they called for some medium and low category codes, such as dementia and water dependency, to be regraded upwards. In response we've initiated a wider stakeholder review of our prioritisation so that any changes are informed by an in-depth and nuanced perspective of the needs of vulnerable customers who are impacted by our activities.



## New ways to reach and maintain a 10/10 service

### What we heard

Through our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel we understand that anyone can become vulnerable yet many people in challenging situations would not consider themselves 'vulnerable'. Nevertheless, customers in vulnerable circumstances have different communication needs.

### What we did

We conducted qualitative and quantitative research with a range of customers, including those on our PSR, to understand how we should best talk to them about known and unknown vulnerability in their households and how we should approach conversations about the nature of vulnerability. We also sought feedback about the impact of power cuts on these customers, and what support would best help them. In response to these insights we enhanced our training and the call quality guidelines that we use to assess our contact centre colleagues and introduced a new mechanism for monitoring performance in real time. This is an innovative mechanism for using customer feedback to ensure customers are being offered additional support and consistently tracking call quality at an individual level.

In response to understanding our customers' accessibility needs we launched cloud-based web accessibility solution 'Recite Me' to our website. This has been accessed 10,868 times since 1st December, with usage peaking during Storm Ciara where interactions reached 1,200 against a daily average of 175. Recite Me has been used primarily for text to speech functionality (80%), a translation tool with over 100 languages (11%) and styling such as increased font size (7%). Based on customer insight we also commissioned the development of an artificial intelligence 'chatbot' window. This is initially being added to three key pages: Who is my supplier? Is there a power cut? and Reporting a power cut. This channel is a convenient way for our customers to obtain essential information and resolve problems quickly. It is also easier to use for those who have a hearing impairment or prefer to articulate themselves in writing.

### Outcome

PSR customers gave us a call quality sentiment score of 94%. Our inclusive service has enabled 3,601 different customers with cognitive impairment or different needs to communicate more effectively with us.

**Ella Stafford, Customer Experience Manager, said:**

"Customer insight has significantly increased our performance. Our agents are more confident talking to customers about the nature of their vulnerability and more adaptable and empowered to go the extra mile – the key ingredients customers tell us are needed for a 10/10 call."



## Targeted interventions using social data mapping

### What we heard

Our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel were concerned that our approach to understanding vulnerability was too dependent on our own PSR data.

### What we did

As reported in Part One, page five we widened the scope of our triangulation this year by using social mapping data and intelligence shared by our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel to inform a set of criteria that we used to map the key causes of vulnerability.

We ranked all 34 Local Authorities (LAs) within our region according to the prevalence of this criteria and then overlaid PSR membership to estimate the gap between known membership and total eligibility in each locality (the 'PSR gap'). Blackpool had a high prevalence of vulnerability relative to other localities and a relatively large PSR gap:

### Blackpool vs other Local Authorities

Low income	6/34
Fuel poverty	3/34
Over 65	19/34
Physical disability	2/34
Power cut incidence	30 per 100 households
PSR gap	48%

### In response we:

- ✓ Funded a partnership with Cosy Homes in Lancashire to promote the PSR, carry out energy efficiency assessments, and issue grant funding to fuel poor customers
- ✓ Provided knowledge and tools such as iPads to colleagues at Lancashire and Blackpool Borough Council to register eligible vulnerable customers onto the PSR
- ✓ Joined the Blackpool Business Leadership Group and Fylde Responsible Business Network to engage with businesses across Blackpool to highlight the support available via our Business PSR
- ✓ Shared our data with partners such as Age Concern Central Lancashire. This influenced their expansion into the Fylde coast and the opening of a new store through which they promote our PSR.

### Outcome

Our targeted approach has had a transformative effect in Blackpool where 36,448 customers have registered for the PSR, decreasing the PSR gap from 48% to 33%. Blackpool now has the smallest gap out of all 34 Local Authorities demonstrating our success in saturating the area with access to the support needed to alleviate key causes of vulnerability. This represents a socio-economic benefit of £680,397 – a multiplier of x10 for every £1 invested.

### Continual learning

Not every person eligible for the PSR will want to take it up – making an ongoing 'gap' likely. We have set a target of 60% of eligible customers being registered to the PSR, a similar take-up level to the NHS winter flu jab. The success of our targeted approach in Blackpool means that we are now actively deploying the same approach in other localities which rank highly for the prevalence of vulnerability.

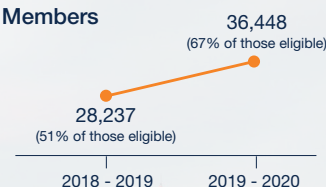
### Blackpool

2020 population estimate **139,305**

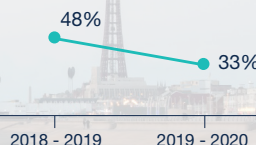
2020 population eligible **54,545**



### PSR Members



### PSR Gap



Pillar: Continuously improve and refresh customer contact data through accessible channels

# Continuously improving and refreshing our data

In this section we highlight a range of innovative and targeted initiatives that have enabled us to grow our PSR membership to a total of 933,617 customers whilst simultaneously maintaining the quality of the existing data.

Acquired

88,905

new PSR customers (net)

Proactively contacted  
and checked details

597,671

'One-stop  
shop'  
registration service

95,271

PSR leaflets shared  
by our partners

1st DNO

to invest in  
virtual workers



ENHANCED



## Driving industry-wide change in PSR data collection

### What we heard

Following the overwhelming success of our industry leading PSR data-sharing trial with United Utilities, the North West's water and wastewater provider, Ofgem and Ofwat encouraged an industry roll-out of our best practice approach. During our subsequent collaboration with other utilities companies, it has become apparent that many are collecting information on a 'household' rather than on an 'individual' which prevents tailored support being provided to vulnerable customers during a power cut, based on their individual needs.

Jo Crinson, Customer  
and Community Manager, explains:



"An individual with dementia, for example, may be happy for their spouse to receive advice and make decisions on their behalf. However, a student with mental health challenges, living in a shared house may want us to be aware of their condition, so we can support them, but will not want other people in the house to have access to such personal and sensitive information."

Data Protection Officers (DPO) Forum, bringing together utility companies' data protection leads. The new forum supports cross-industry initiatives to ensure that due consideration is given to protecting individuals' personal and sensitive data whilst also working to remove barriers which enable companies to provide enhanced support to customers who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances.

### Outcome

We are aiming for industry-wide change. Our best practice approach prevents the misuse of personal data which can cause financial and emotional harm to individuals and enables the provision of tailored support. We continue to develop and raise additional change requests to adapt and improve industry codes in this regard.

### What we did

We have engaged widely to inform the industry about the benefits to vulnerable customers of collecting individual PSR data and our view that it supports the key principles of the General Data Protection Regulation.

To standardise approaches, we submitted a formal Master Registration Agreement 'Issue Form' to the Issue Resolution Expert Group advocating the collection of PSR data on an individual basis. In parallel we investigated the creation of and lead the

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## Improving existing PSR data through proactive communication

### What we heard

Our PSR customers expect regular contact and providing this improves ratings of trust and overall satisfaction with our services. Our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel (see Part One, page four), challenged us to contact all our high vulnerability Priority Service Register customers and a third of our medium/low vulnerability customers annually.

Mr Cheeseman, a PSR customer, by letter:

"Whilst my wife was alive your PSR scheme was essential and gave both of us peace of mind. I think it is great that you are keeping your systems up to date and focusing help where it is needed most."

-90,504

Total PSR customers removed  
through proactive calls

51%

More than  
last year

### What we did

As part of our business plan commitment to keep an up-to-date and accurate PSR we have enhanced the data we already hold through:

1

#### Proactive calls to PSR customers

We've proactively contacted 597,671 customers this year, which is 186,942 above our target. A benefit of these contacts is that we can check the information we hold is still relevant and appropriate, and that customers are still comfortable with us holding this information about them. This allows us to remove individuals where there is no longer a need to be on the register. We have removed 90,504 dormant customers from the register, in line with our policy, when we've received no response after three attempts to contact them through their preferred method of communication.

2

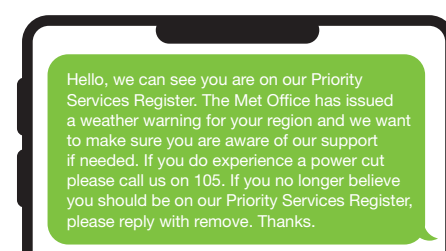
#### Making proactive weather alert contacts count

### What we heard

Our research shows that PSR customers value receiving advance notification of adverse weather in their locality so that they can take steps to protect themselves from the risk of harm, and so they know how to get in touch with us.

### What we did

This year we sent 113,725 SMS weather alerts to high priority customers on our PSR as part of our embedded approach to preparing for storms such as Ciara, Dennis and Jorge.



ENHANCED

Further strengthening our cross-utility engagement this year we have issued joint storm communications with United Utilities, updating our website so that customers could access information about their water and electricity supplies. We also shared this information with our partners who communicated important messaging through their own channels to improve our reach. In addition to building resilience in advance of and during adverse weather conditions, these contacts provide an opportunity to cleanse our data by allowing customers to notify us of their changed circumstances and wish to no longer be included on the PSR.

-1,570

Total PSR customers removed  
through proactive SMS

New  
this  
year

EMBEDDED



## Enabling a one-stop shop for customers

### What we heard

Customers want us to improve how comprehensively our PSR represents the communities we serve and to make it easy to join through a 'one-stop shop' PSR registration service across utilities.

### What we did

We continued to use our embedded 'behind the scenes' processes that ensure customers only have to register once through three ongoing data sharing agreements:

#### 1 Two-way data share with energy suppliers

A significant number of our new PSR customer records come from energy suppliers. Suppliers process registrations when acquiring new customers and pass on the relevant data.

**+241,774**

Net change in number of Priority Service Register customers

**13%**

less than last year

#### 2 Two-way data share with United Utilities

We've embedded a single sign-up process to the PSR for customers in the North West with United Utilities, the region's water and wastewater provider.

**+7,938**

Net change in number of Priority Service Register customers

**297%**

More than last year

#### 3 Data received from Cadent

Technical constraints prevent Cadent, the Gas Distribution Network Operator in our region, from participating in a two-way data flow, however, we receive data from them which then enters the wider sharing loop.

**+453**

Net change in number of Priority Service Register customers

**New this year**

#### Outcome

**+250,165**

Total PSR customers added through data sharing

## Making every customer contact count

### What we heard

When we or our partners undertake our normal activities, we should make every contact with vulnerable customers count by raising awareness of the PSR and the range and scale of support available.

### What we did

We've harnessed existing inbound and outbound customer communication touch-points and the combined reach of our partnership framework to promote the PSR:

**Inbound:** We've embedded our 'We're Switched On' approach to call handling in our customer contact centre. This means that as part of every call we tell customers about the PSR and we ask whether anyone in their household, or anyone they know, would benefit from this service. 65 hours of specialist training from expert partners, such as that provided by Dementia Friends has been given to all our customer contact centre agents to give them the skills and confidence to conduct what can initially feel like a difficult conversation. As a result of this year's activity, we've added 25,813 customers to our PSR and updated 45,318 contacts.

**Outbound:** This year we proactively sought opportunities with our operational colleagues to promote our PSR. In Part Two, page five we described our notable success in engaging and building trust with residents of multi-occupancy buildings. As part of our tower block refurbishment programme, our welfare team maintained a visible presence on site and registered 305 vulnerable customers through being in the right place at the right time.

**ENHANCED Partnership:** Our partners issued a total of 95,217 PSR leaflets to eligible customers and promoted our services through housing associations, Job Centre Plus, doctors' surgeries, pharmacies, charity shops, council tax bills, food bank parcels, nurseries, day care centres, cafés, and local community events. PSR eligibility was also tested in market research interviews with customers and information provided to those who gave their explicit consent to be re-contacted.

When customers register for the PSR we ask them how they heard about the service. Our data validated 14,627 referrals from our partners' promotional campaigns (15% conversion rate). In addition to distributing PSR leaflets we expanded our partners' role by encouraging them to promote the PSR through their own media channels. In doing so we reached an additional 132,245 customers at no additional cost to consumers.

Partner	Channel	Area	Reach
Kashmir Youth Project	Roch Valley Radio awareness campaign	Oldham	8,746
Advocacy Focus	Newsletter and social media campaign	Blackburn	63,580
Eden Warm Homes	Media coverage of launch event	Eden	3,379
Carlisle Homelife	Article and social media campaign	Carlisle	56,540

#### Outcome

**+40,745**

Total PSR customers added through making every contact count

**85%**

more than last year



NEW



## Cleansing our data 24/7 with virtual workers

Duplicates caused by data sharing processes reduce the quality of the data we hold. In the NIA-funded Project Avatar, research highlighted customers' support for investment in innovative technology such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve the services we provide.

### What we did

Informed by this learning a trial to test the viability of AI was funded under Project Avatar. We collaborated with Codebase8 to introduce two virtual workers ('bots') that follow a set of rules to detect and deactivate duplicate PSR data and retain the most up-to-date contact in our database. This technology has been trialled and embedded in our welfare process. Analysis has shown that currently, the bots take an average of five minutes to process each property, compared to two minutes spent by our highly experienced welfare advisors. However, the bots operate 24 hours day, 365 days a year. Our virtual workers significantly decrease the

amount of manual, repetitive, and time-consuming data processing activity undertaken by our welfare advisors, releasing capacity for them to provide more support to our priority customers during power cuts.

#### Outcome

The virtual workers are expected to deliver a 210% efficiency gain over a one-year period and a socio-economic benefit of £232,181 based on efficiency alone – a multiplier of x4 for every £1 invested.

#### Continual learning

This new technology is subject to ongoing refinement and we anticipate greater efficiencies year on year.

#### Outcome from continuously improving and refreshing our data

In total we acquired 88,905 new PSR customers this year by continuously improving and refreshing customer contact data. We have calculated the social benefit of adding customers to the PSR as £83 per person, equating to £7.4m in total this year, a multiplier of x17 for every £1 invested. This is informed by the likelihood of customers experiencing a supply interruption and the benefit of accessing tailored support, as described on page three. The benefit includes but is not limited to avoided distress, primary healthcare appointments and improved resilience.

Pillar: Manage trusted services that deliver tailored support to our Priority Services Register customers

# Delivering joined-up services with trusted partners

In Part One, page five we reported the addition of 42 partners to our framework this year. In this section we illustrate how we have used a targeted approach to identify new partners who are closest to and trusted by our vulnerable customers, and brought partners together to scale the benefits and impact of our outcomes.

21

partnerships with support agency specialists

2,028

affordable warmth referrals

Befriending scheme scaled to support

583

isolated customers

'Utilities Together'

created to deliver joined-up services

400,000

co-branded prescription bags

EMBEDDED / HARD-TO-REACH



## Targeting more support through our partnership network

### What we heard

The 2018/19 Stakeholder Engagement (and Consumer Vulnerability) Incentives Panel Report praised our use of partnerships but concluded that these didn't appear to be the result of targeted engagement.

### What we did

This year we increased investment into our Consumer Vulnerability Fund to approximately £200,000, indicative of our ambition to scale the social benefit of our activities. We mapped geographical support agencies serving our communities by vulnerability and targeted investment at partners whose activities were concentrated in areas highlighted by our social data mapping tool as having the greatest need defined as:

Low income

Power cut incidence

Fuel poverty

Physical disability

Over 65

PSR gap

### Outcome

This year 80% of our partnership investment was allocated to priority Local Authority areas, identified by our social mapping data as having the highest prevalence of vulnerability. These areas were highly concentrated in Lancashire as follows:

#### Priority areas

Blackburn and Darwen, Blackpool, Burnley, Hyndburn, Oldham, Pendle, Preston, Rochdale and Salford.

This targeted approach has helped us to successfully reduce the PSR gap in our membership by an average of 15% this year, across all nine priority areas.

The multifaceted nature of consumer vulnerability is revealed in the following case studies, where targeted initiatives have been focussed towards regions which have a relatively high incidence of two or more of our prioritised criteria.

EMBEDDED / HARD-TO-REACH



## Alleviating cold homes in Lancashire and Cumbria

### What we heard

Local councils in England have seen an average cut to their budgets of almost 26% since 2010 and in the north of England, real-term housing spend has fallen by 84% in the same period, compared with 43% in the rest of the country. The government's Energy Company Obligation scheme often requires customers to make a financial contribution towards measures that will help to alleviate cold homes. This prevents many vulnerable customers from accessing the support that they need.

### What we did

We partnered with Eden Warm Homes, Cumbria Action for Sustainability, Carlisle Homelife and Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL) on two projects which offered vulnerable customers access to energy efficiency advice, free first-time central heating, and grants to insulate or upgrade the heating system in their homes regardless of their privately owned or rented status.

Partner	Type	Investment	Priority Local Authority areas reached
Eden Warm Homes	Referral	£8,000	Eden

**Outputs delivered:** A single point of contact service providing energy efficiency advice, benefit entitlement reviews and measures such as draught proofing. 640 leaflets were delivered, and in response, 52 home visits and 4 ECO Flex funding declarations signed. 26,939 PSR leaflets were also delivered.

CHiL	Referral	£31,250	Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Hyndburn, Pendle and Preston
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**Outputs delivered:** 2,028 vulnerable customers provided with access to affordable warmth and 305 signed-up to the PSR. 694 customers signposted to other organisations, the foremost being United Utilities, Health through Warmth, Turn2Us, and Citizens Advice.

### Outcome

Our interventions have improved the health and well-being of customers by helping to heat and insulate their homes, reducing bills and connecting them to tailored support, delivering a combined socio-economic benefit of £379,266 – a multiplier of x10 for every £1 invested.

NEW / HARD-TO-REACH



## Ending social isolation with companionship

### What we heard

There are an estimated 35,000 people aged 65 years and over who are chronically lonely and isolated in Lancashire. Loneliness can have a major adverse impact on mental and physical health resulting in costs to individuals, their families and society.

### What we did

We funded volunteer befrienders who were matched and made regular contact with lonely or isolated people.

Partner	Type	Investment	Priority Local Authority areas reached
Age Concern	Expert	£7,500	Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Preston, and Burnley
Advocacy Focus	Referral	£40,132	Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Preston, Rochdale
Homelife Carlisle	Referral	£40,330	Carlisle

**Outputs delivered:** In total 110 befriending volunteers reaching a total of 583 people.

### Outcome

Our befriending schemes improved participants quality of life through continued or increased independent living, maintenance of and improved physical and mental health and reduced need for acute health and care support, such as fewer GP appointments. Reduced loneliness, improved self-esteem, support and well-being delivered a total socio-economic benefit of £415,096 – a multiplier of x5 for every £1 invested.

### Continual learning

We've instigated and reached an agreement to co-fund a Mobile Advice Centre (MAC) with Cadent and United Utilities which will enable Age Concern to support 35,000 lonely, isolated and vulnerable older people by providing an outreach service across a variety of hard-to-reach communities in Lancashire.

Pillar: Build and maintain a resilient network across the North West supporting vulnerable communities

# Building and maintaining a resilient network

In Part Two, page four we set out how we have mitigated the impact of power cuts through measures such as accurate updates, a refreshed generator provision policy and enhanced food provision through our new partnership with Just Eat and Deliveroo. In this section we have set out initiatives that demonstrate how we are protecting vulnerable customers by adapting our network to ensure it is resilient to physical, virtual and weather-related threats and how we are empowering our business community with the business continuity knowledge and support they have requested.

Leading the industry with a new  
**RIIO-ED2**  
investment model

Smart Street reduces bills by up to  
**£60**

Trust improved  
with 2/3 of businesses who sign up to PSR

**32%**  
of businesses on the PSR act to improve their resilience

Intervened to achieve an  
**82%**  
reduction in worst-served customers

## ★ ENHANCED

### Enabling smarter network investment decisions

#### What we heard

Our NIA-funded research demonstrated that the Value of Lost Load (VoLL), an assessment of the value that electricity consumers attribute to the security of their supply, has increased significantly since Ofgem set the single value, which underpins the regulatory matrices for RIIO-ED1. This is due to greater dependency on electricity and changing customer needs and expectations. The existing single VoLL is aggregated across all customer groups to provide a price signal which is used to determine how much money should be spent to deliver the requisite level of reliability. Our study concluded that a uniform VoLL significantly undervalues the needs of specific customers (notably the fuel poor, vulnerable, and early adopters of low carbon technologies) whilst others are over represented, driving potentially inefficient investments.

Customer segment	Fuel poor	Electric vehicle owner	Rural	Low income
% VoLL variation vs. average domestic customer	<b>+85%</b>	<b>+25%</b>	<b>+20%</b>	<b>+15%</b>

#### What we did

This year we actively engaged with Ofgem and every other DNO, leading an industry consultation to explore the practicalities of implementing a disaggregated investment model in RIIO-ED2. A key output of our engagement is a proposed segmentation model where VoLL is calculated for a defined region by applying a weighted combination of values that represent the customer characteristics in that area. This model could be used by all DNOs without the need for new data flows. We also surveyed 2,000 customers to understand their perceptions about the fairness of replacing the static model with a variable VoLL.

#### Outcome

If Ofgem accepts our proposal that VoLL is integrated into the Cost Benefit Analysis model for RIIO-ED2, equitable Distribution Use of System (DUoS) charges will be maintained. However, application of VoLL will enable DNOs to make smarter investment decisions that are more reflective of divergent customer needs, which prioritise resilience strategies in localities where they will deliver the greatest societal and financial benefit.

## ★ EMBEDDED / HARD-TO-REACH

### Ground-breaking 'Smart Street' cuts bills

Smart Street, a Low Carbon Networks funded innovation project, was endorsed by our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel on the basis that this intelligent voltage optimisation technique has been proven to enable our networks and customers' appliances to perform more efficiently and reduce customer energy consumption by up to 8%.

#### What we did

This year we successfully bid for an adjustment to the price control under the RIIO-ED1 Innovation Rollout Mechanism (IRM). The funding will enable 180 Smart Street installations which will provide long term value to approximately 64,000 customers. We engaged Citizens Advice and used their anonymised local area level data, in conjunction with our social data mapping tool to guide our site selection. This targeted approach means that interventions will include areas of high fuel poverty so that energy savings are obtained by those who will benefit the most.

#### Outcome

Smart Street will alleviate fuel poverty by reducing energy bills by up to £60 per year, without customers having to take any action. In addition, the wider carbon saving across the 180 installations is around 144,860 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. It will enable a socio-economic benefit of £18.2m during RIIO-ED1 and £37.9m inclusive of RIIO-ED2, a multiplier of x2.

## ★ EMBEDDED / HARD-TO-REACH

### First DNO to introduce a Business PSR Register

#### What we heard

Power cuts have a relatively high impact on the 590,000 businesses in our region, many of whom say they are vulnerable to significant financial, social and sometimes reputational impacts caused by reduced productivity and the ability to maintain services to end-customers.

#### What we did

We conducted a deep-dive research programme and heard that SMEs have few, if any, business continuity plans in place to mitigate the impact of a power cut. In response, we launched a free Business Priority Services Register in May 2019 for all our business customers. Working with our customers, we co-created materials and business continuity advice, including information on how to assess risk and how to procure a generator. Since its launch, 1,641 business customers have signed up to the service enabling them to access benefits including 30 days' notice of a planned power cut.

#### Outcome

67% of businesses signed up to the PSR claim it has increased their trust in us and 47% say they are more satisfied overall. Since joining 32% of businesses have sourced their own generation or enacted business continuity plans. This has delivered a total socio-economic benefit of £839,900 – a multiplier of x22 for every £1 invested.

## ★ EMBEDDED

### Making sure no one will be 'worst-served' by 2023

#### What we heard

Ofgem defines a worst-served customer (WSC) as "one who has experienced 12 or more higher-voltage unplanned interruptions over a three-year period with no less than three interruptions in any one year". Feedback from WSCs indicated relatively lower levels of trust and satisfaction with our services.

#### What we did

We identified a risk that our reactive approach to 'supporting' WSCs would fail to meet our commitment to eliminate worst-served customers

by 2023 because the mechanism only results in an improvement scheme, once a network meets the WSC definition by which time, customers have been significantly impacted. In response, we increased the frequency of WSC assessments from twice a year to quarterly and developed an agile process for proactively identifying customers at risk of becoming worst-served. We also collaborated with our special projects delivery team to complete proactive WSC interventions as quickly as possible, rather than incorporating these measures with other longer term planned works.

#### Outcome

Our investment of £1.48m has supported a marked reduction in the numbers of WSCs during the RIIO-ED1 period, falling from 1,523 in 2015/16 to 268 in 2019/20, an 82% decrease.

# Tackling fuel poverty

In this section we highlight the increased scale and success of our referral networks this year in helping to alleviate fuel poverty in areas of greatest need. Our success has been underpinned by an understanding of the significance of language in making people feel both included and valued or excluded and unwelcome. We have collaborated with expert partners to ensure that we use inclusive language and methods of communicating to break down barriers, to reach and support more fuel poor customers than ever before.

4,309

fuel poor customers supported this year (380% increase)

£975,000

Total benefit to fuel poor customers this year (293% increase)

Removal of language barriers for hard-to-reach communities

Empowering young people to inspire behaviour change

Innovative channel to target Universal Credit claimants

NEW / HARD-TO-REACH



## Eliminating language-based barriers

### What we heard

During our community and local energy events we heard that to set an inclusive tone and to help build trusting relationships with fuel poor community members, it is important to take steps to eliminate language-based barriers.

### What we did

We partnered with the Kashmir Youth Project (KYP), a trusted local community group operating in a hard-to-reach area, on a new project called Fuel Katao, Paisay Bachao (Save Fuel, Save Money). KYP identified key language barriers including limited English language literacy, and the use of technical or industry-specific terminology, jargon and acronyms.

Dr Neil Simcock of Liverpool John Moores University conducted an independent evaluation into the impact of KYP's activities, six weeks after events had taken place. 85% of participants found the information and advice provided useful.



### Outcome

A hard-to-reach community engaged with energy efficiency, energy bills decreased and social networks within the community increased. The socio-economic benefit of our activity was £87,854, based on a conservative 10% behaviour change – a multiplier of x11 for every £1 invested.

### Continual learning

This project demonstrated the importance of awareness and knowledge of our customers' cultures, diversity and behaviours. As a result, we are investing £100,000 in a partnership with One Manchester to understand the triggers, motivators and enablers that drive behaviour change to alleviate fuel poverty and how these vary by life-stage, culture, education and household income

## Improving access to energy efficiency support

### What we heard

The Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics report, which provides a comprehensive view of the latest statistical trends and analysis of fuel poverty in England, concluded that the North West has the highest prevalence of fuel poverty at 13.1% compared with an average of 10.9%.

### What we did

To better understand how customers are impacted by fuel poverty and how to increase the success of our referral network, we participated in the NEA Fuel Poverty Forum and used our social data mapping tool to identify areas with the highest prevalence of fuel poverty. As a result, we partnered with CHIL and the Energy Saving Trust to supply these areas with bespoke energy efficiency interventions, free first-time central heating, and grants to insulate or upgrade the heating system in homes regardless of their privately owned or rented status.

Partner	Type	Investment
Energy Savings Trust	Referral	£43,800

### Priority Local Authority areas reached

Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Burnley, Manchester and Pendle. Referrals were also accepted across all other parts of our region.

CHIL	Referral	£31,250
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### Priority Local Authority areas reached

Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Hyndburn, Pendle and Preston

**Outputs delivered:** 1,589 referrals including, but not limited to, heating and insulation surveys, energy behavioural change, tariff switching and the Warm Home Discount scheme.

We also engaged with the Department for Work and Pensions who gave us permission to use their Messaging Journal to issue energy efficiency advice to all Universal Credit claimants in our region.

### Outcome

We achieved a 380% increase in energy efficiency referrals across our fuel poverty projects compared to last year. The combined socio-economic benefit of our advice, heating and insulation interventions, and associated bill savings, was £856,292 – a multiplier of x11 for every £1 invested.

NEW / HARD-TO-REACH



## Empowering young people to inspire behaviour change

### What we heard

By teaching young people to be aware of how they use energy at an early age, they can become an effective voice in spreading that message to their families and the wider community and promote active behavioural change leading to a better future outcome for the energy industry and the planet.

### What we did

In addition to using our social data mapping tool to focus our ongoing 'Bright Sparks' programme at schools in our priority fuel poor areas (Part Two, page three), we partnered with Burnley Boys and Girls Club who regularly bring together 318 members aged 5-19 for sport, recreational, and art activities. Through a programme of educational workshops, its members became 'eco warriors' by developing and sharing their energy efficiency knowledge and skills.

Partner	Type	Investment	Priority Local Authority areas reached
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Burnley Boys and Girls Club	Expert	£15,000	Burnley
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**Outputs delivered:** Through learning how to reduce their own carbon footprint and giving them the confidence to engage with others, 230 eco warriors promoted key messages to the wider community. 810 leaflets distributed through the Chit Chat Café and food parcels.

### Outcome

Eco Warriors learnt new skills and the confidence to share their knowledge with the community. The socio-economic benefit of our investment was £62,941 including £800 annual bill savings for the club through the installation of LED lighting and a new energy-efficient boiler – a multiplier of x4 for every £1 invested.

# Our funded consumer vulnerability partners 2019/20

This year 80% of our partnership investment was allocated to priority Local Authority areas, identified by our social mapping data as having the highest prevalence of vulnerability



