

# CONSUMER VULNERABILITY APPROACH, INITIATIVES AND OUTCOMES

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2016/17



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# Welcome by Derek Lickorish MBE

"The change within the business over the last 12 months is clearly evident.

The innovative Make Every Contact Count approach and engagement campaign has been developed through comprehensive research and engagement with customers, stakeholders and vulnerable customers. I'm pleased to see this approach recognises that not all customers' needs are the same and supports a more personal and tailored experience, as this especially applies to vulnerable customers.

The business has worked hard to expand its understanding of vulnerability, improve and enhance their services for vulnerable customers, and engage Team Powergrid to consider vulnerability and social responsibility as part of everything Northern Powergrid do.

As chair of the Social Issues Expert Group (SIEG) since its inception in 2013, I have witnessed a real step-change in formalising and operationalising the vulnerability strategy. I congratulate Team Powergrid as the whole business embraces Make Every Contact Count, and it becomes embedded in the 'hearts and minds' of everyone - from Contact Centre colleagues, frontline technicians and engineers, through to the Executive Board.

I look forward to continuing to see the business build on the momentum created this year, and ensure they have the right strategic partnerships in place to address and support current and future vulnerabilities."



*"I'm very impressed to see Northern Powergrid has learnt from both inside and outside of the energy sector. The vulnerability model developed with Experian is profound, allowing us to target support to the areas that need it most, especially as Northern Powergrid's licence areas are shown to be the most deprived in England and Wales."*

— DEREK LICKORISH, CHAIR OF SOCIAL ISSUES EXPERT GROUP

## Our Social Issues Expert Group help us to make the right decisions for our vulnerable customers

Our strategy, approach and framework has been developed with direct input from our panel of experts.

This group meets quarterly and comprises a handpicked, multi-disciplinary team of vulnerability specialists who's role is to continually bring ideas, challenge and provide direction to shape our current and future thinking.



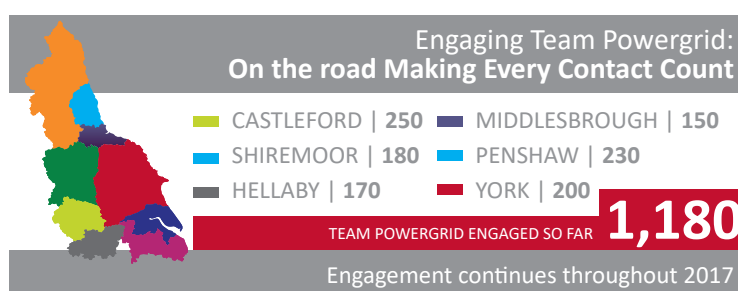
## Making Every Contact Count for vulnerable customers

Our approach brings together our cross-business strategies for Consumer Vulnerability, Stakeholder Engagement and Customer Experience. We have detailed the background to this in Part 1.

This unites the business together and gives us a clear strategy to deliver a more tailored experience for our most vulnerable and hard to reach customers. We are empowering our workforce to confidently and flexibly respond to the complex needs of our customers whilst seeing the individual beyond their vulnerability (more on Pages 2 and 3).

For our vulnerable customers this means a service that is:

- Relevant to their personal needs
- Based on solutions to real-life problems
- Provided proactively whenever possible
- Communicated simply and clearly
- Supported by partners who can give them the help they need
- Built from engaging and listening to continually improve



### Our strategy in action

*"I need help... to keep my fridge working and stop my disabled daughter from having a meltdown."*

- Low income single mother of three, with two of her children under five
- One daughter has disabilities and her routine can't be changed
- Her medication requires constant refrigeration

As a result, we have developed tailored communications to help our customers better prepare

*"I was very impressed with the number of calls I received to check I was ok, thank you to all involved."*

- Mrs. H – affected by an unplanned power cut
- Hard of hearing
  - Felt very isolated
  - On our Priority Services Register

As a result, Mrs. H received a number of calls from the Powergrid Cares team to keep her up-to-date and check that she was ok

*"I felt really looked after and didn't have to deal with lots of people."*

- Mr. T – to be affected by a planned power cut
- Severely disabled
  - Medically dependent
  - Wouldn't be able to get out of bed in the event of a power cut






As a result, our engineer, John Rhodes, organised a generator for the customer

# Our Social Pillars Framework

Our five Social Pillars, as introduced in Part 1, act as a guide to target our approach and our investments for vulnerable customers and for broader social issues.

Our core, long-standing goal has always been to help those that are, or feel, the most vulnerable at the time of a planned or unplanned power cut. The Social Pillars enable us to stay focused on this goal whilst also looking at the wider social issues affecting our customers and communities.

The Social Pillars underpin Make Every Contact Count and the vulnerability strategy, providing a framework to map and anchor our overall corporate and social responsibility activities, partnerships and initiatives, helping us to make the right decisions whilst ensuring that we have a holistic approach to our vulnerable customers and communities. This is what we are striving to achieve through our Social Pillars:

 <b>VULNERABILITY</b>	 <b>AFFORDABILITY</b>	 <b>COMMUNITY</b>	 <b>EDUCATION</b>	 <b>ENGAGEMENT</b>
We know that vulnerability is complex and for vulnerable customers, a power cut can be devastating. Our vulnerability strategy helps us to recognise, understand and respond to different vulnerabilities in a way that best supports our customers	Our customers are entitled to a warm, dry and healthy home. However, we know many suffer in cold, damp conditions that affect their wellbeing. Through our partnerships we make a real, positive impact, addressing household poverty and home energy efficiency	We operate in communities with diverse socio-economic issues. In the event of a power cut or natural disaster linking vulnerable customers to local groups and frontline agencies achieves better outcomes. As we move forward we will continue to identify and target the most vulnerable communities in each of our nine operating zones	Our education programme develops disadvantaged young people by raising their aspirations and preparing them for the world of work. It addresses skill shortages within the industry by bringing engineering to life through Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) activities, whilst keeping safety as the highest priority of our core education programme	Team Powergrid take pride in our central aim of keeping the electricity supply secure, and are highly motivated to support the customers we serve, and the communities we live in. Our partnership programmes, local delivery model and volunteering programme enables our employees to have a direct impact in those communities and directly contribute to our social objectives
<b>Vulnerability outcome:</b> Providing targeted support to our most vulnerable customers before, during and after a power cut	<b>Affordability outcome:</b> Helping customers and communities by alleviating and preventing effects of fuel poverty	<b>Community outcome:</b> Strengthening communities whilst ensuring and securing safer places to live and work	<b>Education outcome:</b> Creating a smarter and more aspirational generation for our industry and the communities we serve	<b>Engagement outcome:</b> Empowering our people to serve and engage with our customers better
<b>27.6%</b> of our households have a person with a long-term health problem or disability	<b>36.6%</b> of our households have no adults in employment	<b>60%</b> of our Community Investment Areas suffer from at least two dimensions of deprivation e.g. health and disability	<b>26%</b> of our customers aged 16+ have no qualifications	<b>2,000</b> volunteer days available to support our social objectives

## Our Consumer Vulnerability Strategy

Our Consumer Vulnerability activities are grouped into five key areas.

This ensures that each part of the organisation, and the multi-disciplinary teams that deliver our plans, have clear objectives and are supported by robust and simple reporting structures and governance.

We will go into further detail around each of these five areas in the following pages of this submission.

*"We recognise that vulnerability is complex and often co-dependent. Therefore, for any intervention to have a sustainable positive impact, we need to look at issues holistically and avoid the temptation to be superficial and not sustainable. For example, developing life skills like understanding energy bills, negotiating prepayment plans and saving on fuel bills."*

— PATRICK ERWIN, POLICY AND MARKETS DIRECTOR

### Consumer Vulnerability five step strategy

<b>1</b> EXPANDING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF VULNERABILITY	<b>2</b> IMPROVING OUR SERVICES	<b>3</b> INCREASING ACCESS TO THE HARD TO REACH	<b>4</b> DEVELOPING OUR PEOPLE	<b>5</b> DEVELOPING OUR PARTNERSHIPS
<b>OBJECTIVES:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) To continue to expand our understanding of existing vulnerability and how we identify new and emerging vulnerabilities</li> <li>2) To understand the needs of those that are temporary or transiently vulnerable</li> <li>3) To proactively identify, acquire and manage data to inform</li> <li>4) To help bring this understanding to life in a usable way in our business</li> </ol>	<b>OBJECTIVES:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) To continue to ensure that PSR registration is accessible for all</li> <li>2) To improve and target the activities that promote our PSR and additional support services</li> <li>3) To improve the experience of our vulnerable customers</li> <li>4) To proactively use data and insight to effectively target and tailor support</li> </ol>	<b>OBJECTIVES:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) To improve understanding of those that are hard to reach and the barriers that prevent engagement</li> <li>2) To raise the profile of hard to reach within Northern Powergrid and with our contractors and partners</li> <li>3) To tailor and target our activities to increase our access to the hard to reach</li> </ol>	<b>OBJECTIVES:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) To continue to raise awareness of vulnerability across all our services</li> <li>2) To equip all our people with the autonomy, tools, motivation, capacity and capability to tailor services that meet the needs of our vulnerable customers</li> </ol>	<b>OBJECTIVES:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) To identify the right partners to work with to increase our reach, improve our services and meet the needs of our vulnerable customers</li> <li>2) To develop the strength, scope and scale of existing and new partnerships</li> </ol>



# Expanding our understanding of vulnerability

Our understanding of our vulnerable customers develops through engagement and learning.

Our analysis shows that our customers suffer the highest levels of vulnerability of any other DNO in the UK. We have sought to further articulate Ofgem's definition of vulnerability to reflect this. Our overarching definition is in two parts:

1. Customers who are less able to represent themselves or their interests in the energy market (all vulnerable customers)
2. Customers who need extra support due to loss or interruption of service (Powergrid Cares - PSR customers)

These definitions have provided direction for a number of our research and analysis activities that are now shaping our services, partnerships and initiatives.

## Using data to target and tailor our support

There is a wealth of data available which we use to help us to understand the scale and complexities of vulnerability in our region. We have been using this to inform investment in our social programmes (see Pages 7-9) for the last few years. This year we've built on this approach, working with experts (Experian) to help us to navigate and understand the wealth of data available and how this can help us to improve, tailor and target our services and support.

## Our comprehensive Consumer Vulnerability data model

- Over 450 data variables analysed
- Financial, health and other social indicators incorporated
- Data is continually refreshed and analysed
- Every household on our network has a vulnerability score

Alongside the Experian data, our PSR data cleanse and geographic census data is helping us to target our support for vulnerable communities, households and individuals. Currently we are identifying vulnerable communities to target our social programmes and PSR campaigns and in 2017/18 we will be:

- Using the census data to target our PSR partnerships and promotions to reach the key groups of customers by type of vulnerability
- Using the Experian household vulnerability score to help prioritise our services, for example prioritising where our customer care vehicles are sent and where generators can be best deployed



## Understanding the behaviour of our vulnerable customers during a power cut

We conducted research across Yorkshire and the North East in rural and urban areas, ensuring a representative view. It consisted of face-to-face, in-depth interviews with 42 customers across all service lines - power cuts, connections, general enquiries - and needs codes. The outcome of the research showed that, regardless of vulnerability type, these customers had three basic and fundamental needs: **light, heat and food**.

With this in mind, they asked us to stay focused on the provision of partnerships and services aligned to these must-have needs before expanding the offer into other less essential areas.

In addition, this helped us understand how these needs change over the lifecycle of a power cut. We now know that vulnerable customers find it manageable for the first three hours, with the amount of support

required increasing incrementally over the next nine or more hours.

This insight has informed the creation of our vulnerability needs assessment, which helps our Contact Centre colleagues to target the essential help, at the right time, matched to each individual's needs during a power cut. And, we have also redesigned and launched our Powergrid Cares offer to reflect these changing needs over time.



*Fear of being alone in the dark and falling: "I thought, what am I going to do? I was petrified. I couldn't see anything."*



*Many who are limited to their home rely on warmth to keep themselves well: "I have to have the heating on because of the cold getting to my chest."*



*Carers looking after people with chronic illnesses: "I worry about getting him his food."*

Customers' needs evolve over the lifecycle of a power cut



CRITICAL NEED  
EMOTIONAL NEED  
COMFORT NEED

Is the safety of the customer affected by the power cut?

How emotionally distressing is the power cut for the customer?

How has the power cut affected the physical comfort of the customer?



Proactive contact and ongoing updates from our Powergrid Cares team



The option of a torch / glow sticks and a hot meal provided



A call from the British Red Cross, a visit from an engineer and a generator if needed



The option of alternative accommodation if required

Contact Centre colleagues assess the needs of each customer - this is an example of tailored support

## OUR SERVICE IN ACTION OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS

71% OF PSR CUSTOMERS RESTORED WITHIN 3 HOURS	86% OF PSR CUSTOMERS RESTORED WITHIN 6 HOURS
PROACTIVE CALLS 10,138	CUSTOMER SERVICE VAN 6,588 CUSTOMERS SUPPORTED
GENERATOR PROVISION 44	RED CROSS REFERRALS 35
ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION 8	PARTNER PSR REFERRALS 1,402
PSR SUPPORT KITS ISSUED 62	

# Powergrid Cares - improving our priority services

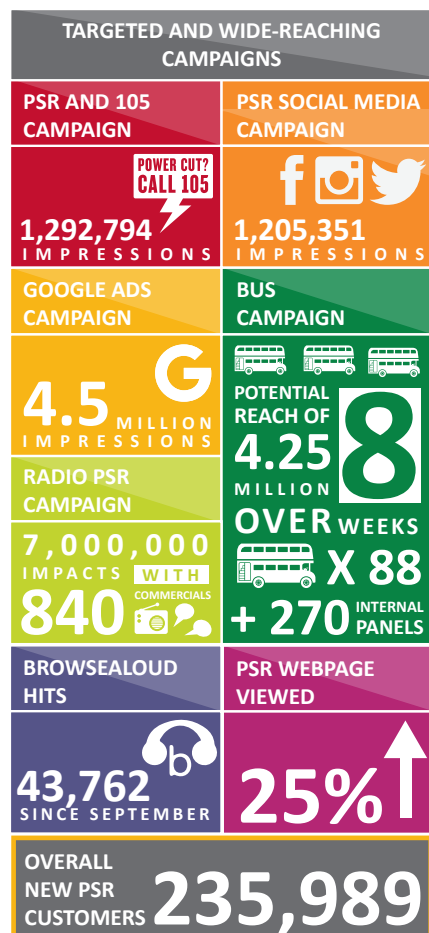
We continually strive to enhance and improve the services we provide for our Powergrid Cares, Priority Services Register (PSR) customers.

Insight gained through in-depth engagement and research with over 1,500 existing PSR customers across all vulnerabilities has helped us start delivering an individualised and tailored approach for our vulnerable customers.

*"We have engaged with all suppliers and are now providing an urgent metering service for vulnerable customers. This service ensures that where possible our customers are supported if they have a metering issue."*

— HARVEY JONES, HEAD OF SMART METERING

## Our Powergrid Cares highlights of the year



### ► OUTCOMES

#### OUR CUSTOMERS SAID, THEY LIKED OUR...

- Notification and reminder processes
- Dedicated Powergrid Cares hotline bypassing the Interactive Voice Response system (IVR)
- Planned power cut update process
- Proactive unplanned power cut calls / texts

#### OUR CUSTOMERS SAID, "ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL", SO WE...

- Launched new Powergrid Cares section on our website, with tailored support for key groups of vulnerable customers
- Widened the range of tailored support services we offer, responding to the complex needs of customers
- Provided essential support and self-help guidance, enabling our customers to effectively prepare for a power cut
- Ensured that, on PSR enrolment, customers automatically receive tailored resources relevant to their particular needs. These have been tested through focus groups to ensure they are fit for purpose

#### OUR CUSTOMERS SAID, "IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY TO SIGN UP/I'M NOT ALWAYS ABLE TO SIGN UP", SO WE...

- Created an 'account free' sign-up where customers can register through all channels without having to open an account
- Made it easier for concerned family members or friends to make registrations on behalf of others, e.g. via web or easy to share perforated cards

#### OUR CUSTOMERS SAID, "KEEP IT SIMPLE AND EASY FOR ME TO UNDERSTAND", SO WE...

- Reviewed our communications to produce eight tailored packages to meet the needs of key groups of vulnerable customers
- Relaunched our main site webpages, enabling a more accessible and user-friendly experience, including BrowseAload in multiple languages, audio speech and large text to address all communication needs
- Reviewed all customer-facing resources through our Tone of Voice project, particularly those ones targeted towards vulnerable customers – now all tested using the FLESCH-Kincaid readability scale to ensure ease of understanding – 150+ communication materials rewritten
- Extended free 0800 phone lines to coincide with the launch of 105 across all of our service areas
- Rebranded services for vulnerable customers as Powergrid Cares to aid recognition and clarity

#### OUR CUSTOMERS SAID, "I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE OR WHAT HELP I CAN ACCESS", SO WE...

- Launched our Hidden Heroes campaign to raise awareness and drive PSR sign-up
- Expanded our wide-reaching PSR marketing activities to focus on our Community Investment Areas
- Rebranded all urban zone customer support vehicles to improve access and visibility for vulnerable customers
- Initiated new, and strengthened existing, referral partnerships with Northern Gas Networks, National Grid, Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Partnership Trusts, Community Link and Baywater Healthcare

## Building a comprehensive picture – enhancing our PSR data and its use

Last year we addressed the issue of historic data and poor customer data quality to enable us to better target our resources to those customers who need an enhanced level of customer service support.

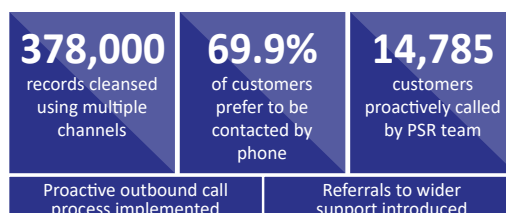
Our team embraced the challenge, and using multiple methods (letter, email, phone and text messaging) to make sure we successfully reached our customers and updated their records. We took this opportunity to inform them about the enhanced support available and offer referrals to wider support networks. Having contacted nearly **400,000** customers, we are pleased to say the data cleanse programme is moving into a further phase to support our enduring model. This will ensure we contact our priority services customers at least every two years.

We have established a team of PSR coordinators to undertake proactive outbound customer calls, with a letter being sent to those customers we have been unable to contact despite several attempts. This helps us to:

- Keep our promise to contact PSR customers at least once every two years as set out in our Business Plan – through their preferred channel: **69.9%** phone call, **24.7%** letter, **5.7%** sms / email
- Tailor the contact to the customer and their individual needs
- Update the customer's contact details including email address, and alternative means of contact
- Explore if other services are appropriate e.g. 'knock and wait', a password facility and signposting for customers who require additional support from trusted partner organisations

As the awareness of the PSR increases through campaigns, promotions and partnerships, we are seeing the number of new registrations gain momentum. With **235,989** people signed up over the last 12 months, this approach to robust data management has become a core business function.

Our Consumer Vulnerability model (Page 3) has provided us with a vulnerability score for each household. This has given us an improved understanding about the needs of our customers like never before. We will be looking at how we can align this data to our priority service and wider customer data to ensure that we have a holistic picture that informs how we can best deploy our support to those that need it the most.



# Increasing access to the hard to reach

We define hard to reach as groups of people who are less able to represent their own interests, experience significant barriers to engaging with us or choose to stay hidden.

The industry needs codes clearly set out vulnerable groups who, by the nature of their vulnerability, can often be hard to reach. Our Social Pillars (see Page 2) incorporate and build on these needs codes to ensure we have identified our wider groups of hard to reach customers. This wider model recognises that vulnerability is ever changing in society and for individuals, and allows us to be flexible in responding to these needs, now and in the future.






From our engagement through research, our Social Issues Expert Group, third sector partnerships and direct feedback from vulnerable customers, we know that:

- We are not always best placed to identify or offer direct support to hard to reach customers
- There is no one size fits all model for how we communicate and engage with these groups and customers
- We need to be proactive and innovative, making it as easy as possible for these hard to reach groups to engage with us

As a result, we take different approaches to identifying, reaching, engaging and supporting the hard to reach dependent on their particular needs and the outcome we are trying to achieve. The key approaches are:

**1. Working with third sector organisations who already have relationships or are seen as trusted channels within hard to reach communities to offer enhanced services and support, for example:**

**Supporting young people in our communities**  
We have partnered with the Children's Society who proactively engage young people, aged

SOCIAL PILLARS	TYPE / CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES OF OUR SUPPORT AND PARTNERSHIPS
<b>VULNERABILITY</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental wellbeing</li> <li>• Reduced mobility</li> <li>• Temporary vulnerability (e.g. recovering from a life changing event)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oxygen providers – Baywater Healthcare / BOC / Air Liquide</li> <li>• Red Cross partnership</li> </ul>
<b>AFFORDABILITY</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship status</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Fuel poor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relate referral partnership</li> <li>• Trussell Trust partnership and fund</li> <li>• Citizens Advice funded advisors</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNITY</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural areas</li> <li>• Multicultural communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PSR awareness campaigns</li> <li>• Infrastructure North Community Week</li> </ul>
<b>EDUCATION</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not in education or training</li> <li>• Care leavers</li> <li>• Young careers</li> <li>• Girls in STEM sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy Heroes schools programme</li> <li>• Ahead partnership STEM and skills programmes</li> </ul>
<b>ENGAGEMENT</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hearing and site impaired</li> <li>• Limited access to digital resources</li> <li>• No phone/broadband availability</li> <li>• English not the first language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BrowseAloud functionality on website</li> <li>• Local third sector partners</li> <li>• Language line available</li> </ul>

10-18, with the aim of addressing complex personal and social barriers that limit life chances, and help them progress to readiness for work. These young people are often hard to reach and experience multiple-disadvantages resulting in repeat offending, going missing from home, sexual exploitation and leaving care. All 43 young people involved in the project to date face specific issues like poverty, lack of education and adolescent neglect, and through this activity are seeing significant positive outcomes (more detail on Page 8).

**2. Working with trusted partners and hard to reach communities to understand how we can best communicate key messages, raise awareness and signpost further support, for example:**

## Defining an inclusive digital experience

As part of a major review into our customers' digital experience, we worked with a development partner to engage a number of our rural communities in remote and hard to reach areas to understand their specific needs during a power cut. Through drop-in sessions at community based events, they engaged and listened to potentially vulnerable customers in their own relaxed environment, for example a coffee morning at the Community Centre in

Arkendale or an over 60s lecture in Lothersdale (216 face-to-face interviews and 150 surveys). This targeted learning forms the bedrock of an enhanced digital experience that we will be launching next year and which has already started with the new Powergrid Cares area of our website.

**3. Proactively going out ourselves to communities to share information and provide support. We are equipping our colleagues to be able to do this, for example:**

## Making Every Contact Count in our Community Investment Areas

We have been engaging with the communities that we have identified as being most vulnerable across each of our nine zones. Using our vulnerability data, we targeted communities in Doncaster, Gateshead, Hull, Barnsley, Grimsby and Leeds, holding roadshow events aimed at educating the communities about who we are, what we do, how they can contact us and promoting our PSR offer. We also used these events to learn more about how best to serve our hard to reach customers. During this period we directly contacted 15,500 vulnerable customers to launch our new Powergrid Cares campaign to the community.

## Vulnerability insights

A real benefit to working with specialist partners to identify, engage and support the hard to reach is the insight they can give us to specific and emerging vulnerabilities. Some examples of this over the last year include:

### ► INSIGHTS

**Hard of Hearing:** We have always been aware that deafness is a key vulnerability that requires tailored support but through our work with Action For Hearing Loss we are fully aware of how widespread 'Hard of Hearing' vulnerability is.

**Family breakdown as a result of financial hardship:** Groundwork Green Doctors identified and highlighted that they were encountering increasing incidences of family breakdown as a result of financial hardship. The impact of living in debt or struggling to make ends meet has a significant impact on families and individuals in terms of emotional stress, lack of coping mechanisms and impacting physical health. Related to this, Green Doctor also identified single / divorced men as an emerging vulnerable group.

### ► OUTCOMES

Our Louder than Words™ assurance and accreditation has assured us that we are taking the right approach to supporting this vulnerable group but that we can strengthen this through additional training for our colleagues.

From this we identified that the wellbeing of individuals needed to be considered to ensure our programmes are sustainable in tackling the root cause of fuel poverty. We are currently scoping a piece of work with Relate, who can provide the necessary relationship counselling to families, carers and young people. Relate would provide training to our Green Doctor partners and staff to help them have positive conversations with vulnerable consumers, enabling them to identify whether there is any risk, and signposting and referring them to the Green Doctor project.

# Developing our people and contractors

We are dedicated to ensuring that all our employees are well equipped to recognise and deal with Consumer Vulnerability.

Our staff are the people living and working in our communities and our ambassadors as they deliver our services every day. Equipping and engaging them to recognise and understand the issues facing many of our customers is essential. We are delivering this through engagement, training and our volunteering programme, giving them the right tools and the autonomy to do the right thing for our vulnerable customers.

Within our Contact Centre our 10 out of 10 quality framework allows us to monitor the consistency of how this is being delivered. We are delighted that the BSI audit highlighted this culture of 'doing the right thing' was evident, and we have been working hard this year to build this further through practical support.

*"I can clearly see the consistency of message to do the right thing and support vulnerable customers."*

– BSI AUDITOR

## Team Powergrid roadshows

Following a major launch event with 200 senior managers, partners and contractors, all staff were invited to attend our Make Every Contact Count roadshows. The roadshows helped to engage Team Powergrid in the Make Every Contact Count ambition, to give them a greater understanding of vulnerability in their area and to discuss what this meant for them in their roles. Each session was supported by a member of the Executive Team, with over 1,000 employees engaged so far, each signing up to make a positive difference to our vulnerable customers. We also took this opportunity to launch our consistent Tone of Voice work (see right).

## Providing the skills and tools to enable teams to tailor the offer to customers

Building on our vulnerability training programme for our customer service staff and rapid response engineers, we have made a commitment to train 100% of our employees in vulnerability, safeguarding and how to make appropriate referrals. We have begun scoping

training packages for cross-sections of the business depending on their role and contact with customers. This training will cover all core vulnerabilities and we will complement this with formal customer experience development, demonstrating links to the delivery of service for vulnerable customers.

In August, through our Tone of Voice project, we reviewed and upgraded all of our communication materials for vulnerable customers. This ensured that they were simple, relevant and practical for customers, and gave our people hands-on, supportive tools to help them when interacting with vulnerable customers. This included leaflets, booklets, letters, drop cards, website, text messages and social media. This simplified communication is also strengthened by specialist tools like BrowseAloud, providing audio speech, large text and multiple languages to ease website use.

*"Our commitment to supporting vulnerable customers extends beyond our service area. Our Hidden Heroes assisted our industry colleagues in restoring supplies to customers affected by storm Doris. During this significant event we supported 35 vulnerable customers outside of our operating area."*

– NICK GILL, OPERATIONS DIRECTOR

# Developing our partnerships

There are a number of key partners we work with to deliver our social and vulnerability services and programmes.

As well as working closely with charities, community and other third sector organisations, we also have strong and very active partnerships with other utilities in our region, recognising that we often have shared customers with similar vulnerabilities and needs. We also share issues with other Distribution Network Operators (see Appendix 1), Energy Suppliers and National Consumer Representatives.

## Our partnerships can be split into three key categories:

### ► CATEGORY

**STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS:** Collaborating with like-minded organisations to help shape each other's social responsibility programmes, create joint ventures and lobby for positive change

**PROJECT PARTNERSHIPS:** Working with individual organisations with specific 'skill sets' over a longer period (1-2) years

**INITIATIVE PARTNERSHIPS:** Delivering targeted activities and events with short-medium term impact in specific areas

### ► EXAMPLE PARTNERSHIPS

**Infrastructure North:** Joint engagement, awareness raising and support available for vulnerable customers across utilities

**Green Doctor:** Delivering energy efficiency programmes and advice to communities to encourage behaviour change

**Children's Society, Tyne and Wear:** Delivering projects to achieve health, wellbeing and employability outcomes for at risk young people

These partnerships are fundamental in helping us achieve sustained impact in our vulnerable communities and provide us with:

- Essential insights into social issues across our operating area and how working collaboratively we can address these
- The ability to increase our capacity and help us reach wider and new audiences
- Opportunities to build on our relative strengths and combine resources for greater impact
- Opportunities to enhance our own services, and support or promote partner services that would benefit our customers

- Strengthened relationships with communities by working with not for profit or charitable organisations that are trusted and have existing, positive relationships within communities

We have reviewed the partnership aspects of our vulnerability strategy this year to reflect good practice within the industry and build on the feedback from last year's submission:

- Recognising the different dimensions to these partnerships, their strengths and limitations and how this can inform our approach and thinking when establishing or strengthening partnerships
- Developing a set of standard agreements,

varied to reflect the nature and depth of the project. This includes minimum standards for reporting and referrals in all relevant projects. All new projects are set up on this basis and we have begun to roll this out within existing projects

- An emphasis on how we can use existing and new partnerships to horizon scan for new vulnerabilities and learning
- How we will develop our partnerships into a network to learn from each other
- Recognising the limitations - varying capacity and capability of our third sector partners to measure and report activity and outcomes has impacted our approach to Social Return on Investment (see Page 10)



# Strengthening our programme through partnerships

Pages 7-9 detail how our partnerships are supporting our vulnerability strategy. In each case we use icons to highlight which of our Social Pillars (see Page 2) are supported and at which stage of our development process they are at (see right).

1. CONCEIVE & PROTOTYPE
2. START UP
3. SCALE UP
4. EMBED
5. ENHANCE

TOTAL BENEFIT TO CUSTOMERS FROM THIS YEAR'S ACTIVITY

**£653,323**

## Infrastructure North

Our Infrastructure North partnership has been in place since 2013. It is a model we have developed, partnering with other utilities in our region to work together to share learning and address shared issues. This is now an area of best practice that other DNOs have adopted. In 2015/16, following our shared workshop with charity, voluntary and community organisations in our region, we established our social group which meets quarterly to engage with our third sector partners and deliver projects which support our shared agendas. Highlights this year have included:

- **Community week (December 2016):** To raise awareness of winter preparedness, boost sign-up to the PSR and extend our local referral partners by engaging with frontline agencies in West Yorkshire and the North East. We attended community events to engage with hard to reach customers and frontline workers at Housing Associations, Newcastle Library, foodbanks, Citizens Advice office Leeds, International Day of Disabled People – coordinated by Adult Social Services.
- **Golden Guide:** Targeting older people in Tyne and Wear, Northumberland and County Durham, the Golden Guide, with comprehensive information, advice and guidance on energy saving and additional support, was published in January 2017. It was advertised within a referral magazine that targets older people living independently at home to ensure copies reach those vulnerable people who need the information most. The initial feedback has been very positive.
- **The Nation's Biggest Housewarming, 17th February 2017:** Partnering with Northern Gas Networks (NGN) and Wales and West Utilities (WU) nationally, we supported Green Doctor to implement energy efficiency measures in homes experiencing fuel poverty (Leeds and Bradford).
- **Data sharing with Northern Gas Networks:** We have a mutually beneficial arrangement in place with NGN for them to access our PSR customer information provided through a comprehensive data sharing agreement. In return, NGN encourage their engineers and frontline staff to sign up vulnerable customers to our PSR register so that we can provide them with extra help when they need it most. This year, this was extended to their emergency response engineers.

## Partnership benefits

Working with other regional utilities (Northern Gas Networks, Northumbrian Water and Yorkshire Water) allows us to share resources in order to reduce duplication, maximise efficiency and deliver coherent messaging and support for our shared vulnerable customers. Partnering with other external organisations further extends our networks, allowing us to benefit from our individually established partnerships.



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP DELIVERING AWARENESS, REFERRALS AND DIRECT INTERVENTIONS



SCALE UP

EMBED

## GROUNDWORK – GREEN DOCTOR

COST PER HOUSEHOLD

**£82.78**



OVERALL FINANCIAL BENEFIT

**£99,229.74**



AVERAGE BENEFIT PER HOUSEHOLD

**£328.57**



JOINT INVESTMENT

**£25,000**



This is our flagship energy efficiency scheme with NGN. Following a successful trial with 60 homes in 2015/16, we have now scaled up to support a further **350** homes throughout 2016/17.

We are supporting the Green Doctor to alleviate fuel poverty at household level and enable vulnerable service users to stay warm whilst saving money on energy bills. The main aims of the service are achieved through home visits where small energy efficiency measures are installed and energy efficiency advice and applications for grants submitted to maximise income. In addition, the training of our partners e.g. Trussell Trust and our volunteers to become Green Nurses has extended reach.

In the first six months of the service, Green Doctor visited **302** vulnerable homes helping **763** beneficiaries by installing **1,621** energy efficiency measures and providing advice, support and onwards referrals saving customers in excess of **£90,000**.

## Wider benefits

- Installed **229** carbon monoxide detectors in the homes of vulnerable service users
- Signed **369** people up to the Priority Services Register
- Service user disposable income increased by **£24,288.73** from possible benefit entitlement and Trust Fund applications through referrals to the Citizens Advice in Leeds regarding Leeds residents
- Established the 'Close Knit Communities' campaign. People were invited to knit a scarf to raise awareness of fuel poverty. This has led to meetings with various community groups to tell them about the scheme and we have received more than 10 boxes of knitting to give out to households living in fuel poverty

## CASE STUDY

Mrs P and Mr A are both living in social housing. Mrs P's home is affected by penetrating damp, leaking pipes and a broken window. Mr A's home could do with improvements as it is very cold and damp. The windows need repairing, the boiler is very old and the Energy Performance Certificate also appears incorrect as it lists that wall insulation has been installed despite no evidence of this at the property. Mr A was provided with dehumidifiers, a winter warmth pack and light bulbs, as well as advice on heating the house better and ventilating properly. In both cases Green Doctor contacted their social housing provider to reach a solution.



# Strengthening our programme through partnerships

## My Green Investment - Energy Heroes

Energy Heroes is a practical, engaging programme teaching children to be energy literate, a lifelong skill that is the first step in gaining energy awareness around efficiency, fuel poverty alleviation and the challenges of climate change.

This four year programme supports students in Year 5 to look at these issues, share learning with parents and improve their mathematics skills. The programme includes teacher training sessions, comprehensive resources, energy audit, up to six weeks in-school programme and a Community Energy Extra Event pack. Energy Extra is a robust mechanism for project evaluation and allows opportunity for beneficiaries to share learning with peers and the wider community. This is the second year of a four-year partnership across **100** schools in the most deprived areas in our region.

### Customers supported (2016/17)

The scheme is targeted at some of the most deprived areas in our region. Vulnerabilities include those from low income / fuel poor families and lack of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills:

- 21** schools received an energy audit
- 716** pupils have engaged in the Energy Heroes programme including 'Home challenges' to save energy in their homes
- 5,775** pupils participated in the Energy Heroes Assembly and received a Northern Powergrid energy efficiency leaflet to take home and share with their families
- 2,300** people reached through Energy Extra proactive community outreach - awareness raising and cascaded learning

## Children's Society - Edge of Care

Our one-year partnership with the Children's Society is reaching out to **130** socially excluded young people aged 10-18 and their families in the Tees Valley. The project addresses complex personal and social barriers that limit some young people's life chances, and helps them develop aspirations and fulfill their potential. The project adopts a holistic and multi-faceted approach to supporting, nurturing and progressing young people through:

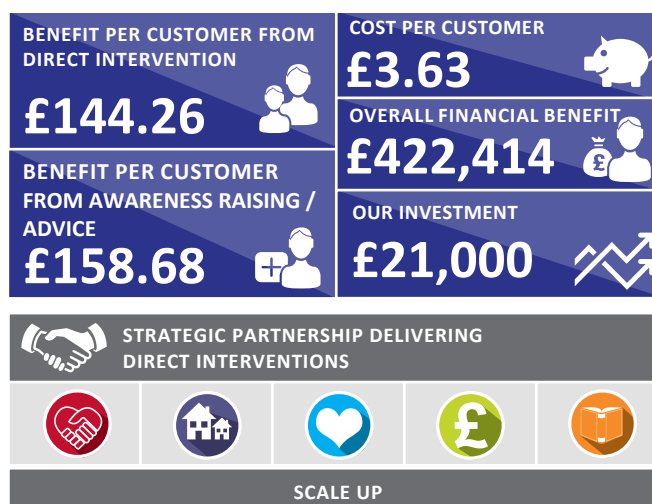
- Targeted support with young people and their families and group programmes for young people addressing personal resilience and preparing them for transition to adulthood and employment
- Working with **20** statutory and voluntary partners in Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton on Tees, Redcar and Cleveland - 35% of referrals come from Youth Offending Teams

### Customers supported (2016/17)

During the first six months of the project they have worked intensively with **43** young people experiencing multiple-disadvantage and considered vulnerable, at risk and often hard to reach. They may experience repeat offending, go missing from home, be at risk of sexual exploitation, be in the process of leaving care, or are considered 'on the edge of care'.

### Partnership benefits

Working with the Children's Society enables us to build on our education and outreach programme to engage hard to reach young people who are socially excluded. It allows us to do this through an experienced organisation and its outreach partners.



### Partnership benefits

By working in partnership with My Green Investment on Energy Heroes we benefit from their presence and experience through a large number of initiatives across our region, as well as maximising local links to schools.

### Wider benefits

- Raising standards in mathematics - improving data handling and problem solving skills for Year 5 pupils
- Empowering people to reduce their fuel bills and the risk of fuel poverty
- Helping communities understand the benefits of CO2 reduction
- Continuous professional development for teachers
- Linking community energy groups to schools and the wider community - creating Energy Champions and Champion schools

### Wider benefits

- 43** vulnerable young adults are supported to develop better coping strategies, engage in positive activities, develop aspirations for learning and work, and reconnect with family and the wider community. 100% are reporting improved emotional wellbeing and better handling of relationships
- 17** (39%) are now staying at home or have ceased offending and **5** of the **19** young people receiving targeted support (27% of all beneficiaries) have entered training or employment
- Individual plans are developed and monitored around emotional wellbeing, substance misuse, employment, accommodation, money, relationships, stress, alcohol, drugs, health, and happiness
- All beneficiaries have progression routes identified during, and beyond, their engagement with the project
- 32** of the beneficiaries will progress to learning and sustainable employment through the programme
- One in eight offenders will cease offending through the programme
- At the end of the project Northern Powergrid will better understand this vulnerable group, how to reach them and how this may apply to the work that we do
- There is no direct financial benefit to the customer for this type of scheme but the reduction in cost to society is reflected in the SROI below - based on the cost to society of avoided offences leading to a place in a Young Offender Institution at a cost of **£65,000** per annum



# Strengthening our programme through partnerships

## Citizens Advice - Specialist energy advisors

We have been working in partnership with Citizens Advice Newcastle since October 2014 and enhanced the programme by scaling up to Leeds in April 2016. The programme will continue for another year before we complete a full assessment but we have been seeing strong results. We are funding specialist Energy Debt Advisors who can offer more in-depth and holistic fuel poverty advice, referrals and support, as well as addressing wider health, affordability and other social issues. The Newcastle trial included one full time advisor for two years. This scheme continues and was expanded to Leeds in 2016 with enhancements including:







- Identifying formal outreach partners in the vulnerable communities
- Introduction of our partnership with Green Doctor to enable / strengthen support and referrals around energy savings and efficiency in the home (20 referrals in December 2016 alone)
- Energy training for **20** volunteers to expand reach, upskill community supporters and encourage sustainability

### Partnership benefits

Citizens Advice are already established, respected and trusted by customers locally, to deal with complex financial and wider social issues through their existing networks and experience. Citizens Advice have their own network of local and community organisations to extend their outreach and are open to learning from and working with our existing partners.

### Wider benefits

- Customers receive a holistic service through a trusted source which addresses complex issues, e.g. tailored referrals and support including, energy efficiency advice, PSR sign-up, GP referrals etc.
- Customers receive financial advice and support across multiple sources including energy switching, billing and meter reading issues, debt relief, access to benefits etc.
- Volunteer recruitment and training extends reach and sustainability of the programme
- Programme to be extended across our licence area in 2017/18; to provide consistent referrals and support through our PSR data team
- Hardship fund provision made available for customers in crisis to enable them to move forward with more comprehensive support

<b>CUSTOMERS SUPPORTED</b> <b>888</b> 	<b>OVERALL FINANCIAL BENEFIT</b> <b>£140,909</b> 
<b>BENEFIT PER CUSTOMER</b> <b>£158.68</b> 	<b>COST PER CUSTOMER</b> <b>£102.47</b> 
<b>OUR INVESTMENT</b> <b>£91,000</b> 	<b>SROI</b> <b>£1=£11.16</b> 



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP DELIVERING DIRECT SUPPORT



SCALE UP

### CASE STUDY

Mr X is a 40 year old British male, living alone. He has multiple physical and mental health issues and is socially isolated. Mr X had a large debt on his electricity account because he bypassed the meter out of desperation during a time of no income and needing a working fridge for medications. The Citizens Advice Energy Advisor gave Mr X support:

- Supplier calls to reduce debt collection from £8 to £3 weekly on both meters (£260 annual cost reduction). Reset meters within 3 hours and added £10 credit
- Completing Trust Funds for both his energy and water debts
- Arranging write off of debt with Council Tax recovery and DWP of **£225.48**
- Registering Mr X on the Priority Services Register
- Arranging Green Doctor visit to install energy saving measures and advise on tariff switching
- Contacting partners to discuss PEP social prescribing, potential Trust Fund access and ESA benefits which, if successful, could lead to Mr X being **£8,447.40** better off

Mr X was very happy that he had been able to heat his property for the first time in 2 years. Due to reducing his recovery payments, he can now top up his gas meter.

## Trussell Trust - More Than Food

Since 2015 we have been working with the Trussell Trust, supporting them to expand and enhance their network in order to encourage collaborative working across our community partnerships. Our annual fund focused in 2015/16 on supporting expansion and sustainability of existing foodbanks increasing capacity. Our focus for 2016/17 has been on More Than Food grants to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship; enabling foodbanks to provide specialist debt and benefits advice along with wellbeing and health support.

### CASE STUDY






From Billingham foodbank - supporting up to 5,600 individuals a year: "We applied for funding to enable us to set up a new distribution centre with a very needy area nearby. We were aware that the clients who need to use the foodbank had to walk three miles each way or use a taxi which is not possible. The direct bus service has stopped so clients need to use three buses to get to the main foodbank centre. We had a few volunteers and a room in a community centre so wanted to open once a week in Port Clarence. This is now functioning well. We purchased signage, A-boards, roller banners, weighing scales, shelving, all the books to complete paperwork and fleeces for the volunteers. The clients appreciate not having to travel into Billingham for food crises help. We have also been able to facilitate Citizens Advice input with home visits to assess energy advice, benefits etc. The team working there is managing very well and feels it's really benefiting the community."

### Partnership benefits

Working with Trussell Trust allows us to expand and enhance our referrals between partners by extending our reach into communities through a trusted partner who is helping those at their most vulnerable.

### Wider benefits

- Engagement of our own staff with champions and quarterly collections for foodbanks at each of our locations across the region
- Working more closely through our network of partners to enhance services for their clients e.g. referrals to Green Doctor for energy saving advice, and Citizens Advice
- Reaching people when they are experiencing acute hardship and or crisis
- Offering additional non-financial benefits and support to the foodbanks, e.g. Mental Health First Aid training for their volunteers

<b>OUR INVESTMENT</b> <b>£25,000</b>	 <b>STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP DELIVERING DIRECT INTERVENTION</b>
<b>25%</b> MORE PEOPLE SUPPORTED FROM GRANTS IN 2015/16	 
<b>POTENTIAL REACH FROM GRANTS IN JANUARY 2017</b> <b>47,000</b>	 
	<b>EMBED</b>

# Measuring success, value and impact

To ensure we are delivering a successful social and vulnerability programme that offers the greatest benefit at the best value to our vulnerable customers and communities, we measure the benefits and our impact in a number of different ways.

These different factors all form part of our overarching balanced scorecard approach which ensures that all our activities have clear ownership, are underpinned by SMART measures and ensure that we are targeting our resources most effectively.

## Informed decision making

As detailed in Part 1 of our submission, our projects and initiatives are delivered through an effective development process. This ensures that we only scale up projects that are having the desired impact, and that throughout the process we engage with stakeholders to help with our learning and future improvement.

In last year's submission we introduced the Social Value UK principles in our Social Return On Investment (SROI) model and demonstrated how we had applied this to some of our social programmes. Whilst we continue to use the model, we have learnt this year that we need to adapt our approach. Through our partnerships and the nature of the projects, we have identified some considerations which limit the full use of the model and made some changes in how and where we apply it.



### ► LIMITATIONS

Some of our smaller third sector partners do not have the capacity or capability to deliver the detailed reporting required to achieve full SROI but the added value they bring is evident from the quantitative and qualitative data they do provide.

We are not comparing like-with-like across our social projects. They vary in terms of the outcome we are trying to achieve and the level of activity or intervention required to achieve this.

### ► OUR APPROACH

We don't want to dismiss these partnerships as they are often the closest to some of our most vulnerable customers. When agreeing new projects or scaling up existing start ups, we will take a robust but pragmatic approach to the appropriateness of what is reported dependent on the project, existing metrics and the capacity and capability available.

We have identified categories for the levels of interactions so we can more usefully group initiatives and use SROI to inform our decisions: 1. Awareness raising / signposting, 2. Referrals, 3. Direct support and, 4. In-depth support.

## Assurance and accreditation

To help us with our continuous improvement, we regularly invite external organisations in to assess and advise us about the quality of our services and highlight areas for improvement and enhancement. We set this out in more detail in Part 1 but the key learning this year has been:

### Action on Hearing Loss



We are ensuring customers can do everything they need to online, providing mechanisms for our people to access and signpost the right services at the right time, training all staff on text relay and Action for Hearing Loss awareness.

Charter mark achieved  
16/03/17

*"All staff were found to be most helpful and welcoming and were obviously keen to offer people who are deaf or have hearing loss a good quality service."*

— ACTION ON HEARING LOSS AUDITOR

### BSI: Inclusive Service Provision



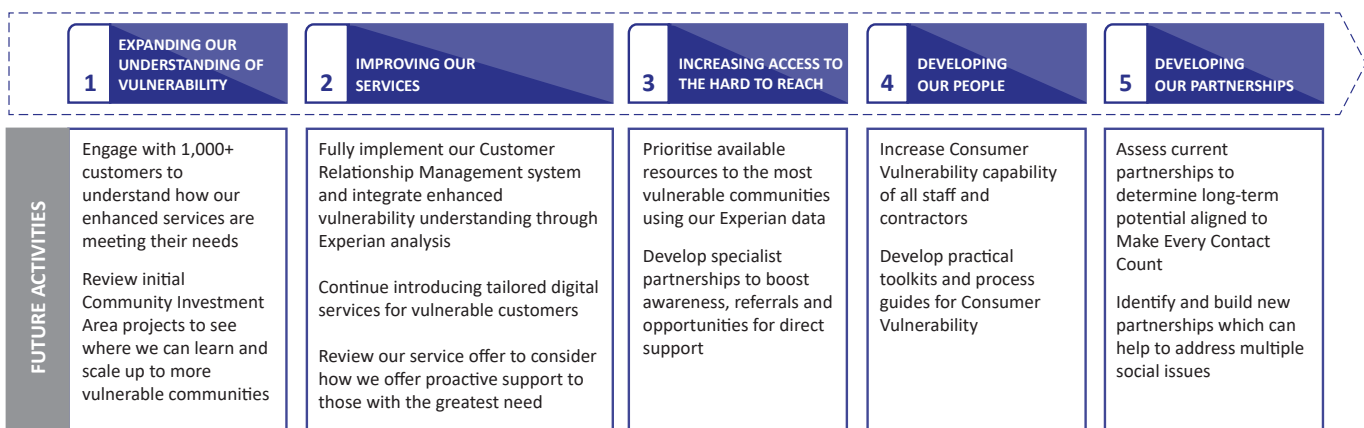
Strengthening our risk management processes within internal audit, and focusing on specific requirements to be incorporated as part of our web development strategy for vulnerable customers.

*"Really strong focus on identifying customer needs and providing a bespoke solution for the customer, effective deployment of the vulnerability and customer service principles."*

BSI standard achieved  
10/02/17

— BSI AUDITOR

## Looking ahead





# Notes

# Notes

# Notes



@powergridnews @northpowergrid



Northern Powergrid



Northernpowergrid



Northern Powergrid

**Contact:** [yourpowergrid@northernpowergrid.com](mailto:yourpowergrid@northernpowergrid.com)

**Useful links:**

**Stakeholder webpage** - [www.northernpowergrid.com/your-powergrid](http://www.northernpowergrid.com/your-powergrid)

**Business plan website** - [www.yourpowergridplan.com](http://www.yourpowergridplan.com)

**Online community** - <https://northern-powergrid.explainonline.co.uk>