

*Part 3*

## Consumer vulnerability approach, initiatives and outcomes

2017/18



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## Part 3 – Consumer vulnerability approach, initiatives and outcomes

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Living and working in the north throughout my life means that I am well aware that our region has some of the highest levels of vulnerability across the UK in health, poverty and education. However, our research painted a bleaker picture than I first imagined. As many as 60% of our customers can experience financial hardship and it is estimated that 1 in 5 of households in our region live in fuel poverty.

These insights sharpen the wider sense of responsibility that we feel to support sustainability and address vulnerability in the communities where we live and work. Our team has developed our social programme to do exactly that. Our obligation to create best value with the funds (provided by our customers) has led us to focus the benefit our social programme offers, making a clear link to our core role and our statutory and social duties.

This year we have found innovative ways to set specific measures and service standards for vulnerable customers, using customer insight and external expertise to calibrate new delivery models for our most vulnerable customers. We have engaged large numbers of our colleagues through a training programme that improves their knowledge, confidence and ability to deliver these additional services. Our teams are encouraged to 'do the right thing' by our customers, to follow their moral compass, and never to overlook a difficult or concerning situation. A bespoke toolkit guides our field staff to embed this service.

Others qualified to say so tell me that our social responsibility programme has been leading-edge for some time and is now well developed. The greatly increased accuracy in our own customer data, coupled with additional insight available through some newly commissioned research, means we are better placed than ever to make a difference. Essential programmes and partnerships such as 'Powergrid Cares' are an embedded part of our routine, and we are continuing to build local networks, partnerships and initiatives, like our PSR referral network and the extension of our 'Partnering Communities Fund'. These mean that our limited resources can have a much wider effect where the benefits can be greatest.

We are building local expert networks, targeting our PSR recruitment to those most in need and ensuring our staff recognise vulnerability in order to offer a tailored response to meet these needs, whenever they see them and whatever the circumstances.

Our social programmes are a source of pride to everyone at Northern Powergrid. We know the characteristics of our region because we live here, yet our understanding has been deepened with accurate and adaptable data which allows us to combine our people, our training and our strong sense of purpose to deliver decisively for those who need us most.

**Phil Jones**  
President and CEO

## 2017/18 headlines

**83%**

satisfaction with  
our PSR services

**96%**

PSR customers  
back on supply  
within six hours

**£272,958**

savings for  
customers through  
Powergrid Cares  
programme

**100+**

new partners in  
our PSR referral  
network

**70+**

health and  
resilience  
professionals  
engaged with PSR

## 2018/19 priorities

**Strengthening our health  
partnerships to reach those  
most at risk**

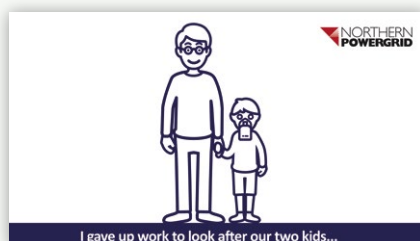
**Setting and targeting holistic  
service standards for our  
vulnerable customers**

**Embedding service standards  
and excellent customer service  
to meet our customers' needs**

NEW

CASE STUDY

Innovative digital health campaign



Our health promotion campaign has been developed by feedback from our local community workshops and our health partner event. We know that people experiencing health and mental health issues are most at risk from a power cut so we wanted to target our next Priority Service Register (PSR) awareness campaign at this group. In West Yorkshire, we have the highest levels of health and mental

health issues. We know that we now have a network of health professionals who are in a good position to support a digital campaign. Using anonymised case studies from interviews with our vulnerable customers we have designed an innovative campaign with animations and regional voice overs. We're looking forward to launching it in West Yorkshire over the coming months and sharing the results.

**The aim of our Consumer Vulnerability strategy is to provide the best possible support and assistance to our vulnerable customers, informed by a detailed understanding of their needs.**

## Our Consumer Vulnerability strategy

Our strategy is formed by our stakeholders using the processes explained in Part 1. It is supported by a three-year delivery programme and tracked internally through our established management processes and externally via our Stakeholder Panel and Social Issues Expert Group. This integrated design and delivery is under continual review and open to stakeholder challenge. It has evolved into

a successful programme because of the quality of this challenge.

Our strategy has three key objectives with two supporting enablers as detailed in the table below. These provide a framework and focus for each part of our organisation. Each department has its own detailed plan with objectives refined to the parameters in the

area of the business in which it works.

There is a robust reporting structure and governance which is supported by the social responsibility team. We go into further detail around each of these areas in the following pages of this submission.

OUR AIM				
To provide the best possible support and assistance to our vulnerable customers, informed by a detailed understanding of their needs				
OUR KEY OBJECTIVES			OUR ENABLERS	
1. Expanding our understanding of vulnerability	2. Increasing access to the hard to reach	3. Improving our services	4. Developing our people, capacity and culture	5. Developing our partnerships
<p>► In order to provide the best possible support to customers we have, and will continue to, invest in developing our knowledge about our customers. We have to understand who they are, where they are, and what their needs are both now and into the future.</p> <p>We use this knowledge to help raise awareness of our Priority Services Register (PSR), and to tailor our support services. This knowledge also helps us to engage with people who are hard to reach by removing any barriers they may face in accessing our services and representing their views.</p>			<p>► Delivering high quality support for customers in vulnerable situations is a responsibility of everyone at Northern Powergrid and is instilled into our business at every level. We know we can't do this alone, and so by developing our people, our partnerships, and our understanding through research and industry best practice, we can identify who is best placed to provide the support our customers need, when they need it.</p>	

## Embedding our strategy

Whilst our overarching strategy has remained consistent, our focus over this last year has been on embedding this service across the business. We have done this in the following ways:

- Run workshops with colleagues to share our strategy and discuss the many ways in which they can implement services in their respective areas. We have made a commitment to run at least one creative workshop per year to refresh their plans.
- Our Social Responsibility Management Group (SRMG) engages monthly with the leaders

from all areas of the business to discuss and monitor progress and help shape our current and future plans.

- Each SRMG lead reports against their own departmental plans; this gives them ownership for developing new initiatives and for delivering services to our customers in a meaningful way.
- Comprehensive Consumer Vulnerability targets and measures have been developed by the business, our stakeholders, and our Social Issues Expert Group.

► Through our Key Business Activity reporting our senior managers and executives receive monthly metrics and progress updates on our Consumer Vulnerability and Social Responsibility programmes.

- Consumer Vulnerability and Social Indicator data is now part of the assessment criteria within our innovation project decision-making process.
- PSR customers are part of the prioritisation criteria used by our network investment planners to guide infrastructure upgrades.

## Future-proofing our strategy

We know that we have good data on the current key social issues impacting our region and this informs our annual review of our strategy and the supporting three year plan which underpins this. We are working hard to understand how these and future social trends and indicators impact on our customers in the future. The headlines from our social indicator research report are:

- Population – All Northern Powergrid areas record a lower rate of growth to 2030 than the projected national rate of growth.

► Old Age Dependency Rate (OADR) – Most Northern Powergrid local authorities are projected to have a higher Old Age Dependency Rate than the national average of 36%, indicating a higher proportion of elderly population in the Yorkshire and North East by 2030 – this is highest in our more rural areas.

- Life expectancy – Statistics at birth, and at age 65, indicate that most local authorities in the Northern Powergrid area have a lower life expectancy than the national average.

Whilst the joint DNO report (see page 4) shows a general expansion of people requiring PSR services it is clear from the research to date that this is not a one size fits all across the country or even within our region. We want our services for the coming years and throughout ED2 to be fully informed, thought through, consulted on and fit for purpose, therefore we will be working hard to understand exactly what this will mean for the people and the communities we serve.



**Understanding the needs of our customers and the different types and levels of vulnerability helps us to shape our plans and prioritise our activities to offer the best possible support across our communities.**

## Our approach to addressing vulnerability

To focus our approach we have identified three broad groups of vulnerable customer need. Below we outline our role in supporting them:

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

Following the review of industry needs codes in June 2017 we analysed how representative our current register was in comparison to the profile of the communities we serve. This analysis has shown that over 60% of the population in our region could potentially qualify for our PSR, furthermore changing circumstances can increase or lessen a vulnerability for these customers.

So there is not a 'one size fits all' solution, which is why we seek to offer a range of tailored services to customers in vulnerable situations, whether they are registered on our PSR or not.

However, given the potential scale of support required, we set an approach which recognises that the effects of a power cut can cause an increased level of detriment to priority customers in the following areas:

- ▶ All medically dependent customers.
- ▶ Chronic/serious illness.
- ▶ Mental health.
- ▶ Dementia(s).
- ▶ Temporary, e.g. post-hospital recovery.

We are training all our colleagues to identify and respond to vulnerability when they see it. Our PSR recruitment campaigns are targeted to those most at risk, so that our services are proactively offered to those most in need.

## Managing our data to get results

The last two years has seen us focus significantly on data acquisition, analytics, data cleanse and management of our PSR and our Social Indicator

Mapping. We are finding that what comes with data is a wealth of opportunities and

a responsibility to ensure we use the information appropriately and securely.

### Ensuring quality PSR data

We ensure no individual record goes for two years without a review. That way we can be more assured that we are holding up-to-date, quality information in order to provide the best level of support. If they call us, our PSR customers will route directly through to our dedicated advisor team to provide that enhanced service. These advisors will update records and customer needs at that time. Based on their feedback we write, either digitally to our customers or through mail, to advise of the need to renew information. We offer multiple channels for our customers to interact making it as easy as possible to amend their information.

Our PSR data headlines for 2017/18 are:

**175,000**

records updated using multiple channels – 31,000 wish to remain on the register

**191,376**

new PSR customers signed up this year

**144,000**

records removed as a result of data cleanse

**710,377**

people on PSR

**26.6%**

growth in PSR

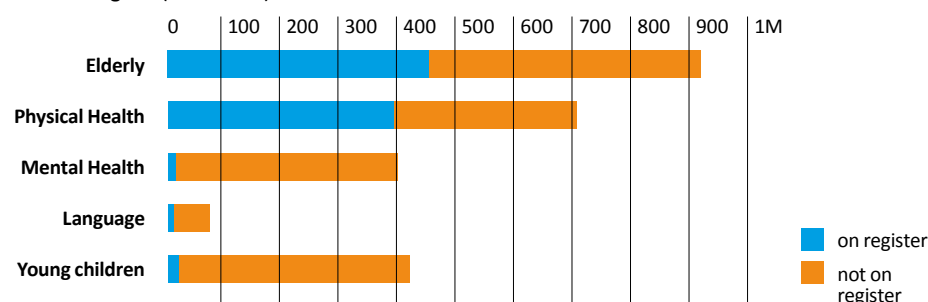
We know from engaging with our stakeholders, vulnerable customers, and their representatives, that health and mental health are most at risk in the event of a power cut. Therefore, this is where

we are focusing our efforts for recruitment in the coming year with young children and customers whose first language is not English to follow.

We profile our records to our social indicators (see bar chart on the right). This analysis reveals where we need to focus our efforts for PSR recruitment to address the demonstrable gaps (see bar chart on the right), as well as ensuring we have sufficient resource in place now and in the future to meet the service commitments our customers require (see page 6). We will continue to benchmark our records against our social profiles to inform initiatives and our recruitment campaigns.

### Current profile of our register informing our recruitment campaigns

PSR coverage of (thousands)



## Understanding the social issues in our region

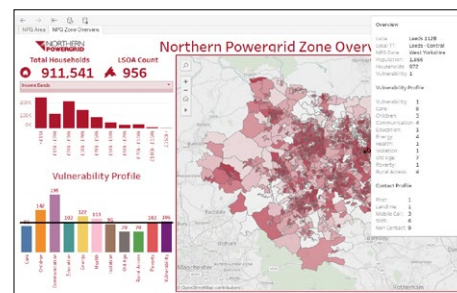
In 2017 we explained the initiatives we'd taken, working with Experian to gather detailed data to understand our customers. In 2018 we've taken this to the next level. With Experian we've developed a web-based system which allows us to interrogate and use the valuable data we've gathered, helping us to make better informed decisions to improve our services and target resources as outlined below.

NEW

The joint DNO research into future social issues impacting the PSR predicted an overall increase in the number of households qualifying for the PSR over the next decade. The research also found emerging areas of vulnerability including:

1. Increase in palliative care driven by an ageing population and medical advances.
2. Increased reliance on medical devices driven by new technology.
3. Increased reliance on electricity affecting the amount and nature of support DNOs are required to provide.
4. Local generation: New PSR intervention measures may be needed to cover future patterns of power consumption.

We are considering this to inform future PSR recruitment and provision of services and have commissioned an additional piece of social research which will give us greater detail on what this means in our region specifically. The research report is due in May 2018.



## Using data and feedback to inform, prioritise and tailor our approach

### The insight

- ▶ Potentially 60% of our customers could meet the Ofgem criteria for vulnerability.
- ▶ The duration of a power cut determines vulnerable customer needs, so our services must be tailored and flexible to address this.
- ▶ Vulnerable customers consider communication to be the most important service we can offer before and in the early stages of a power cut.
- ▶ Profiling our PSR-registered customers against potential PSR customers under the needs codes shows us that:
  - Elderly people are the most represented
  - People with health issues and children under five are areas with the largest potential gaps.
- ▶ Some of our communities have complex multi-layered social issues which require a tailored and targeted approach from our engagement and partnership programmes.

### How we're using the insight

- ▶ Targeted 105 awareness campaigns in areas with lowest awareness (see below).
- ▶ Tailored and targeted PSR awareness campaigns around health and mental health (see page 1).
- ▶ To review, expand and target existing partnership programmes (see page 9).
- ▶ Targeting vulnerable communities and health organisations to build our PSR referral network (see page 9 and Part 1 page 5).
- ▶ To set service standards/commitments (see page 6).
- ▶ To set and measure performance targets.
- ▶ To manage services and improvements.
- ▶ To adequately resource the services offered and required.
- ▶ Refreshed the membership of our social issues expert group to reflect social profiles; NHS England and social housing provider Gentoo joined the group.
- ▶ Held a Powergrid Cares partners pilot session to trial data sharing and training.

### Our informed approach

- ▶ Through training all colleagues in identifying and responding to customer vulnerability we will offer tailored services to all vulnerable customers when they are needed.
- ▶ We will prioritise the most at risk for PSR recruitment, ensuring they receive services proactively – focusing on health.
- ▶ We will continue to target our engagement and develop wider social partnerships in our most vulnerable communities.

### In 2018/19 we will:

- ▶ Run five consumer vulnerability training and data-sharing sessions with our local PSR referral networks and Partnering Communities Fund applicants.
- ▶ Explore how we can responsibly share the online tool with key strategic partners like Local Authorities and resilience partners to inform and target programmes in our shared communities – maximising our impact.
- ▶ Run a pilot community engagement project with Yorkshire Water to raise awareness of the PSR and the services we both offer.

NEW

CASE STUDY

## Geographically targeted PSR promotional campaigns



### Feedback and insight

- ▶ Awareness of Northern Powergrid in South Yorkshire one of lowest in region at 4% (June 17).

- ▶ South Yorkshire has 3 of the top 15 most vulnerable areas in the region (Experian).
- ▶ Key vulnerabilities identified as poverty, rural isolation and health.

### What we did

To test a more targeted approach, we identified the top postcode areas with the highest prevalence of these vulnerabilities and tailored a door drop campaign to two key groups: the rural elderly and the urban young. The leaflets included a 105 fridge magnet and PSR

application form and were tested with community partners and customer focus groups.

### The outcomes






- ▶ Awareness in those South Yorkshire areas increased to 12% after the campaign.
- ▶ PSR registrations in South Yorkshire during the campaign grew by 28%.
- ▶ Awareness of 105 increased from 4% to 15% – an almost four-fold increase.

**Our increased understanding of our vulnerable customers and communities has helped us to strengthen partnerships in these local areas and target our efforts to reach those most in need through trusted experts.**

## Extending our reach through partnerships

As reported last year we take three key approaches to increasing access to the hard to reach. These are set out below along with examples of how this has supported us over the last year. The table summarises a wider selection of our hard to reach partnerships.

1. Working with third sector and other organisations that already have relationships or are seen as trusted channels within hard to reach communities to offer enhanced services and support. We held a workshop with health professionals and wider resilience partners to further build our PSR partner network (see Part 1, 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. We have recruited over 100 community partners who have informed the review of our PSR materials and become PSR referral partners (see our case study below).
3. Proactively going out to communities to share information and provide support. Using our social data and awareness research we have targeted our PSR recruitment campaigns (see our case studies on page 1, health recruitment and page 4, geographic targeting).

Social Pillars	Type/Characteristics	Examples of our support and partnerships
 Vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Physical and mental well-being</li> <li>▶ Recovering from a life-changing event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Oxygen Providers</li> <li>▶ NHS</li> <li>▶ NPg Rapid Engineers</li> </ul>
 Affordability	<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>▶ Powergrid Cares – see p10</li> <li>▶ Colleague volunteering</li> </ul>
 Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Rural areas</li> <li>▶ Multicultural communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Warm Hubs</li> <li>▶ Partnering Communities Fund</li> <li>▶ Colleague volunteering</li> </ul>
 Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Not in education or training</li> <li>▶ Care leavers</li> <li>▶ Girls in STEM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Ahead partnership STEM and skills programmes</li> <li>▶ School safety programme</li> </ul>
 Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Digital exclusion</li> <li>▶ English not the first language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Partnering Communities Fund</li> <li>▶ Language Line (translator facility)</li> <li>▶ Browsealoud on website</li> </ul>

Since we began delivery of this hard to reach, data-driven programme in November we have seen significant increases in PSR activity, particularly through digital channels. The % increases in activity through key on-line metrics from April to October and from November to March when we delivered the engagement and campaigns are:

- ▶ **193%** increase in online PSR applications
- ▶ **97%** increase in hits on Powergrid Care website
- ▶ **71%** increase in unique users on Powergrid Care website

## NEW CASE STUDY

### Reaching vulnerable communities through trusted local partners



#### Feedback and insight

- ▶ 15 areas of highest vulnerability identified through social indicator data.
- ▶ Grouped into six key urban areas: Bradford, Leeds, Hull, Sheffield, Newcastle, Middlesbrough.
- ▶ Historically, we've had low response rates from our direct contact with vulnerable/hard to reach customers who often prefer to receive information through a trusted local partner.

#### What we did

Ran eleven events in local community buildings, promoted through local community partner networks, e.g. Community Voluntary Associations. Round table consultative events designed to:

- ▶ Consult with grass roots service providers on the accessibility of our PSR communications.
- ▶ Raise awareness of PSR and substantially extend our PSR promotional partners network.
- ▶ Promote our Community Fund (page 9).
- ▶ Discuss current challenges and further support we could provide.

Following the events, we redesigned our PSR literature in response to their feedback regarding the needs of their organisations and the vulnerable customers they support. We created an on-line resource area and offered a free print service for leaflets, posters, information sheets and application forms.

There was significant interest expressed for Northern Powergrid to run training and data-sharing sessions to support our local community partners like Citizens Advice, in targeting and delivering our services, as well as their own, to build a more sustainable network.

#### Outcomes and benefits

- ▶ PSR materials simplified and revised to have more impact – informed by experienced vulnerability partners.
- ▶ 96 attendees from organisations including health, mental health, job centres, fire and rescue, many supporting customers with multiple vulnerabilities.
- ▶ 89% overall satisfaction with the events.
- ▶ 93% likely to promote PSR following events – an increase of 60%.
- ▶ All attendees are now part of a network we will continue to support and expand.
- ▶ 1,500 printed resources have been requested, 149 downloads of partner resources on-line.

Our research, data and engagement with vulnerable customers has given us a clear picture of their service needs and priorities. We are now establishing a holistic suite of services to successfully meet those needs.

## Targeted and tailored support

EMBEDDED

The vulnerability matrix we introduced last year is now embedded as part of the consumer vulnerability training and toolkit rolled out this year. The tool provides guidance to our Contact Centre colleagues, helping them to understand how customers' needs evolve over the lifecycle of a power cut, and prompts them to consider the support services most relevant to each customer.

We continue to learn more about our customers' needs and adapt/develop our approach through our regular PSR customer surveys. This feedback is helping to inform our service commitments.



## Our priority service commitments and measures

SCALED UP

Over the last six months we have built on this framework by measuring performance in order to set targets for our services through a set of Priority Services commitments. These commitments align to feedback from our customers in vulnerable situations, and their representatives, about their needs

and expectations. Vulnerable customers' needs are very similar to those of all customers in the early stages of a power cut in that they want us to keep the lights on or get them back on as quickly as possible and to keep them informed of progress. We have been working to set the metrics and ensure we have the correct processes, resources and technology in place

to accurately measure and report on their delivery. The commitments have been guided by our Social Issues Expert Group and our wider stakeholder panel and we will be testing them back directly with vulnerable customers from April before finalising and reporting on them publicly.

Our approach	Our commitments	Example metrics	Our current performance
We originally looked at undertaking no planned works at all under 0 degrees but our stakeholder panel fed back that connections customers, commercial or otherwise, may want to go ahead if any other customers were not affected – regardless of the temperature.	▶ We will minimise disruption wherever possible (avoiding impact).	▶ We will not conduct any planned works affecting PSR customers when the temperature falls under 0 degrees.	▶ 53 jobs deferred due to low temperatures.
We always try to get the power back on as soon as possible for all customers. Some jobs are trickier than others so a 0% target may be unachievable, however through looking at targeting generation for PSR customers we can find ways to keep them warm and well over longer periods, ensuring they have power when they need it, even if not directly from the grid.	▶ In the event of a power cut we will restore power as soon as possible.	▶ 0% electrically medically dependent PSR customers experience a power cut over 6hrs. ▶ A maximum of 10% of PSR customers experience a power cut over 6hrs. ▶ All PSR customers to be restored within 12hrs.	▶ 4.45% ▶ 4.19% ▶ 99.59%
We began to measure and report against a range of communication and service metrics in 2018. We have some initial figures but needed to strengthen processes and reporting to ensure we have an accurate picture of activity in order to set stretch targets and test these with customers.	▶ We deliver tailored services that meet the needs of our vulnerable customers.	▶ Six proactive and reactive communications metrics. ▶ All PSR customers offered support for over 6hr interruptions. ▶ >95% satisfaction for PSR support overall.	▶ Reported from April 2018. ▶ Reported from April 2018. ▶ 83%
Our new vulnerability training roll-out means 100% of staff will be trained to a high standard by September 2018. Through embedding this in our induction and refresher training cycles we will ensure this is maintained. We have also developed a set of metrics to ensure this is having a positive impact on services delivered.	▶ We will ensure everyone is equipped to understand and respond to the needs of our vulnerable customers.	▶ 100% of our colleagues receive vulnerability training every three years. ▶ 90% of frontline colleagues receive face-to-face vulnerability training in 2017/18. ▶ 100% of colleagues receive on-line vulnerability training by September 2018.	▶ Reported from September 2018. ▶ 86% of frontline colleagues received face-to-face vulnerability training. ▶ 74% of colleagues so far have received on-line vulnerability training.
Our data cleanse cycles are embedded and our social indicator data is helping us to target campaigns and engagement of referral partners to ensure we are reaching the most vulnerable.	▶ We will proactively manage our PSR and target promotion to recruit the most vulnerable.	▶ Contact everyone on our register every two years. ▶ Establish partner referral networks to increase PSR registration and engage the hard to reach.	▶ 100% customers contacted through data cleanse every 2 years. ▶ Over 100 new partners this year.



## Measuring service quality

To ensure our customers receive the highest level of service consistently, we have implemented our 10 out of 10 quality framework; which:

- ▶ Establishes clear expectations and standards.
- ▶ Enables colleagues' performance to be observed, assessed and scored.
- ▶ Provides leaders with the opportunity to provide high quality feedback and coaching for continuous improvement.
- ▶ Recognises and rewards great quality conversations with our customers.

The quality framework focuses attention on actively demonstrating care, empathy and providing reassurance and action to the customers who need us the most.

We have doubled the number of PSR customers we survey every year to 3,000; assessing their satisfaction with registration right through to those experiencing a planned or unplanned power cut.

The surveys not only inform us of our performance and PSR customer satisfaction but a series of questions drill down into their expectations and concerns in the event of a power cut so we can understand changing needs and trends to inform service delivery and development.

NEW

We have revised our survey this year to provide us with a stronger customer base for surveying. There are now three surveys, which identify if a customer has experienced a planned or unplanned power cut, or if they have registered on the PSR within the last six months prior to surveying. This means rather than coming across customers who have experience of a power cut by chance, we know who they are already; it also means their responses are more targeted and give a truer view of our service. As it always has, their feedback falls into our continuous improvement cycle, helping us to pinpoint areas for further improvements.

## Feedback from Care Quality Indicator surveys

9.5/10

score for ease of registering on the PSR

8.4/10

Overall satisfaction with PSR services for planned power cuts

8.2/10

Overall satisfaction with PSR services for unplanned power cuts

*When I did ring the number everyone was very helpful I said my husband was dependent on machines to get to bed and obviously I couldn't lift him and they were very very good*

*They are excellent at keeping us in touch and letting us know what is happening*

*I think it is very essential that the people that need it most get the service quicker*

*I didn't have to go through loads of hoops, it was sorted out very quickly, I was very impressed and I thought you know everyone could learn something from them, the way they handled the call and the information was so easy, quick and easy, brilliant. It's not often you get that these days is it*

*My husband has a non-invasive heart and lung machine so he would need a generator if the power was off for more than six hours as it has a six-hour battery life*

Colleagues from across the company are implementing their departmental plans tailoring services within their areas to offer an enhanced service for our vulnerable customers.

NEW

### Suitcase generators

Our colleagues in the North East have been trialling the use of suitcase generators, modified to quickly and flexibly restore power to customers homes, not just a single appliance, to make our customers more comfortable in their own homes, whilst striving to restore full power as quickly as possible.

The trial has been extended as we want to ensure we have a safe, reliable and efficient solution to offer. In the initial stages using petrol generators we identified an issue with the generators cutting out. We have worked with the local manufacturer to design a simple relay trip switch which can be used safely and remotely by customers. Whilst this addresses issues of safety and inconvenience, the petrol generators currently only run for four hours. We are

exploring LPG generators which offer 20 hours of power but the associated cost and safety issues are significant. We continue to work on developing the right solution and hope to be deploying these as part of our service standards within the next regulatory year.

NEW

### Improving the process for emergency disconnections and reconnections for vulnerable customers

Our connections team received a reconnection request from a customer who was suffering from cancer and had to be disconnected due to a significant house fire. Recognising not only the health aspect of vulnerability, the team realised that the very nature of a house fire could put a customer into a vulnerable situation, outside the parameters of a standard disconnection and reconnection. They immediately adapted their services to support the customer and this has resulted in a review of this area of the business for vulnerable customers. Although these cases may prove to be few and far between,

when they do happen the impact for the customer can be devastating.

Piloted since November 2017 the project is looking at the following:

- ▶ The framework/scenarios for identifying vulnerability in this area, e.g. a house fire would not automatically qualify if, for example, it was a disconnection as a result of a fire but then resold at auction in that condition.
- ▶ The current service standards and potential improvements, e.g. offering to visit site and give one-to-one support on what can often be complex sites with multiple contractors rather than needing to go on-line for quotes and to access services.
- ▶ Reviewing the current commercial arrangements, e.g. deferring payment rather than asking for it upfront at a particularly vulnerable time in terms of affordability.

We will continue the pilot throughout 2018 to ensure we have enough examples of individual cases to inform an improved, tailored service.

## Embedding holistic services for vulnerable customers – now and in the future

We feel we have a far greater understanding of the needs of our vulnerable customers than ever before and although we will be testing and shaping our PSR service commitments back with vulnerable customers themselves, we look forward to having a holistic set of core service targets in place within the next regulatory year.

However, we're aware that all customer needs are constantly changing, including those of our vulnerable customers. Over the next few years we will therefore be:

- ▶ Investing in further understanding of future social needs and trends inside and outside our industry – such as the joint DNO social research along with our own.
- ▶ Closely monitoring PSR performance metrics enabled by our Customer Relationship Management system.
- ▶ Understanding the social impact of our wider work and its relationship with some of our most vulnerable communities.

We believe that these core areas of activity will be essential as we develop, test and deliver robust plans for vulnerable customers' support into the next price control and beyond.

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

Our PSR is our main mechanism of identifying our customers experiencing vulnerabilities and we expect this to continue in the long-term. However, we recognise that a power cut increases vulnerability for all our customers,

and there are some who are vulnerable that are unknown to us for various reasons. Whilst our support services were implemented with our PSR customers in mind, they are available to anyone who requires them, at any time. In

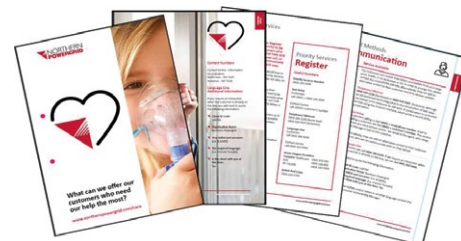
order to achieve this we make sure all our colleagues have the capability to effectively recognise and respond to customers in vulnerable situations.

## The right tools to do the job

In addition to our tailored training and the autonomy to offer the tailored services needed, we make sure our colleagues have the right frameworks, support and processes in place to make this happen. This year we have:

- ▶ Included Consumer Vulnerability awareness into our induction and PSR support services as part of our quality framework.
- ▶ Simplified and clearly explained our PSR referral network and processes, including safeguarding.
- ▶ Developed our new Safeguarding policy, in partnership with the National Training Academy and Citizens Advice.
- ▶ Revised our Consumer Vulnerability toolkit – on-line and in hard copy – to support the revised training programme and the range of services we offer.

- ▶ Embedded our vulnerability needs assessment matrix within our contact centre processes.
- ▶ Incorporated consumer vulnerability awareness sessions in operational colleague briefing meetings reaching 95% of frontline colleagues.
- ▶ Introduced social champions across the business, to help get the message out, to encourage volunteering, to look for opportunities to share and learn from good practice across the business and to identify new opportunities for service improvements.
- ▶ Bolstered our volunteering programme – raising awareness through direct involvement with individuals in vulnerable situations.



*"Volunteering for a day with the Green Doctor really opened my eyes to the issues some of our customers are facing. We talk about fuel poverty and the decision to heat or eat but when you see it with your own eyes it really brings home how important our support and the service we offer is. I was passionate about supporting vulnerable customers and communities before but I feel like I can be a stronger ambassador for this within the executive team and in the business now."*

**Patrick Erwin, Policy and Markets Director**

## Tailored training delivering results

This year we have designed and delivered a bespoke face-to-face and online training programme in collaboration with experts from Money Advice Trust, regarded as vulnerability best practice leaders within the financial services sector, and National Training Academy, best practice leaders in on-line training.

The face-to-face training has been designed to be interactive, and to take advantage of the conversation generated by the diversity of the roles gained from attendance across different business areas. Activities are completed in groups and cover:

- ▶ Defining vulnerability.
- ▶ Identification of customers in vulnerable situations.
- ▶ Indicators of vulnerability.
- ▶ Tools/techniques for gathering relevant data.
- ▶ Our Priority Services toolkit.
- ▶ Our Consumer Vulnerability Assessment Matrix.
- ▶ The basics of safeguarding adults and children.
- ▶ The importance of reporting back.

The conversation generated throughout the training provides attendees with the opportunity to learn about different business areas and roles, and how the services they each provide can link together.

The online training covers the same information and requires a 75% pass mark to successfully complete.

The key to the success of this training has been the input of experts who have spent time understanding our business and the involvement of colleagues in testing and developing the programmes.

## Measuring impact

### As a result of the training:

- ▶ **100%** of attendees knew what the PSR was, compared to **61%** before training.
- ▶ **95%** of attendees felt prepared to report a safeguarding concern to the relevant organisation(s), compared to **51%** before training. Five colleagues have made safeguarding referrals.
- ▶ We have developed a new safeguarding policy in partnership with The National Training Academy and Citizens Advice.
- ▶ We regularly receive feedback on how colleagues are translating the training into action:

*"Provided overnight accommodation for family of three adults and hot meals due to medical condition and distress of long duration power cut."*

*"An elderly lady let me know that her electric blanket was very hot and she didn't like to turn it off through the night as she got cold. I was concerned for her safety so we contacted the fire service to organise a Health, Safety and Well-being check."*

*"Got customer a generator but it could not be fitted safely so managed to get customer into a care home for the day."*

*"Fast tracking a reconnection as customer was renovating property after a fire and had cancer."*

**Our third sector partnerships are fundamental in helping us achieve sustained impact in our vulnerable communities.**

## Improving partnerships and collaboration

We have continued to improve our partnerships this year to reflect good practice within the industry and build on the feedback from last year's submission:

- ▶ Further reviewed the reporting arrangements and introduced a much closer working relationship throughout the year across all our partnerships. We receive quarterly progress reports with agreed metrics which are then discussed and reviewed at a subsequent face-to-face meeting.
- ▶ Included a set of guiding principles and decision-making criteria which inform our assessment framework before we agree any new projects.
- ▶ Mapped partnerships to our most vulnerable areas and addressed gaps through scale-up and targeting support (see below).

- ▶ Working closely with partners – taking a holistic approach encouraging cross-referrals, best practice sharing, running joint training sessions and sharing data.
- ▶ Ensured our partners are GDPR compliant.

Since 2015 we have been working with the Trussell Trust, establishing 'More Than Food' grants to reach customers when they are most in need. The grants support food banks to pilot and deliver enhanced services such as debt advice, efficiency advice, well-being and healthy eating programmes, helping to address underlying issues in addition to immediate needs. Three years into the partnership we wanted to review progress and further understand their challenges. The resulting survey undertaken with foodbanks outlined needs and gaps in current funding provision and the fund has been revised to reflect feedback.

As a result we have:

- ▶ Increased minimum grant awards to £5,000 from £2,500 and simplified reporting to encourage smaller organisations to participate and enable reporting.
- ▶ Included PSR registrations as a standard requirement of the grant.
- ▶ Ensured that Trussell Trust can directly fast-track service users experiencing fuel poverty through to the Powergrid Cares service as this includes a regional specialist debt advice programme.
- ▶ Offered PSR, Consumer Vulnerability and basic fuel debt advice training through Northern Powergrid or our partners.

For the six projects which received funding in March this year it is estimated that we will reach over 11,500 people in need.

### EMBEDDED

### CASE STUDY

#### Partnering Communities Fund



#### The need

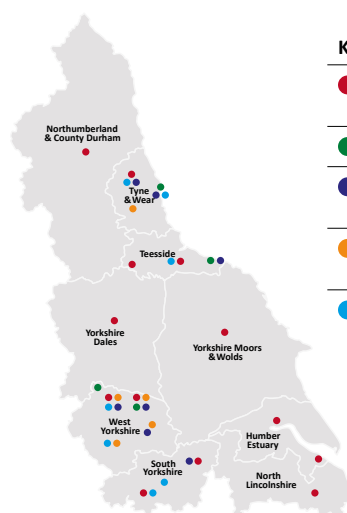
- ▶ We have seen a shift in the last two years from generation projects towards affordability and energy efficiency applications to our Community Energy Seed Fund.
- ▶ Through our partnership with Northern Gas Networks we recognise that we are often both supporting the same or similar projects or organisations separately.

#### What we did

We have expanded the criteria of our Community Energy Seed Fund, now in its fourth year, to support projects which deliver against any or all of our social objectives. Our Partnering Communities Fund was launched in November 2017 and we received 33 applications from a range of large and small community organisations and charities. In order to understand the cross-over between our two funds Northern Gas Networks was a member of our assessment panel along with wider stakeholders and we were part of theirs. This has led to agreement that we will join our funds in 2018 to ensure a more holistic approach and the best possible impact for our shared customers.

#### The outcomes

- ▶ Driving local innovation through working with organisations who have the in-depth knowledge of the areas, issues and individuals they support.
- ▶ An open and transparent approach to identifying potential partners, allowing us to assess like-for-like solutions in a managed way.
- ▶ Seven innovative projects reaching more than 1,750 people, delivering benefits and learning that we can share with wider partners and potentially scale up if successful. For example:
  - Citizens Advice Sheffield and Law Centre – advising the deaf community on energy saving, switching and PSR.
  - Thornton Lodge Action Group – alleviating hardship associated with fuel poverty for digitally excluded people in Huddersfield.



#### Key

- Community events and outreach – PSR promotion
- Partnering Communities Fund projects
- School employability programmes – Ahead partnership, Maths Inspiration, Big Bang
- School energy efficiency programmes – Energy Heroes
- Forthcoming Partnering Communities Fund projects

### SCALED UP

### CASE STUDY

#### Reviewing, expanding and targeting existing partnership services

A key development we reported last year was identifying our most vulnerable communities in order to target vulnerable groups, prioritise investment and support community-based education and volunteering programmes. Emerging best practice married with Social Indicator Mapping has enhanced our approach to working with our most vulnerable customers this year. The map shows just a snapshot of where some of our key programmes have been deployed.

Our Partnering Communities Fund which will join with the NGN fund in 2018 is allowing us to target initiatives and partnerships by geography and need, something we will build on in the coming years where we may have gaps.

**Powergrid Cares is our flagship partnership programme which offers a holistic approach to addressing issues of fuel poverty and affordability for our customers who are in most need.**

## Powergrid Cares programme

**SCALED UP**

Since we began our partnership with Citizens Advice Newcastle back in 2014 we have been piloting, reviewing, enhancing and scaling up the services we offer to our customers experiencing fuel poverty and affordability issues. The Powergrid Cares

model simplifies access to debt-advice and wider provision through two direct points of contact with Citizens Advice Leeds and Newcastle and also through our wider partners: Trussell Trust, Relate and Green Doctor. A dedicated number means our colleagues and partners can fast track customers who need extra support. The service responds to the personal needs identified by our

customers and helps them receive relevant support. It also provides critical support through a new Hardship Fund for those facing acute fuel poverty or crisis. The model supports Northern Powergrid-funded projects to collaborate and share learning to achieve excellent customer-centred provision.

- ▶ Established Trussell Trust Partnerships grant programme.
- ▶ Introduced fuel debt advisor support with Citizens Advice Newcastle.

- ▶ Piloted Green Doctor programme with Northern Gas Networks.
- ▶ Enhanced our Trussell Trust grants to be more energy related – more than food.

- ▶ Expanded fuel debt advisor model to Citizens Advice Leeds – service available across our patch.
- ▶ Green Doctor programme agreed to run through to 2019.

### Today

- ▶ Relate feasibility study begins and Powergrid Cares model embedded as an enhanced service.
- ▶ Training/sharing learning event across all partners.

### Forthcoming

- ▶ Relate to deliver training to wider community partners throughout 2018.

2014/15

2015/16

2016/17

2017/18

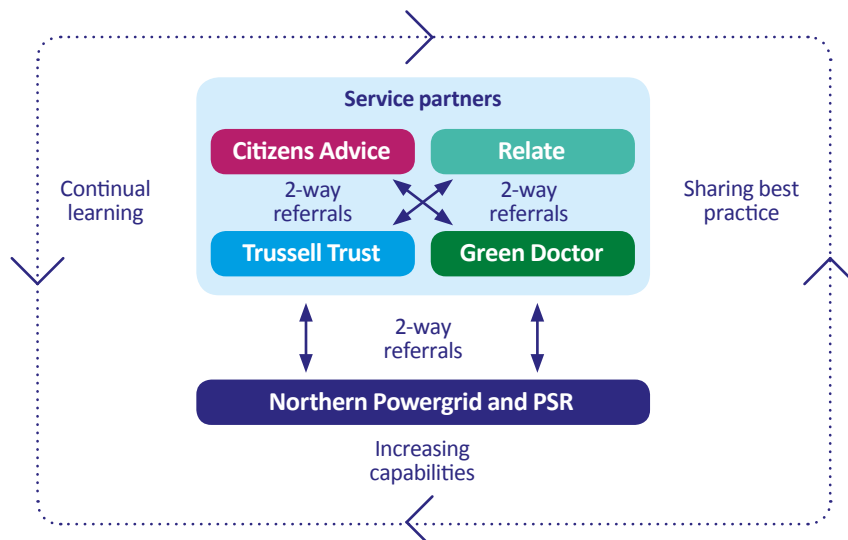
2018/19

*"The Powergrid Cares model allows me to work with clients over time, so I'm able to build trust and really understand and respond to the issues affecting them. A large part of what I do is income maximisation and financial capability but I know there's a network of partner specialists to provide support – it's a holistic and collaborative approach to supporting vulnerable customers with complex needs."*

Vicky Emsley Specialist Advisor, CA Leeds

*"At a recent national Citizens Advice meeting my colleagues felt that Powergrid Cares was a best practice model which should be replicated across the country."*

Shona Alexander CE, CA Leeds



	EMBEDDED	EMBEDDED	EMBEDDED	NEW
Powergrid care partner	Citizens Advice Leeds and Newcastle	Trussell Trust	Green Doctors	Relate
Service offered	Three funded specialist Energy Debt Advisors who offer in-depth and holistic fuel poverty advice, referrals and support as well as addressing wider health, affordability and other social issues.	More Than Food grants encourage innovation; enabling foodbanks to provide specialist debt and benefits advice along with wellbeing and health support to maximise outcomes for service users.	Home visits where small energy efficiency measures are installed and energy efficiency advice is given. Education of frontline workers and the general public is also provided.	Relationship counselling support available; recognising the link between emotional well-being and wider vulnerabilities such as fuel poverty. One-year pilot introduced in response to feedback from existing partners.
Customers supported directly	1,682			
Overall customer benefit	£272,958			
Cost per customer supported	£61.49			
Benefit per customer	£162.28			

### Outcomes and benefits

- ▶ Overall PSR referrals – 515.
- ▶ 52 households switched either energy supplier or tariff.
- ▶ 75 households claimed the Warm Homes Discount.
- ▶ 1,522 energy advice saving and winter warmth measures installed.
- ▶ 576 other services delivered including CO detectors, dehumidifiers, blankets and hot water bottles.
- ▶ Green Doctors achieved match funding of £99,000 to offer multi-agency approach to tackling inter-related issues in Bradford.
- ▶ Our customers receive holistic support to address their needs.
- ▶ Improve the support services offered to our customers by helping refer them to appropriate, professional and independent services in a safe, non-judgemental way.
- ▶ SROI – for every £1 invested: £11.16 additional income; £8.17 in wider economic benefits and social benefits; and £1.57 in fiscal benefits.
- ▶ Customers receiving £80 towards fuel debt as part of hardship fund to date have experienced complex issues including debt, anxiety, depression, cancer, unemployment and drug addiction.





