

nationalgrid



Annual Vulnerability Report

2023/24

Electricity
Distribution

nationalgrid.co.uk

Welcome

Our mission at National Grid is to ensure a clear, fair and affordable energy future for all of our customers, and that vision sits at the heart of everything we do.

I am proud to be able to publish our first Annual Vulnerability Report of the RII0-ED2 regulatory period. These reports are incredibly important as they set out how we are meeting the commitments we've made to our customers - especially the 2.3 million customers currently registered on our Priority Services Register - and reporting on the impact our interventions have had.

This work has been delivered by our committed colleagues working across our control rooms, Contact Centres, front line operations, and support services - a group of over 6,600 individuals who keep electricity flowing and seek to provide the very best customer service day and night.

We're not alone though, and through our strategic approach to partnership working we've been able to deliver substantial value to thousands of customers; helping to reduce fuel poverty, enabling access to low carbon technologies, and providing support and additional care to customers with a range of additional needs.

We live in an uncertain and volatile world and it has never before been so important for companies to play their part in supporting the communities they serve.

I believe this report demonstrates our commitment to our customers and our region, and provides a strong foundation for the years to come.

Christopher Hayton
Director of Corporate Affairs



We are the nation's largest Distribution Network Operator (DNO) by geography, powering homes and businesses across England and Wales.

With 220,000km of electricity network spanning the east and west midlands, south west, and south Wales, we connect over 20 million people to the power they need via eight million meters.

Our network serves **20 million** customers via eight million meters

2.3 million customers on our Priority Services Register

We cover a **55,000km²** service area and employ over **6,600** colleagues

Our main responsibilities to our customers:



Operating our network assets to ensure we 'keep the lights on' for all of our customers, including those on the Priority Services Register (PSR).



Maintaining the condition, and therefore, reliability of our assets.



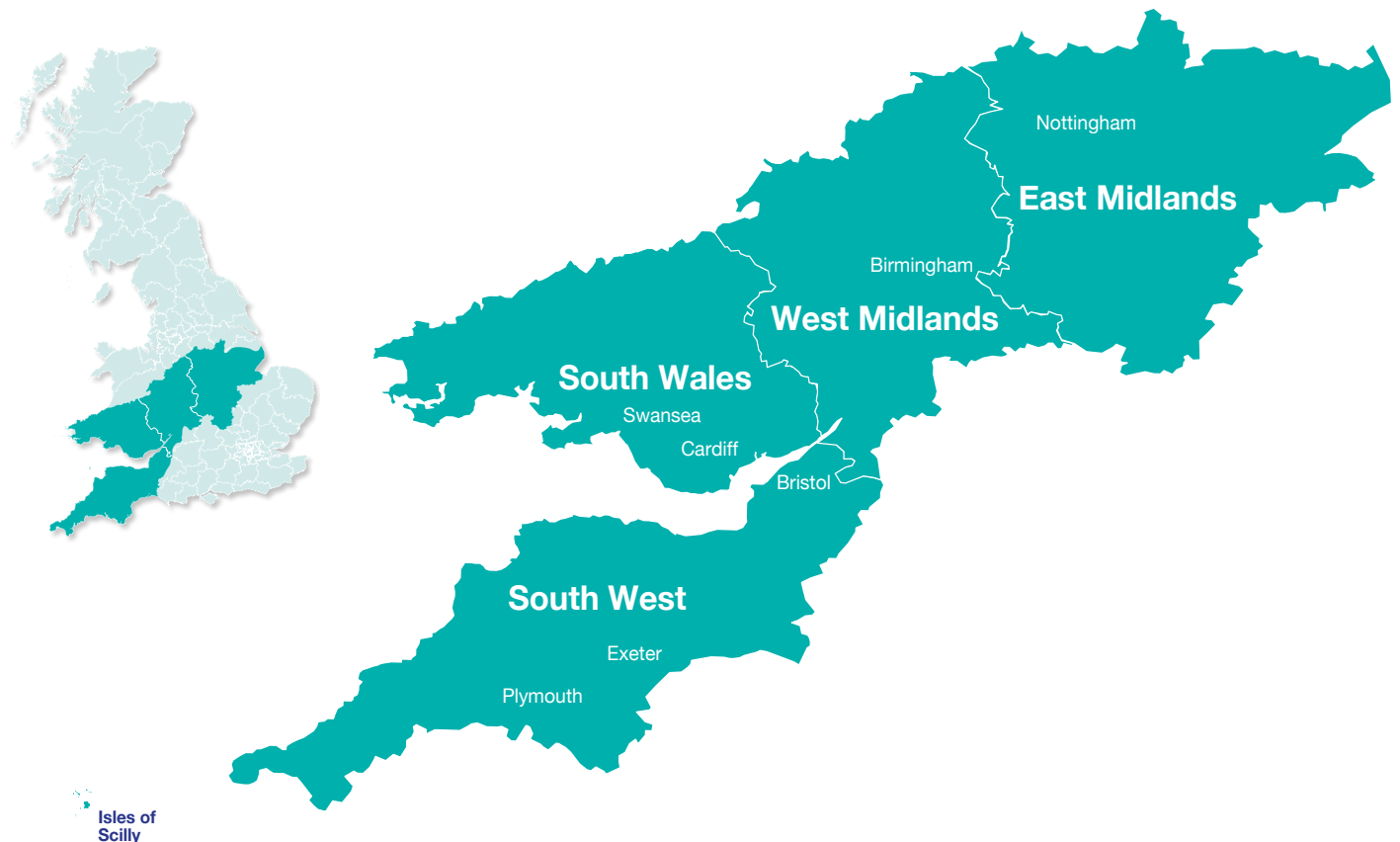
Fixing our assets should they get damaged or if they are faulty.



Upgrading the existing network or building new ones to provide additional electricity supply or capacity to our customers.



Operating a smart system by managing two-way power flows and flexible services.



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Annual Vulnerability Report 2023/24

In April 2023 Ofgem, our regulator, introduced the Consumer Vulnerability Incentive to ensure Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) deliver key vulnerability priorities to:

- Protect those whose wellbeing is most at risk during a loss of supply
- Help those in, or at risk of, fuel poverty
- Support customers at risk of being left behind by the energy system transition to net zero.

In accordance with the incentive, this Annual Vulnerability Report will provide stakeholders with an overview of the support services NGED has delivered for customers in vulnerable situations during the year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

This report covers the four licences:

- National Grid Electricity Distribution – East Midlands**
- National Grid Electricity Distribution – West Midlands**
- National Grid Electricity Distribution – South West**
- National Grid Electricity Distribution – South Wales**

1. Introduction

As a Distribution Network Operator, it is imperative that the services we provide are both inclusive and effective, as we continue to play an essential role in protecting and supporting customers in vulnerable situations.

Our customers have a wide range of needs, personal characteristics, health conditions and skills that impact their ability to interact with the energy system. In addition, their requirements can change over time, particularly when faced with an unexpected change of circumstance or a particularly urgent or complex situation.

Our commitment to customers in vulnerable situations starts at the highest level of the company. Our well-justified approach includes an Executive Vulnerability Champion and a consistent and continuous focus on embedding training to maximise the potential from all customer touchpoints. All new-starters receive training on recognising signs of vulnerability and how they can help customers, while frontline field and Contact Centre staff receive annual refresher sessions.

We have continued to expand our strong network of partners who deliver a variety of services, from detailed, one-to-one fuel poverty support to providing power cut resilience advice and assisting customers with joining our Priority Services Register (PSR), which now supports 2.3 million customers. This evolving, collaborative approach allows us to maintain a comprehensive understanding of the changing landscape of consumer vulnerability and, in particular, the issues prevalent in our region. As a result, we have delivered more than £23m of fuel poverty savings this year, supporting 23,705 customers.

External factors such as unprecedented weather events, lasting impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the international energy crisis have driven many customers into vulnerable circumstances for the first time, or amplified existing vulnerabilities. The increasing pressures on the cost of living has forced many customers who were 'just about managing' with their day-to-day finances into fuel poverty. The financial burden of energy bills and widespread inflation has also been widely reported to have the potential to trigger anxiety and mental health issues.

On top of this, we are seeing a significant transformation in the energy sector, revolutionising the way we operate a smarter, low carbon network. Customers must be at the heart of this net zero transition and, as we experience a significant uptake of low carbon technologies on our network, we are supporting customers in vulnerable situations to access the benefits this brings. This year, as our Low Carbon Transition support develops and we continue to shape our offering we have supported 5,828 customers to save £449k.

For all of these reasons, safeguarding customers in vulnerable situations, particularly during power cuts, remains the enduring focus of our Customer Vulnerability Strategy.

Our Customer Vulnerability Strategy at a glance

Our core mission remains to **maintain a high quality, accurate Priority Services Register (PSR) with the widest possible reach, continuously work to identify and increase our understanding of vulnerability, deliver targeted, holistic support to those in fuel poverty and help customers navigate the transition to a low carbon future.**

How this strategy is embedded in our delivery is explained in more detail on [pages 8 and 9](#) and throughout this document.

Key principles



Increase PSR reach and build power cut resilience



Tackle fuel poverty and cold homes



Ensure a fair energy transition for all

Our delivery approach ensures that partnerships and collaboration maximise benefits for customers

Work with external experts and trusted partners to leverage knowledge and expertise, using data to drive insight and improvement. Foster strong industry relationships to ensure shared best practice and maximum efficiency.

2. Engagement with stakeholders drives continuous improvement

Regular, detailed engagement with expert stakeholders, such as our Customer Panel, Consumer Insights Forum and delivery partners, enables us to continually review our understanding of vulnerability.

Ongoing feedback from our local delivery experts provides key insight on prevalent challenges and emerging issues, as well as enabling them to share best practice and ongoing improvements.

In 2023/24 we engaged with over 1,700 stakeholders on consumer vulnerability topics via more than 110 activities. Through this robust and cyclical engagement, we ensure the evolving priorities of our key stakeholders are captured, improving the outcomes we can deliver for customers in vulnerable situations:



Customer Panel

In place for 14 years, our panel is a group of 30 experts representing all customer and stakeholder segments, with membership regularly reviewed and refreshed to ensure it reflects emerging customer issues and the changing energy landscape. The Panel, attended by our President and/or a member of the executive, meets three times annually in addition to holding regular, topic-specific surgeries to discuss key business areas in detail. This valuable engagement provides essential customer insights, drives new initiatives and strategically steers us on key business issues.



Example delivery and outputs in 2023/24

- Published new customer-facing leaflets including information on customers in vulnerable situations for landlords and non-connected customers (e.g. park homes).
- Reviewed and informed proposals for fuel poverty winter funding applications.
- Shaped the operation of digital channels to support customers in vulnerable situations (e.g. allowing users of live web chat to discuss their needs).
- Reviewed and improved content and design of Smart Energy Action Plans (see [page 35](#)).



Consumer Insights Forum

We established our Consumer Insights Forum, a qualitative research community of bill-paying, future and business customers, in 2021. The forum comprises 90 members from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and locations to ensure a range of views are represented. Through online exercises, 'homework' tasks and focus groups, the forum reviews key business areas and decisions in detail and provides informed, candid feedback.



Example delivery and outputs in 2023/24

- Reassessed the priorities for us as a DNO, with fuel poverty remaining high on the list.
- Shaped and informed the update of our Social Contract, including a refreshed evaluation criteria.



Social Obligations Workshop

Our annual Social Obligations Workshop in November 2023 attracted 67 attendees, in person and online, representing a range of different stakeholder groups, including charities, community energy groups, utilities and energy consultants. This year, delegates unanimously agreed that innovative and inclusive approaches were required in order to expand the PSR's reach and there was scope for greater cross-sector collaboration on digital initiatives to bring the PSR and fuel poverty support to more vulnerable customers.



Example delivery and outputs in 2023/24

- Increased community frontline worker training through our fuel poverty outreach.
- Improved PSR portal on NGED website.
- Network of referral partners increased to facilitate PSR sign-up for hard-to-reach customers (see [page 19](#)).



Collaboration and best practice sharing

Continued collaboration and best practice sharing with core fuel poverty partners and industry colleagues who share our geographical footprint allows efficient outcomes for customers, leveraging synergies to increase reach while reducing costs.



Example delivery and outputs in 2023/24

- Developed and shared consistent customer advice material for partners providing Low Carbon Transition Services.
- Low Carbon Transition pilot projects launched to explore ways of offering advice to more customers.
- Collaborative PSR promotion for hospital patients with Wessex Water and Bristol Water.

3. A Customer Vulnerability Strategy shaped by our stakeholders

Key to the delivery of effective, holistic services for customers is our long-standing strategy, continually updated and refreshed using stakeholder insights. Collaboration, partnership networks and expanding initiatives have continued to increase the reach and depth of our programmes in the last ten years.

At its core, our strategy has centred on the maintenance and accuracy of our Priority Services Register (PSR), whilst shaping our delivery plans to meet the stretching targets of our RIIO-ED2 commitments (RIIO stands for Revenue = Incentives + Innovation + Outputs).

Our strategy allows us to meet the changing needs of customers, increasing both the depth and reach of our holistic support. The strategy aligns with Ofgem's consumer vulnerability framework and baseline expectations, which operate under four key principles:

Principle 1: Effectively support consumers in vulnerable situations, particularly those most vulnerable to a loss of supply, through a sophisticated approach to the management, promotion and maintenance of a PSR.

Principle 2: Maximise opportunities to identify, and deliver support to, consumers in vulnerable situations through smart use of data.

Principle 3: Understand new forms of vulnerability, in particular by identifying blockers to participating in a smart flexible energy system.

Principle 4: Embed the approach to protecting the interests of consumers in vulnerable situations throughout a company's operations to maximise the opportunities to deliver support.

A summary of our performance against wider Business Plan Commitments and how these directly support or contribute to these key principles can be found in [Appendix 2](#).



Our Customer Vulnerability Strategy

Core mission

Maintain a high quality, accurate Priority Services Register (PSR) with the widest possible reach, continuously work to identify and increase our understanding of vulnerability, deliver targeted, holistic support to those in fuel poverty and help customers navigate the transition to a low carbon future.

Key principles

Delivery approach



Increase PSR reach and build power cut resilience

Deliver an effective PSR service with bespoke, proactive contact during power cuts providing tailored resilience advice, end-to-end help and welfare support. Ensure empathetic and informed interactions with customers in vulnerable situations.

Enabled by

- Continuously improving accuracy of customer records. Contacting PSR customers at least once every two years to validate information and offer advice/support.
- Strategically expanding our referral partner network, allowing partners to increase reach and target underrepresented groups and locations (e.g. using social indicator mapping).
- Promoting the PSR and resilience advice across multiple channels.
- Driving towards a single PSR sign-up for customers through industry collaboration and data sharing.
- Providing regular expert-led training, enabling colleagues to increase understanding of vulnerabilities and deliver tailored support.



Tackle fuel poverty and cold homes

Deliver a holistic range of support for each customer via single, end-to-end touchpoints, using innovative methods to deliver new and improved services.

Enabled by

- Established, enduring partnerships with trusted providers and continuing to identify innovative support tailored to customer needs.
- Undertaking regular horizon scans to increase our understanding of the support sector landscape and root causes of fuel poverty.
- Surveys, engagement and robust delivery reporting from partners to drive improvement with qualitative insights and quantitative data.
- Using our comprehensive data mapping and expert research to target and support communities with the highest rates of fuel poverty.



Ensure a fair energy transition for all

Deliver support so customers can benefit from the energy transition, building services capable of evolving and expanding to meet future needs.

Enabled by

- Using bespoke research, data and practical trials to understand the capabilities needed to participate in a smart energy system, and the barriers that exist.
- Utilising learning from our proven model of fuel poverty support to design services where customers can benefit from multiple interventions via a single point of contact.
- Delivering innovative pilots to trial new support services for customers and identify effective approaches, tailored to their individual circumstances.

Delivery model centred around partnerships and collaboration

- Work with external experts and trusted partners to leverage knowledge and expertise.
- Foster strong industry relationships to ensure shared best practice and maximum efficiency.
- Data-led approach driving analysis to grow the PSR and inform the development and delivery of services with key partners to achieve maximum benefits for customers.

4. Consumer Vulnerability Incentive

The Consumer Vulnerability Incentive (CVI) introduced by Ofgem in 2023, assesses our performance in five key areas:



All DNOs' performance against these metrics will be assessed at the end of 2024/25 and 2027/28 of our current price control period, RII0-ED2.

As part of the incentive, Ofgem also introduced a minimum requirements assessment which uses an independent assessment process to provide Ofgem and wider

stakeholders with assurance that our performance scores are comparable and reliable.

Our performance against the CVI targets is set out in Table 1 below, and was assessed by the industry-appointed assessor in May 2024 (see [Appendix 1](#)).

Priority Services Register reach

PSR reach means the total number of households registered on our PSR out of the total number of households in our area that are eligible to be registered.

Eligibility for the PSR is based on common, national datasets including data from the Office for National Statistics and Census data and is calculated for all DNOs by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) using the PSR household methodology agreed and set for the CVI.

We will continue to expand awareness of the PSR through active promotion, partnership working with trusted agencies and collaboration with other utilities (see [pages 18-21](#)).



Using this common methodology, across all four licence areas we have 67% of the eligible households registered on our PSR.

Fuel Poverty Services

The social value of Fuel Poverty Services is the total 'Net Present Value' (NPV) our programmes have achieved by alleviating the impacts of fuel poverty for customers.

The social value of fuel poverty is measured using a standard Social Value Framework which utilises a commonly followed 'rulebook' to ensure each licensee calculates value in a comparable and consistent way. It requires the input of the number of customers we have supported with Fuel Poverty Services, the benefits they have achieved and the cost of those services (to NGED).



In total, our extensive fuel poverty programme supported 23,705 customers in 2023/24 (our model delivers additional benefits to those in scope of Ofgem's incentive - see page 28). Using the agreed Social Value Framework, the Net Present Value of the Fuel Poverty Services delivered to customers was £12,757,586.

All customers who receive these services must be invited to take part in a survey, carried out by an independent survey provider to assess customer satisfaction with the Fuel Poverty Services they have received.



Overall, in 2023/24, our customers reported a satisfaction of 9.09/10 with the Fuel Poverty Services our partners delivered.

Low Carbon Transition Services

The social value of Low Carbon Transition (LCT) Services is the total 'Net Present Value' (NPV) our programmes have achieved, benefitting customers by enabling participation in a net zero energy system.

The social value of LCT Services is also measured using a standard Social Value Framework which utilises a commonly followed 'rulebook' to ensure that each licensee calculates value in a comparable and consistent way. It requires the input of the number of customers we have supported, the benefits they have achieved and the cost of those services (to NGED).

The value delivered, across all four licence areas is currently a negative value. Since our Low Carbon Transition Services are relatively new and many of the benefits take time to be realised, this means although customers are receiving benefits, the cost to develop schemes is initially greater than the value delivered. We continue to implement innovative new initiatives and support partners to widen their support and increase the benefits for customers in this area (see [page 32](#)).



In total, our Low Carbon Transition Services supported 2,099 customers in 2023/24. In the development of new services providing LCT support, we delivered additional services benefitting customers (see page 34). In 2023/24, using the agreed Social Value Framework, the Net Present Value of the service delivered to customers through LCT support was -£28,386.

All customers who receive these services must be invited to take part in a survey, carried out by an independent survey provider to assess customer satisfaction with the LCT Services they have received.



Overall, in 2023/24, our customers reported a satisfaction of 9.05/10 with the Low Carbon Transition Services our partners delivered.

Table 1: CVI metrics – ongoing performance

Metric	Year 1	Year 2	Year 2 target	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 5 target
PSR reach							
East Midlands	67.4%		75%				75%
West Midlands	66.3%		75%				75%
South Wales	70.2%		75%				75%
South West	67.1%		75%				75%
Social value of Fuel Poverty Services delivered (NPV)							
East Midlands	£4.14m						
West Midlands	£3.68m		Total for all licences				Total for all licences
South Wales	£2.87m		£13.95m				£60.0m
South West	£2.08m						
Social value of Low Carbon Transition Services delivered (NPV)							
East Midlands	£14.50k						
West Midlands	(£29.25k)		Total for all licences				Total for all licences
South Wales	(£6.46k)		£578k				£1.98m
South West	(£7.18k)						
Average Fuel Poverty Customer Satisfaction Survey score							
East Midlands	9.05/10		9/10				9/10
West Midlands	9.30/10		9/10				9/10
South Wales	9.05/10		9/10				9/10
South West	9.13/10		9/10				9/10
Average LCT Customer Satisfaction Survey score							
East Midlands	9.13/10		9/10				9/10
West Midlands	8.67/10		9/10				9/10
South Wales*	-		9/10				9/10
South West	9.25/10		9/10				9/10

The assurance provided by the independent assessor to confirm NGED has met the criteria for the incentive can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

*In South Wales, an insufficient volume of survey responses has been received for 2023/24

5. Regularly Reported Evidence

The table below details our performance in relation to the Regularly Reported Evidence (RRE) which all DNOs are required to submit to Ofgem. The table shows our performance for the first year of RIIO-ED2 and will be updated year-on-year for each of our licence areas.

- In line with Principle 1 of Ofgem's vulnerability baseline expectations, we have attempted to contact all of our PSR customers once every two years to update their PSR records (see [pages 23-25](#)).
- The average Customer Satisfaction Score (CSS) out of ten for PSR customers who have experienced a power cut (see [page 23](#)) is above target, and
- The volumes of customers we have supported with both Fuel Poverty Services and LCT support (see [pages 26-37](#)) are expected to reach the targets of 113,000 and 8,384 customers respectively before the end of RIIO-ED2.

Table 2: RRE table

RRE	Expectation	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Frequency of PSR Customer data cleanse (reported on an annual basis)		Customers attempted to contact to verify their data (% of registered PSR customers)				
East Midlands	Target: Attempt to contact all PSR Customers to verify data every two years, (at least 50% annually)	54%				
West Midlands		54%				
South Wales		64%				
South West		61%				
CSS score for PSR Customers who have experienced a power cut		Reported on an annual basis				
East Midlands	9/10	9.02/10				
West Midlands	9/10	9.03/10				
South Wales	9/10	9.32/10				
South West	9/10	9.01/10				
The volume of Fuel Poverty Services delivered		Reported on a cumulative basis				
East Midlands	Target: 113,000 fuel poor customers supported by 2028	5,388				
West Midlands		5,628				
South Wales		6,562				
South West		6,127				
The volume of Low Carbon Transition Services delivered		Reported on a cumulative basis				
East Midlands	Target: 8,384 customers supported by 2028	406				
West Midlands		1,120				
South Wales		184				
South West		389				

As well as using the RRE above prescribed by Ofgem, we also committed in our Customer Vulnerability Strategy to report against our Business Plan wider commitments which can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

6. Social Value Framework utilisation

We always strive to ensure we are delivering the best value for our customers. Each DNO has a set of performance metrics which measure the value of the services we have delivered for customers in vulnerable situations. To calculate value delivered, which is represented by Net Present Value (NPV), we are required to use a common Social Value Framework. We also use this to forecast how we expect to deliver value through the activities outlined in our Customer Vulnerability Strategy.

Using this tool can provide insights into what is working well, where improvements can be made to generate further value and where services are not delivering the expected value and should be discontinued or adapted.

Each of our fuel poverty and Low Carbon Transition (LCT) projects are measured using the Social Value Framework to calculate the social value delivered, using the benefits achieved and the cost to achieve them.

The cost and benefits of each project are considered by both our executive team and our expert Customer Panel when we are seeking endorsement for new projects or prioritising the support services we wish to commission.

The following examples demonstrate how the Social Value Framework drives decision-making on which activities we undertake, those we can expand and those which are not considered viable.

Success leads to project continuation:

<p>Project: Hope4U collaboration with the health and social care sector We know that having a young family can be extremely difficult for customers in fuel poverty. Several benefits and entitlements exist for new mothers but, often, awareness of the support available is low. Our continued work with charity Hope4U, enables new and expectant mothers to receive specialist support from people they trust. In partnership with NHS community midwives, Hope4U delivers vital support such as access to maternity benefits, housing support and essential baby equipment. Most importantly, the project can provide each customer with immediate support as well as building a bespoke savings plan, targeting long-lasting benefits to build longer term resilience.</p>	700 customers supported	NPV over one year: £1.45m	Social Value: Positive 
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Decision: Using expert, trusted partners encourages clients to disclose their, often difficult, circumstances allowing the most impactful support to be delivered. **Continued high performing social value, along with substantial benefits for every customer and expansion to new NHS trusts in the previous year underpinned our decision to enter into a new contract and continue this project.**

When projects don't deliver expected value:

<p>Pilot: Low Carbon Transition support Aimed at customers who had previously benefited from fuel poverty support through our trusted partners, the project tested the viability of contacting previous customers to offer LCT Services that might not have been around at the time of their first interaction. Three of our core partners participated and contacted customers offering LCT support in areas such as smart meters and flexible tariff advice.</p>	1,659 customers supported	NPV over one year: (£40k)	Social Value: Negative 
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Decision: Successful contacts were lower than usual given the absence of tailored outreach or a 'warm' referral. Customers were effectively receiving a cold call so take up for advice was low. This, coupled with the fact that whilst some customers valued information and advice, few wanted support with grants or low carbon technology installations, meant that value delivered was also relatively low. **Negative social value confirms pilot model should not be rolled out at this stage, until more viable offers are available for customers.**



What our

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Plan to help us to
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7. Delivering our vulnerability strategy commitments

7.1 Understanding the vulnerability landscape

The multi-faceted nature of customer vulnerability means many customers may face intersecting challenges. For example, those vulnerable to a power cut may also struggle to afford to heat their home or be unable to participate in the opportunities provided by the energy transition.

Our engagement with expert delivery partners has made it clear that more customers than ever before are having to make a choice between eating and heating their homes.

Those seeking support are experiencing significant levels of debt and stakeholders have highlighted the demand for that support as a major issue; charity sector organisations are stretched to the limit and assistance is often restricted to firefighting through short-term solutions for customers.

We continue to commission and work with partners on initiatives that allow us to keep track of the evolving landscape so we can continuously evolve and deliver the right level of support for our customers.

Data mapping enhances targeted support



We continue to update, use and publish our **Social Indicator Mapping**, to more-effectively target support in our region. This ensures we have an enhanced understanding of vulnerability and we refine and expand datasets allowing us to locate and target our outreach schemes to areas of greatest need.

We open-source the frequently-updated data, to allow Local Authorities and partners to target and reach geographical areas where customers may be struggling to maintain a warm home or could benefit from being registered for priority services.

Our mapping currently identifies the following key data:

- **PSR:** Total number of customers eligible and gaps in NGED's coverage
- **Fuel poverty:** Households finding it difficult to affordably heat their homes
- **Resilience:** Community resilience levels to inform local network investment
- **Community energy:** Location of schemes to potentially protect/involve the interests of the most vulnerable in the smart energy transition
- **Income factors:** Such as customers on disability benefits, those eligible for universal credit and children in low income families.



Example delivery and outputs in 2023/24

- Mapping used by Kidney Care UK to target outreach in areas found to have the highest level of deprivation with high prevalence of chronic kidney disease (see **page 20**).
- Data within the social indicator map used to understand customer demographics in advance of targeting research, such as projects undertaken by the Rural England Research Panel.

Using research to understand the social landscape



‘Horizon Scan’ research, undertaken on our behalf by the Centre for Sustainable Energy, allows us to identify organisations offering energy and affordable warmth services to customers in vulnerable situations in our four licence areas, as well as pinpointing gaps in support. The detailed research and analysis enables us to ascertain the types of service offered in each organisation/geographical location, prevailing issues faced by customers and the organisations themselves and the agency’s capacity to handle customer support.



Example delivery and outputs in 2023/24

- Increased network of referral partners from 180 to 197 (see [page 19](#)).
- Targeted communications ensure the most effective reach when we promote our Community Matters Fund (see [page 30](#)).
- Open-sourced data and supporting information on our website allows partners and other organisations to expand their network of support and increase knowledge about agencies they may not have been aware of.

The research and analysis above continues to provide important data-driven insights. This, together with our annual engagement programme and extensive collaboration with industry colleagues, enables us to effectively and efficiently update our understanding of the issues faced by our customers and provide targeted, valuable support.

The following sections demonstrate how our Customer Vulnerability Strategy has been implemented throughout 2023/24 and how the resulting delivery and initiatives meet Ofgem’s key principles and baseline expectations for the standards of service we are expected to deliver for domestic customers in vulnerable situations.

Case study

We are members of the Rural England Research Panel along with Cadent Gas, Wales and West Utilities, Northern Gas and Southern Water. In 2023/24 we collaboratively commissioned research into the experiences and issues for certain rural energy and water customers.

The findings allowed us to consider the impact of a loss of supply for different customer groups and understand their needs and how we can best support them.

This research allowed us to explore, in detail, the lived experience of people with mental health issues or dementia, those dependent on electrical medical equipment and those who are blind or partially sighted and improve our training and communications accordingly.

“When the power is off and the phones are down that is impacting our social isolation and loneliness because we can’t connect with our sight loss services. And once you go down that path it does affect your mental wellbeing.”

Surveyed customer



7.2 Optimising our Priority Services Register reach



This year, 197 partners helped us to sign up

51,420 hard-to-reach customers to our PSR



PSR reach

67%

of eligible households

and medically dependent customers increased by

19%



195,217

records securely shared* with water companies



* all data sharing is done in compliance with data sharing laws and regulations

Partnership working increases PSR reach

We know that many of the 2.3 million customers on our Priority Services Register could find a power cut difficult to cope with. It is therefore vital that we focus our efforts on ensuring we can reach and register as many eligible customers as possible, maintaining up-to-date data and providing appropriate support.

Feedback from our stakeholders consistently supports our effective collaboration with trusted local partners.

What started as a small number of Local Authority partnerships has grown to an impressive 197 trusted referral partners who undertake ‘boots on the ground’ engagement with hard-to-reach customers and can provide resilience advice and support PSR sign-up.

Working across our entire patch, our network of partners includes charities, Local Authorities and health sector organisations. In some cases, two-way partnerships allow us to go one step further and deliver end-to-end support.

Last year, as well as signing customers up the PSR, 16 Fire and Rescue Services in our region also supported 7,629 customers, referred by us, with home fire safety checks.

Events and outreach enable us to identify and recruit new partners. Our ever-evolving database of regional experts is at the core of our ongoing engagement, with newsletters, PSR promotion and funding opportunities, for example, shared across the network.

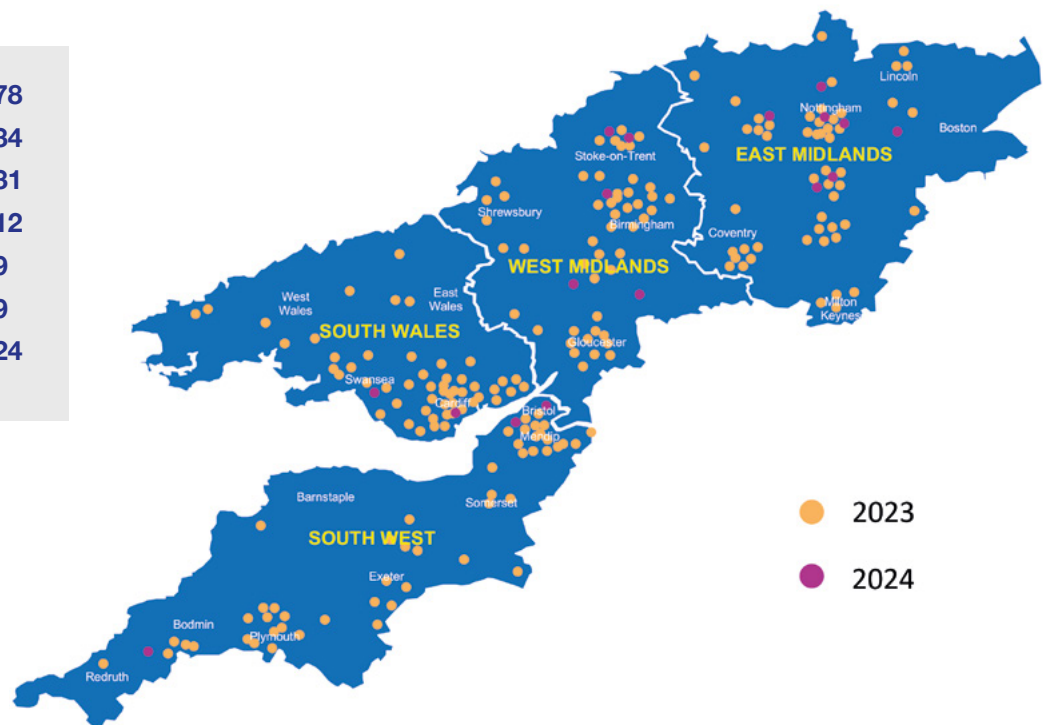
This all-encompassing, cyclical approach ensures we get the very best out of our partners and embrace every opportunity to promote the PSR and maximise value from every touchpoint.

Referral partners can now use our recently-improved PSR portal to sign customers up to the PSR quickly and easily, helping us to reach as many customers as possible who we may not ordinarily come into contact with.

In addition, they often interact with customers who are less likely to self-identify as vulnerable; these customers may live in isolated, or rural locations, for example, or be digitally excluded from accessing the services or information they require. The table and map below show the number and range of partners we work with:

Total 197 referral partners (▲17)

Fuel poverty charity	78
Health sector	34
Local Authorities	31
Emergency services	12
Utilities	9
Housing associations	9
Other charities (e.g. age, health)	24



Where possible, commercial contracts with partners allow a deeper, more specialised approach – encompassing joined-up PSR promotion, impactful outreach work and expert training for NGED teams. With Kidney Care UK for example, we launched a pilot scheme to provide support in two areas identified by our social indicator mapping as having the highest level of deprivation and with a high prevalence of chronic kidney disease.

The project aims to reach as many as possible of the 61,968 people living with advanced kidney disease in

Birmingham and East Lindsey, Lincolnshire. Through the partnership, patients at drop-in clinics at renal units and kidney clinics will be offered fuel poverty support and energy efficiency advice.

As well as boosting PSR referrals of patients, Kidney Care UK will provide bespoke training for National Grid field and Contact Centre teams who support customers during power cuts, ensuring they can best understand and support the needs of kidney patients.

Case study

This year, in collaboration with OVO, we have managed to provide help and support to **200 customers** at two events in Lawrence Weston, Bristol and Newport, Wales.

The events, led by OVO and supported by partners such as Welsh Water, StepChange Debt Charity and Care and Repair Cymru provided ‘pop-up’ hubs in local communities where customers could access key information, support with the PSR sign-up process and long-term fuel poverty and debt advice from multiple utilities and partners.

“The event massively exceeded our expectations, we hoped around 50 families would attend but it was closer to 200. We managed to provide 150 electric throws and smart kits to members of the community to reduce their energy costs. Honestly, I can’t thank you enough for the support. NYCA (Newport Yemeni Community Association) were extremely appreciative of the help we have collectively given to the community”.

Steven Donovan, Consumer Vulnerability Lead OVO



Promoting the PSR for maximum impact

A key way to increase PSR awareness and, in turn, sign-ups, is through proactive, targeted advertising promoting its benefits. Throughout the year we use social media channels to share resilience advice and promote the register.

In addition, eligibility and PSR benefits are included in our business-as-usual engagement such as education for schools, community events, stakeholder workshops and county shows. We also maximise our impact and reach through bespoke campaigns including hospital radio adverts (done in collaboration with Wessex Water and Bristol Water, for example).

Our annual, extensive winter communications campaign using radio, digital, regional newspaper and bus-back advertising to provide power cut and PSR advice reached more than 16 million people (detailed on [page 38 and 39](#)). This coincides with social media promotion and the promotion of our Winter Hub, providing concise and accessible information and advice on our website. This activity is further supported by direct communication for all customers, with bespoke messaging for PSR customers, using email and text messaging (see [page 39](#)).

This year we also introduced leaflets sharing advice for domestic customers, small businesses, landlords and customers of landlords who might not actually be connected to our network. We also shared a new PSR poster detailing benefits of registration and sign up links with 1,719 relevant agencies and partners, allowing them to print the poster for their notice boards and/or email it to their service users. In the first month since its circulation,

this directly led to over 100 hits on our PSR portal through a dedicated, trackable link.

The PSR portal itself has been improved to allow a cleaner, simpler user journey which also allows friends, family and referral partners to add customers to the PSR, ensuring more people who need support in a power cut can access our services. All of our digital and printed customer information is available in any format required. This ensures a wide range of additional communication needs, including hearing or sight loss, are met through multiple channels, large print, audio and translation in to any language. Our website meets the minimum standard of Accessibility AA.

In addition, comprehensive training is carried out continuously for Contact Centre staff and annually for all field staff. All staff have an App on their devices allowing them to access support and sign up customers to the PSR.



A 'one-stop-shop' makes life easier for customers

Stakeholders have told us that collaborative delivery can increase trust for customers, who may have varying recognition of utility brands and the core services companies provide. Dealing with multiple different contacts can cause confusion and frustration – especially for customers facing challenging life events or feeling vulnerable. Historically, PSR data has only been shared between electricity networks and energy suppliers.

In more recent years, we have introduced data sharing with oxygen providers, Fire and Rescue Services and Local Authorities. Furthermore, we have worked effectively with water companies in our region so customers only have to explain their situation once to benefit from PSR services

from multiple organisations. This joined-up approach to PSR data sharing allows us to hold data-share agreements with the water companies and send and receive monthly data (encrypted and securely), meaning our PSR customers can also receive support from their water provider in a water emergency and vice versa.

This vital work has the added benefit for customers who can now get support with bills and debt advice from water suppliers as well as from their energy suppliers.


It is our future ambition to extend this beyond utility companies, and include telecommunication providers.


Outcomes and Business Plan Commitment delivery


The following table summarises our 2023/24 performance against our vulnerability focused Business Plan commitments relating to this section¹.

Vulnerability Strategy Commitment	Description	Expected outcome/benefit	Key milestones	Status update
PSR reach	Expand the reach of our Priority Services Register to at least 75% of total eligible customers and 80% of customers with critical medical dependencies to ensure those in greatest need receive targeted support services. This will include registering at least 50,000 additional hard-to-reach customers each year (Note: the medical dependency element of this commitment is being reviewed due to external data to measure at household level being currently unavailable. As an interim measure, we are tracking the growth of medically dependent customers on our PSR)	Local, trusted organisations, with a good understanding of the regional issues customers face support customers effectively and enable us to proactively target our PSR promotion and outreach services	Increase PSR reach to 66% by 2023/24	PSR reach for all licence areas combined is 67.4%
			Interim milestone: increase the number of medically dependent customers year-on-year	Registered medically dependent customers up 19.4% on last year
			Register at least 50,000 additional hard-to-reach customers each year	51,420 customers registered direct with NGED in 2023/24
			Expand our network of referral partners year-on-year	197 referral partners (up 9.4% on last year)
'One-stop-shop'	Achieve a 'one stop shop' service so customers only have to join the PSR once to be registered automatically with their energy supplier, water company and gas distributors (adding telecommunications in future)	Customers can get multi-agency support from utilities by joining the PSR once Allows greater access to wider support for those who need it most without needing multiple touch points	Data-share agreements in place with all water companies	Agreements and two-way sharing in place with all participating water companies
			Two-way data sharing with all water companies in advance of an automated industry solution	195,217 records sent to water companies in 2023/24 and 154,665 received

Key

 Progress is on track

 Progress is delayed but likely to be achievable before the end of RIIO-ED2

 Milestone is at significant risk and likely to be missed

¹ NGED publishes full Business Plan reporting in October each year, and as such the status of these commitments may change.

7.3 Building resilience to power cuts and how we support PSR customers



4.1m

total proactive PSR contacts



Attempted to contact

1.3m

customers to refresh their PSR record and provide power cut advice



1,555 crisis packs

handed out to those most in need during, and in advance of, power cuts



Accurate, up-to-date data allows effective support

As our PSR now holds 2.3 million customers, an increase of 28% in the last five years, building an accurate and up-to-date picture of the needs of those customers is fundamental to ensure we provide the best possible support.

Our Customer Vulnerability Strategy includes a Data and Information Strategy detailing how we will meet the needs of customers in vulnerable situations. The strategy ensures we maintain our PSR database by attempting to contact every customer to check their data at least once every two years. The development and delivery of the service our customers receive is informed by data analysis and we continuously collaborate with industry partners to best facilitate the sharing of data.

Customer requirements, and the ways in which they wish to communicate, are changing. Whilst we will always offer telephone support for those customers who want to speak to someone, we are seeing a significant rise in the use of digital channels, with more customers opting for contact through text, web chat or social media.

With this in mind, we have increased our PSR Team and now have 24 colleagues across two Contact Centres dedicated to supporting PSR customers. They are responsible for:

- taking inbound calls (when customers use a dedicated 27/4 direct phone number, omitting the need for messaging options)
- proactively contacting every PSR customer affected during power cuts to check on their welfare and update them with information on the incident such as restoration estimates
- contacting all PSR customers once every two years to provide power cut resilience advice and check the customer's PSR needs

- offering and managing referrals to our trusted fuel poverty partners (see [page 27](#)), and
- trialling live digital engagement with customers using our website.

The PSR teams are supported by colleagues in the wider Contact Centre team, who are equipped to deliver the same specialist advice when call volumes are low, or during severe weather events, for example when proactive update contact to PSR customers is a priority.

400 staff from across the business are also fully trained to answer 'ramp-up' calls (many from home) in the event of a severe weather incident. This ensures that no matter how busy our Contact Centres become, we are on hand to deal with any volume of calls, quickly and efficiently.

A new strategic approach to customer excellence has led to a review of our customer journey mapping. Engagement with colleagues who talk to PSR customers every day, such as a colleague engagement forum and prioritisation workshops, ensures their expert insight continues to enhance the service our customers receive.

In 2023/24, customers on the PSR who experienced a power cut were asked to rate our service by an independent survey company. Overall, customers on the register scored 9.13/10 when asked how satisfied they were with our service.



In 2023/24, we attempted to contact 1,309,593 customers by phone or letter to provide power cut resilience advice and refresh their data, maintaining our commitment to contact 100% of our PSR customers at least once every two years.



In addition, we made 4.1 million proactive contacts to PSR customers through our winter communications campaign and, throughout the year, during and after power cuts.



Supporting PSR customers during power cuts

Maintaining an accurate, up-to-date PSR allows targeted, meaningful support for our PSR customers during a power cut. This enables us to provide the reassurance and advice they need, along with estimated restoration times, so they can make alternative arrangements or plan their day. When a customer calls us on the dedicated direct PSR number, our system recognises those on the PSR so call handlers are immediately aware of the customers' needs. This, alongside bespoke training, allows our teams to respond to any communication needs and handle calls appropriately and empathetically.

In the event of an **unplanned power cut** we contact every PSR customer to provide up-to-date information on the power cut affecting them, report on estimated restoration times and check on their welfare. In 2023/24, we proactively contacted 2.3 million PSR customers during and after power cuts to their properties. In addition, our social media teams post regular updates on power cuts and respond within four minutes, on average, to any to any enquiries from customers using those platforms. Customers can contact us using the phone, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, WhatsApp and live (24/7) web chat.

On average our agents respond to live web chats from customers in 42 seconds - at any time of the day or night.

Generators are available to our field staff and prioritised for PSR customers in the event that incidents could be prolonged and staff working on site have 'crisis packs' in their vans for those customers who may need extra help. 1,555 crisis packs were handed out this year. Each canvas bag holds items that could be useful in a power cut such as a hat, socks, gloves, a wind-up torch and a flask (which our field teams can fill with hot water from their vans).

In the event of a prolonged outage we can call upon the British Red Cross and National Caterers Association to attend site and provide hot food and welfare support for our customers.

Furthermore, our Contact Centre teams have the autonomy to support customers, during severe weather events for example, with costs for taxis, food and hotels should the need arise.

Case study

We take our responsibility to our customers very seriously so, when temperatures dropped close to zero during a power cut near Rugby, we teamed up with the British Red Cross and Jojo's Fish & Chips to offer hot food and drinks and door-to-door welfare checks for residents in vulnerable situations.

On such a cold day, their support was extremely valuable to make sure our customers were safe, well and could get a hot meal and drinks while our teams worked to repair the fault and get supplies back on.

"Your caring customer service feels encouraging, lovely and reassuring. Thank you for all you do."

Customer comment on Facebook



All customers experiencing a **planned power cut** will have received our statutory notice to advise them of the date and time and offer some preparedness advice.

In addition, following stakeholder feedback, a number of years ago we introduced proactive contact by text, preventing confusion and frustration that can occur when notification letters are forgotten.

As well as receiving a letter about upcoming planned work, customers receive text reminders (tailored for those on the PSR) ahead of the day, signposting additional information on our website.

This year, we refreshed our planned interruption web pages, containing specific PSR information, videos and leaflets.

Users can access up-to-date information detailing the time-frame, reason for the planned outage, areas affected and contact details.




They can also sign up for SMS updates about their own power supply. Last year alone, 1,798 customers signed up for this valuable service.

Outcomes and Business Plan Commitment delivery

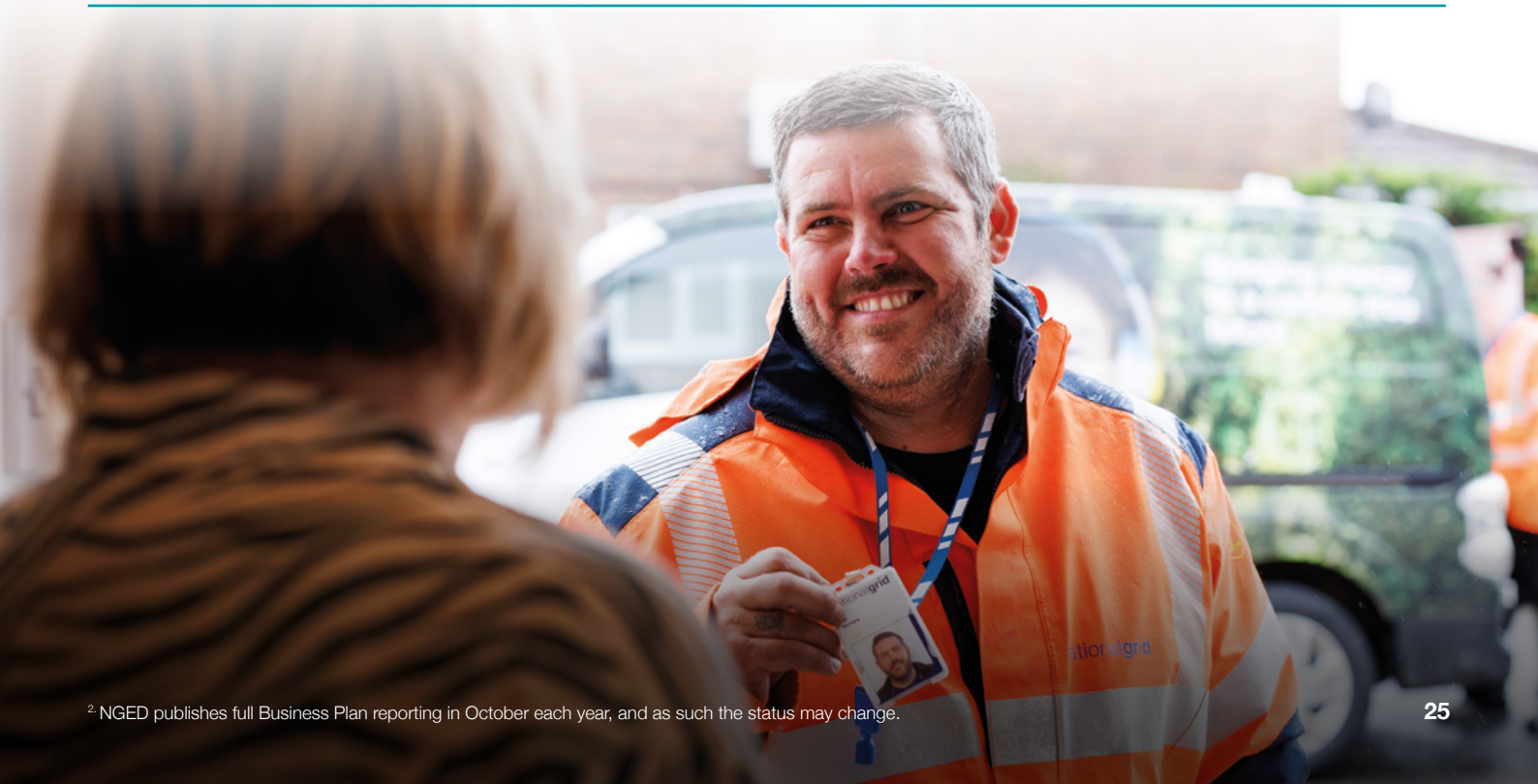
The following table summarises our 2023/24 performance against our vulnerability focused Business Plan commitments relating to this section.²

Vulnerability Strategy Commitment	Description	Expected outcome/benefit	Key milestones	Status update
Proactive contact	Maintain high quality data to allow us to deliver bespoke support to customers in vulnerable situations by proactively contacting over two million PSR customers once every two years to remind them of our services and update their records (with 60% via direct telephone call)	Regular contact ensures the needs of our most vulnerable customers are accurate and up-to-date and we can, in turn, provide efficient support (Note: We now recognise the telephone may not be every customer's preferred method of contact)	Proactively contact over 50% of registered PSR customers each year to ensure every customer is contacted once every two years	<p>57% of registered PSR customers were contacted to verify their data in 2023/24</p> <p>A review is under way to ascertain the percentage of customers who might prefer a digital communication pathway</p>
Improved network reliability	Maintain network reliability where, on average, power cuts are better than one interruption every two years lasting less than 24 minutes whilst utilising vulnerable customer data to prioritise network improvement schemes	Utilising vulnerable customer data means teams have a clear sight of vulnerability in the area where new schemes are being proposed, ensuring customers in vulnerable situations are not disadvantaged and, where possible, benefit from prioritised network improvement	Vulnerability data to be mapped against network performance data with mechanisms for cross-comparisons examined	A working group has been established to provide vulnerability data for this analysis and to inform future network planning

Key

		
Progress is on track	Progress is delayed but likely to be achievable before the end of RIIO-ED2	Milestone is at significant risk and likely to be missed

² NGED publishes full Business Plan reporting in October each year, and as such the status may change.



7.4 Our fuel poverty programme



23,705

customers reached with fuel poverty support



£23.4m

savings achieved for customers, including wider home measures



360,000

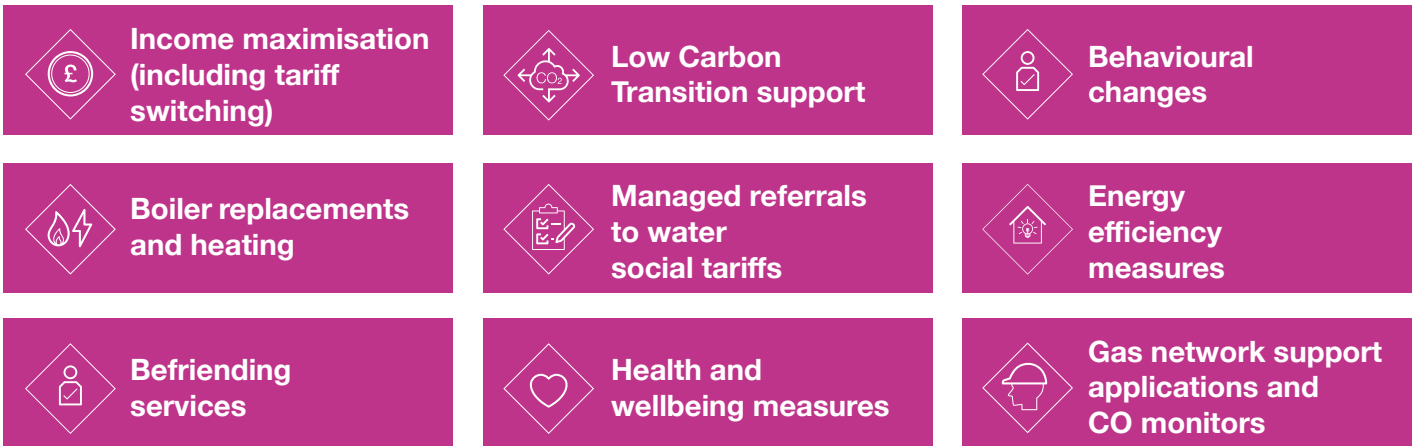
people benefited from £6m Community Matters Fund



Core fuel poverty model provides holistic support

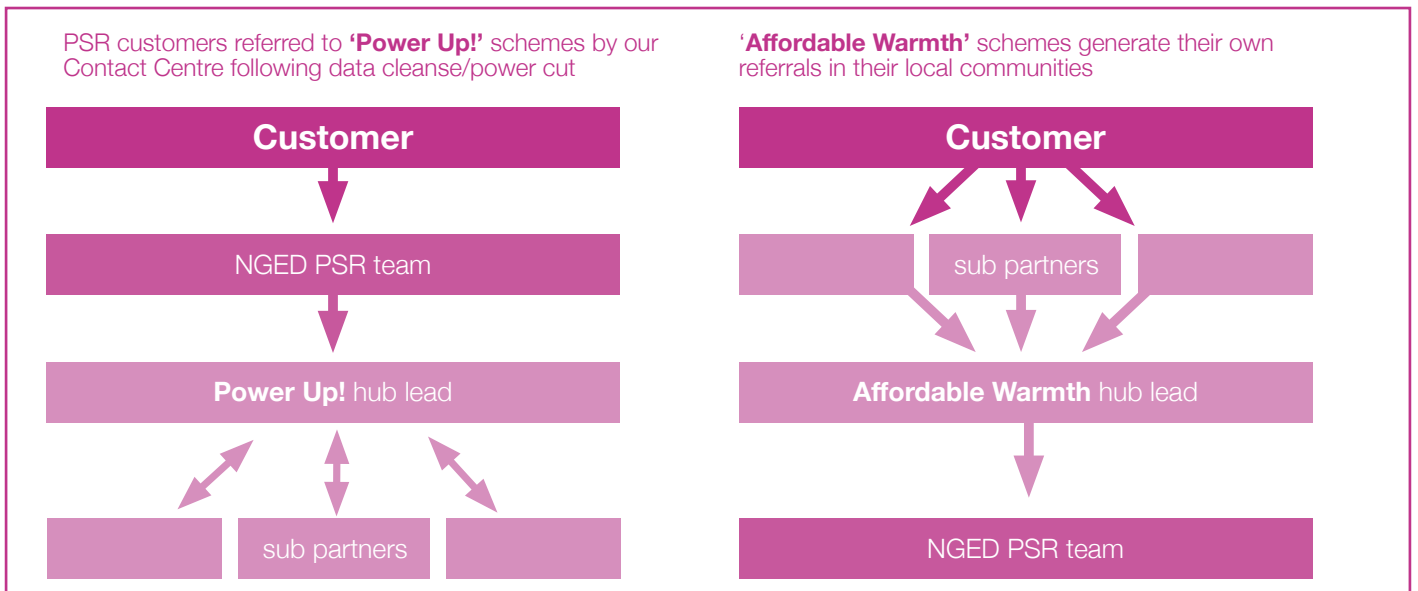
Our established fuel poverty programme has now been operating for a decade. Research has proven a direct correlation between consumer vulnerability and fuel poverty, and figures obtained by Ofgem this summer showed that energy debt had reached its highest ever level - a combination of the rise in wholesale fuel and wider cost of living pressures³.

It is no surprise, therefore, that stakeholders at our Social Obligations Workshop told us we have a key role to play in helping customers struggling to heat their homes. Our core 'Power Up!' and 'Affordable Warmth' projects run using a hub model where one lead partner manages a number of sub-partners. To ensure comprehensive holistic support each customer has a single point of contact and is looked after from the start to the achieved outcomes when their case is closed. Every one of our projects must be capable of delivering specified core interventions to assist customers:



Traditionally, these interventions focused solely on fuel poverty, but our new contractual arrangements for RIIO-ED2 delivery include an explicit requirement for partners to deliver Low Carbon Transition Services where appropriate. This includes advice on maximising smart meters and flexible tariffs, grants for solar panels and heat pumps as well as guidance to maximise smart technologies (see [page 34](#)).

Our Power Up! partners in each of our four license areas receive referrals from our PSR team (see [page 23](#)) and Affordable Warmth partners identify people in need of support through their own outreach, providing referrals back to NGED's PSR:



In addition, a number of bespoke, targeted projects allow us to support customers with more specific needs such as expectant mothers, patients using oxygen and those struggling with mental health issues.

All projects are required to provide detailed reporting demonstrating the outcomes and savings achieved for every single customer and performance is regularly reviewed against targets and KPIs. This allows us to identify the most effective support and remain confident that each and every project is delivering value for those customers who need it most.

³ Ofgem press release: Ofgem explores options amid rising consumer debt, October 2023







Case study

A client was referred to **Hope4u** via a midwife from Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust. The client lives with her husband and three children and is expecting a baby. She currently lives in a one-bedroomed council flat. Advice was given on the overcrowding situation and the housing association's options.

The client was added to the PSR and information was given on energy efficiency before the client was supported in applications for child benefit, council tax support, water social tariff, healthy start vouchers and fuel vouchers.



Total savings: Over £2,500, including

-  Added to the PSR
-  Healthy start £220
-  Council tax £1,290
-  Social tariff £150
-  Fuel voucher £59
-  Child benefit £820

“This is an amazing and really needed service. The feedback from the ladies supported has been brilliant. A real difference is made and it is brilliant that you can support everyone even if they are unable to speak English.”









Customer supported by Hope4u

In the past 12 months, our overall fuel poverty support programme has seen our highest ever financial benefits for customers.



We are proud to have supported 23,705 customers to save over £23.4m.

Table 3: Customer savings from our flagship projects

Power Up!				Affordable Warmth			
East Midlands	West Midlands	South Wales	South West	East Midlands	West Midlands	South Wales	South West
							
Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts	Coventry Citizens Advice	Energy Saving Trust	Centre for Sustainable Energy	Nottingham Energy Partnership	Marches Energy Agency	Care and Repair Cardiff & the Vale	Plymouth Energy Community
8,944 Customers supported to save £3,268,315				13,088 Customers supported to save £13,048,433			

The Net Present Value of services delivered to customers (see **page 11**) was calculated using the Ofgem approved, industry agreed method of calculating fuel poverty savings but our holistic delivery model means that, **in addition**, our partners have also delivered home measures such as accessibility rails and stair lifts (considered out of scope of the CVI). As a result, the gross financial benefits delivered by our entire programme this year, (including the £16.3m achieved from Power Up! and Affordable Warmth shown above) was **over £23m**. The £23m savings also include benefits achieved by our smaller, bespoke fuel poverty projects; for example we work with Citizens Advice South Somerset who support customers with mental health issues and Hope4u (see case study above) who, this year, supported over 700 customers such as expectant mothers to save £1.8m.

Energy Affordability Fund delivers innovative support

Following the success of previous campaigns, a new round of support, shaped by our Customer Panel and funded by our parent company, National Grid plc., was launched in August 2023. Delivered in collaboration with CSE, the latest Energy Affordability Fund (EAF) aimed to engage not-for-profit organisations to seek novel solutions to challenges facing customers in fuel poverty.

Having previously targeted support around digital exclusion, the impacts of Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis, seven innovative new projects, aimed at enhancing local provider advice capacity across our region, were successful recipients of funding.

Successful applicants could provide one-to-one advice in areas such as;

- supporting vulnerable households to carry out home improvements to improve energy efficiency or lower their bills
- increasing resilience of vulnerable households to severe winter weather and providing advice on what to do in a power cut
- targeting home energy advice and support in areas of higher deprivation or at greater risk through not being connected to the gas network, potentially using National Grid's social indicator mapping (see [page 16](#))
- work with healthcare providers and community partners to raise awareness of the links between cold, damp homes and poor physical and mental health.

Following feedback from stakeholders, who stressed that consistency of funding was crucial for organisations at the front line of the cost-of-living-crisis, we extended the fund to be available for a 12-month period (historically six months) with a total of £250k available (maximum £40k per project). As the EAF was funded by National Grid plc., the savings detailed here are not included in the overall savings reported as part of Ofgem's Consumer Vulnerability Incentive.



The Energy Affordability Fund supported 3,166 customers to make £1.2m in fuel poverty savings.

Table 4: Energy Affordability Fund

	Customers supported	Savings
Cwm Arian Renewable Energy Ltd (CARE)	468	£190,052
361 Energy CIC	220	£161,623
Groundwork Five Counties	400	£156,653
Exeter Community Energy	512	£239,443
YES Energy Solutions	400	£234,459
Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire	968	£125,552
Swansea Make a Difference	198	£43,297



Community Matters Fund

We established our Community Matters Fund to deliver far-reaching support in our communities. This enduring, annual fund is paid for by shareholders and distributes £1m a year to local grassroots organisations.

Since its inception, the fund has awarded £10m to more than 1,700 organisations, supporting an estimated 800,000 beneficiaries. Funding is awarded in phases and administered ensuring a range of societal challenges are addressed. Previous themes have focused on fuel poverty, mental health and social isolation, holiday hunger, green spaces and biodiversity and active communities.



In 2023/24 Our Community Matters Fund awarded £6m across three phases (green spaces, active communities and fuel poverty), funding more than 900 groups with an estimated 360,000 beneficiaries. £5m of this was targeted at fuel poverty support, funded by National Grid plc.

Case study

Roshni Birmingham supports black and marginalized female victims of domestic abuse, along with their children. Their mission is deeply rooted in empowering survivors to break free from the cycles of abuse, reclaim their independence, and rebuild their lives with dignity and resilience.

In the winter of 2023, Roshni Birmingham received a £10,000 grant from NGED.

The Roshni Birmingham teams' ability to buy thick, lined curtains for their refuge meant their aging building was able to retain heat better, cutting already high energy bills.

The addition of these new curtains transformed the refuge, their bright colours injecting new life into the space and offering improved privacy as well as making everyone warmer and cosier in the cold winter months.

In addition to the curtains, the fund also paid for a new duvet and fleece for every resident on arrival. Together, these items not only provide warmth and comfort but help alleviate the financial burden of equipping new accommodation. Between the curtains and the duvet, residents have the necessary essentials for a good night's sleep, boosting their overall health and stability.

The funding came at a significant time and had a positive impact on the refuge and the lives of those it serves. Had they not secured funding, they would have had no choice but to cut heating times, and increase the service charge for the residents who are already struggling to make ends meet.

"I took the biggest step in my life to make that call. This was the hardest thing I did in my life. I'm grateful to funders of this grant, they have listened to our needs and have made a huge difference to our lives."

Anonymous resident



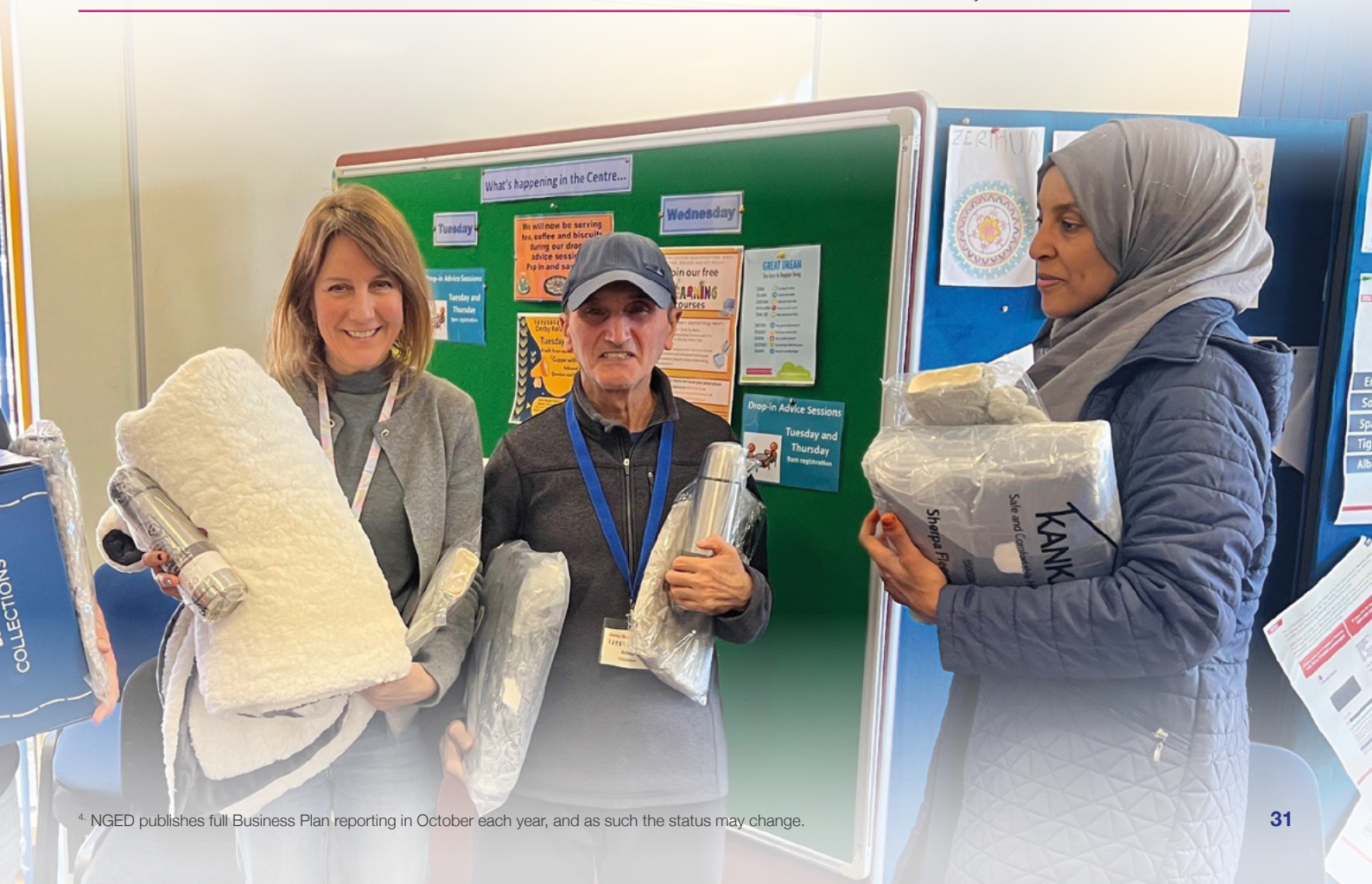
Outcomes and Business Plan Commitment delivery

The following table summarises our 2023/24 performance against our vulnerability focused Business Plan commitments relating to this section⁴.

Vulnerability Strategy Commitment	Description	Expected outcome/benefit	Key milestones	Status update
Fuel poverty support	Support at least 113,000 fuel poor customers to save £60m on their energy bills over RIIO-ED2	Customers living in cold homes and/or struggling to afford their energy bills receive tailored support to make long term changes to improve their ability to afford to heat their home	Support at least 22,500 customers by the end of 2023/24 Achieve savings of over £12m for customers by the end of 2023/24	23,705 customers supported to save over £23.4m
Community Matters Fund	Support and add significant value to our local communities via a 'Community Matters' social initiative associated with the smart energy transition, vulnerability, environment and sustainability	As a socially responsible business we support the needs of the local communities we serve – delivering key corporate social responsibility initiatives to help people in vulnerable situations	This will include a shareholder-funded annual £1m community support fund and 1,900 volunteer days per year for our staff to support local causes	Our Community Matters Fund awarded £6m funding to more than 900 groups with an estimated 360,000 beneficiaries and our people spent over 832 days in total volunteering in their communities

Key

■	Progress is on track	■	Progress is delayed but likely to be achievable before the end of RIIO-ED2	■	Milestone is at significant risk and likely to be missed
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⁴ NGED publishes full Business Plan reporting in October each year, and as such the status may change.

7.5 Helping customers in vulnerable situations benefit from the smart transition



5,828

customers reached with Low Carbon Transition support



£449k

savings achieved for customers



1,012,911

customers offered a Smart Energy Action Plan



One year into the delivery of RIIO-ED2, we are already seeing rapid change for our customers as the decarbonisation of heat and transport gathers pace. In delivering an essential service, we have a responsibility to remain fair and inclusive, providing additional support to those customers who need it most. As we deliver this support, we must rise to future challenges ensuring no customer is left behind in the transition to net zero.

In 2019, we launched 'Smart and Fair?', an industry-first collaborative initiative with Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) and CSE, identifying practical actions to ensure the transition to a smart, net zero energy system delivers benefits for all. Through this programme, we developed an innovative 'Capability Lens' to capture the range of characteristics impacting the ability of domestic households to participate in smart energy offers, such as demand side response, flexible tariffs and low carbon technologies.

The Capability Lens has been used to create tools to map customer capabilities against smart energy offers and to combine household capabilities with socio-demographic characteristics such as energy usage and technology, digital literacy, dwelling and local area.

This enables detailed consideration of those at risk of being disadvantaged and what the requirements to 'keep up' with a smart energy system might look like.

Factors such as digital capability, attitude to innovation and change, energy usage, dwelling type and access to finance were identified as key determiners of a customer's ability to participate in smart energy offers. This research found that those most likely to miss out on smart energy offers were also likely to be the group with significantly higher rates of vulnerability, posing the risk that non-participation may exacerbate their situation further and potentially increase financial inequalities. Moreover, households who were identified as least likely to take up smart energy offers did so due to multiple factors.

The latest findings from 'Smart and Fair?'

There has been significant change in the smart energy landscape since 2019. In early 2024, CSE published 'Working with the smart energy capabilities lens' detailing how these theories are being turned into practice. The report highlights the importance of impartial, reliable and high-quality advice, suggesting that this need will only intensify as the range of smart energy offers and services increases. However, it also identifies the challenges that exist: the difficulty of advising consumers about the cost impact of these new measures, developing standard terminology, tailoring support to different customer journeys, and establishing standardised training for advisors.

Learnings from 'Smart and Fair?' and data from our established fuel poverty programme have enabled us to continue to expand our definition of vulnerability to reflect the capabilities needed to participate in a smart energy network.

We have used this understanding to evolve our fuel poverty programme, Low Carbon Transition support and the delivery of Smart Energy Action Plans to ensure customers in vulnerable situations are not left behind in the net zero transition.

We have committed with SSEN to fund Phase Three of 'Smart and Fair?' over the next two years. The priority for this programme will be to scale the activity to increase the effectiveness of our LCT Services to continue to deliver the insights which will enable the energy transition for all.



Low Carbon Transition support enables the transition to net zero


Our approach is to meet customers where they are on the journey to net zero. We have built on our fuel poverty delivery model to embed Low Carbon Transition (LCT) support into our core programme. LCT support, like our established fuel poverty support, is based on providing one-to-one, tailored advice, using a huge range of partner expertise.

We have provided extensive training to upskill existing partners, who traditionally focused on fuel poverty assistance, developing our model to incorporate advice, guidance and support for those customers wishing to access low carbon technologies.

Where customers are in a position to benefit from retrofit measures, our partners can assist with grant funding for solar panels and heat pumps. For those who have already had measures installed (e.g. by their housing association), we can help unlock greater savings by providing tailored advice about making the best use of smart energy technologies to suit their circumstances and energy use. However, for some customers, the service is about supporting with smaller measures like smart meters and flexibility tariffs, providing advice and guidance to build confidence. To ensure comprehensive support, partners actively share guidance, information and links to funding opportunities allowing customers to access a range of LCT interventions:

 <p>Solar panels/ heat pumps</p>	 <p>Grant funding</p>	 <p>Smart meters/ display units</p>
 <p>Impartial advice and guidance</p>	 <p>Flexibility and 'time of use' tariffs</p>	 <p>EV charging</p>

This year we have delivered extensive benefits through a number of new schemes and pilots as we continue to develop the delivery programme for the CVI. The overall number of customers supported and savings achieved set out below, include additional schemes over and above those eligible for the CVI.

 **In total, our Low Carbon Transition Services supported 5,828 customers to save £449k in 2023/24.**

This customer support has been made possible through analysis of data, our detailed engagement and quarterly best practice events, allowing partners to request topic areas for the agenda, enabling them to discuss solutions to common challenges and share insights where things are going well. Furthermore, we have provided detailed training, along with supporting factsheets and guidance for onward sharing with customers to 40 lead partners and sub-partners – continuously developing and improving the support they can access for customers.

The Net Present Value of LCT Services delivered to customers (see **page 11**) was calculated using the Ofgem approved, industry agreed method of calculating social value. However, developing this service from scratch this year, we have supported a number of customers who were not surveyed and therefore this delivery has not been included in our CVI reporting. The savings delivered for these customers, shown above, represent the gross financial benefit they received, calculated using the social value model.

Case study

Mr B lives in a two-bedroomed bungalow. After receiving a leaflet through the door about Nottingham Energy Partnership's Green Grants scheme, Mr B recognised Rushcliffe Borough Council's logo and got in touch. Mr B received free solar panels which helped to reduce his energy bills.

To offer further support, the Project Support Officer (PSO) supported Mr B with a variety of schemes available to him. Through this wider support it was discovered that Mr B was also eligible for free boiler optimisation through Let's Optimise Your Heating and could be registered for the National Grid's Priority Services Register.

 <p>Registered for the PSR</p>	 <p>Total savings £6,627</p>
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"The service was excellent, It has made a real difference to me. I have no complaints and it all happened very fast."
Mr B, customer supported by Nottingham Energy Partnership



Smart Energy Action Plans – a Consumer Value Proposition

As part of National Grid Electricity Distribution’s Business Plan for RIIO-ED2, we developed a Consumer Value Proposition (CVP) to go above and beyond in order to deliver outstanding service to our customers.

Our CVP detailed an innovative customer support service targeted at customers on our Priority Services Register. Our proposal involved offering a Smart Energy Action Plan to 600,000 customers every year and actively engaging with those who wish to receive a plan to ensure they receive tailored support that meets their needs.

As part of our CVP we are including an update on the first year in this report. The scheme will continue to evolve, with progress reported annually, for the remaining four years of RIIO-ED2.

During 2022/23, we worked with CSE on a pilot, which supported 162 customers who would typically need extra support (e.g. PSR customers referred through Power Up!) to receive a Smart Energy Action Plan tailored to their individual circumstances. The insight from this pilot enabled us to develop and shape our full scale offering.

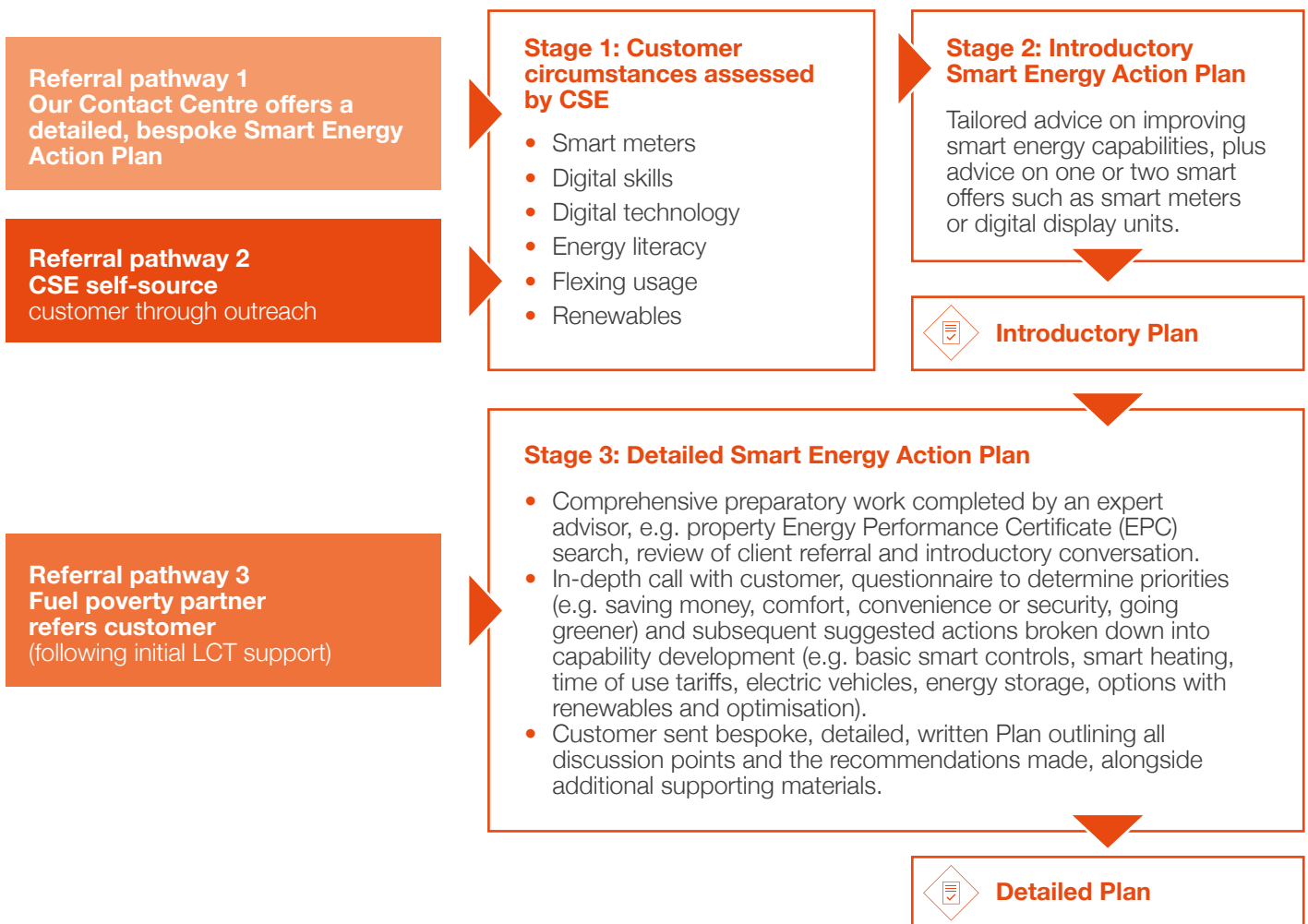
Our Contact Centre teams, who have a proven track record of delivering extensive and impactful resilience advice and signposting fuel poverty support, use established

communication methods such as telephone calls and written communications to offer a bespoke Smart Energy Action Plan to PSR customers.

The expert guidance, delivered on our behalf by CSE, helps customers benefit from offers available and appropriate to them in the immediate term, as well as providing guidance on the uptake of future LCT Services, providing them with a bespoke plan. The plan can be introductory or detailed depending on the needs of the customer.

In addition, as detailed above, our established fuel poverty partners can assess customers’ varying needs and personal circumstances and have the skills and resources to provide LCT support. Should their clients require a more in-depth level of support, as a next step, they can be referred onward to CSE for a detailed, Smart Energy Action Plan.

Whilst phone calls in our Contact Centre were the initial focus for Smart Energy Action Plan offers, we have expanded our focus to explore a range of customer channels where offers can be made - increasing our ability to reach customers using the communications channel they prefer. Using this multi-channel approach, we have offered more than one million customers a Smart Energy Action Plan in the last year.



Expert insight improves quality of advice for customers

CSE has developed a suite of materials, including factsheets and guidance documents, in collaboration with our expert Customer Panel. Topic-specific surgeries have allowed members with a passion for supporting customers in vulnerable situations to cover granular detail with NGED representatives and improve the Plans throughout the year.

“It is great to see that, following earlier Panel feedback, the written plans have an improved design and are easier to read. They benefit from an improved structure and a clearer call to action. Listing LCT measures from lowest to highest cost allows customers to make changes at a time and rate which suits them.”

Gabby Mallett, Independent Chair – NGED Customer Panel



Delivery and outputs

- Delivered enhanced training for 40 partners to widen and improve their LCT advice and allow them to refer customers for detailed Smart Energy Action Plans.
- 322 customers supported with a bespoke Plan.



Coming soon

- New self-serve tool developed in collaboration with CSE, and jointly funded by Northern Powergrid, enabling partners to provide bespoke advice around how a customer could participate and benefit from smart opportunities.
- Collaboration with housing associations to roll out Smart Energy Action Plans to tenants in social housing.

The Social Value of the CVP

Using the agreed Social Value Framework, our Smart Energy Action Plans have delivered a net value of -£125,030 in 2023/24 due to initial set up costs. Over five years this net value increases to £30,435. We will continue to innovate and expand our delivery to generate greater value.

Our Social Contract in action

Our Social Contract outlines how we act as a good corporate citizen across everything we do as a company. The Social Contract simultaneously underpins, and builds on, what we set out in our Customer Vulnerability Strategy, by outlining the social purpose that guides our actions, as well as initiatives that go over and above to generate wider social impact. This year our delivery includes:

- £6m of grants awarded to more than 900 grassroots organisations through the Community Matters Fund, benefitting more than 360,000 people (see [page 30](#))

- decommissioned company technology donated to reduce electronic waste and tackle digital exclusion, and
- delivery of the first solar installations through a new partnership with Solar for Schools – part of our commitment to invest £2.7m by 2028 in solar panels for schools and community buildings in our region to support communities and customers in their net zero journey.



Case study

Two schools in Birmingham, Ark Kings Academy and Ark Victoria Academy, were the first schools to benefit from new solar systems as part of the five-year Solar for Schools scheme. Through the project, the schools saw arrays of rooftop solar installed in December 2023, totalling 381 panels. Nearly 2,000 students were engaged through assemblies and hands-on workshops, providing an insight into the energy system and renewable energy through practical, hands-on 'solar explorer' kits.

"It wasn't just a benefit to save money – to have workshops from Solar for Schools ties everything together. The children are really attuned to things like turning lights off. A key curriculum aim is global citizenship – how we take action as an individual to engage with world issues."

Head of Primary at Ark Kings Academy



Outcomes and Business Plan Commitment delivery

The following table summarises our 2023/24 performance against our vulnerability focused Business Plan commitments relating to this section⁵.

Vulnerability Strategy Commitment	Description	Expected outcome/benefit	Key milestones	Status update
Smart Energy Action Plans	Ensure customers are not left behind in the smart energy transition by offering 600,000 PSR customers a bespoke Smart Energy Action Plan each year	Targeted advice and support for vulnerable customers in relation to low carbon technologies, smart meters, and flexible energy services, for example	Offer 600,000 customers a bespoke smart energy action plan annually	1,012,911 customers offered a bespoke smart energy action plan this year through our Contact Centre and wider partnerships
Social Contract	Deliver enduring, long-term support to our communities by publishing a Social Contract and performance report annually	Communities realise social and environmental benefits from a social purpose embedded throughout NGED, with investment in community-led projects and staff volunteering	Publish an annual update to the Social Contract Strategy	2024 Social Contract published online
Solar for Schools and community buildings	Build decarbonised communities and local energy schemes by providing £540,000 shareholder-funded support annually to install solar PV on schools in areas of high economic deprivation	Environmental benefits through carbon emissions saved, and financial benefits in reduced electricity bills. Reduced consumption through behavioural changes also delivers financial and carbon savings. The solar PV starter packs will allow schools to promote STEM learning activities with a practical focus	Provide £540,000 shareholder funded support per year to install solar PV on schools	We committed £257,000 towards 12 school projects this year, with two installed so far. The underspend from 2023/24 has been re-profiled across the remaining four years of RIIO-ED2 to deliver the commitment

Key

■ Progress is on track

■ Progress is delayed but likely to be achievable before the end of RIIO-ED2

■ Milestone is at significant risk and likely to be missed

⁵ NGED publishes full Business Plan reporting in October each year, and as such the status may change.

8. Plans for effectively supporting customers in vulnerable situations during winter

Extreme weather events such as heatwaves and heavy downpours could become more frequent and more intense. This only increases the importance of supporting our customers and increasing resilience for when these events affect our network. This year saw us respond to 13 named storms and one solar heat and lightning event. Five of those events were recognised as ‘exceptional’, meaning our teams were responding to eight-times their usual faults, and yet they restored 99.9% of customers within 24 hours.

Our customers and stakeholders can register on our website for severe weather updates and choose to receive vital information before, during and after severe weather incidents. Updates include the latest weather conditions and areas affected, the number of customers without power and the key steps we are taking to quickly and safely restore power.

Table 5: 2023/24 storm performance

	Total	West Midlands 10-13 June 23 Solar Heat & Lightning	South West 1-4 Nov 23 Storm Ciaran	East Midlands 21-23 Dec 23 Storm Pia	South West 2-3 Jan 24 Storm Henk	South Wales 21-22 Jan 24 Storm Isha
Customers restored	175,965	49,416	51,070	31,413	32,709	11,357
Calls taken	20,474	5,480	4,705	4,503	3,913	1,873
Average answer time	-	7.96 seconds	14.02 seconds	47.73 seconds	18.55 seconds	12.67 seconds
Proactive calls (total)	116,687	19,715	27,308	32,695	26,731	10,238
Proactive calls (PSR)	53,464	17,223	10,743	11,591	9,992	3,915
Social media/webchats	1,816	566	497	237	313	203
Customer satisfaction (PSR)*	-	8.7/10	9.0/10	9.2/10	9.5/10	9.3/10

Preparing customers for the winter period

Given the increased risk of power interruptions as a result of inclement weather and storms over winter we continue to educate and inform customers and stakeholders about:

- the potential causes of power cuts and how we ready our network
- what we will do should interruptions occur and how customers can be prepared
- the support we have available and how customers in vulnerable circumstances can access it.

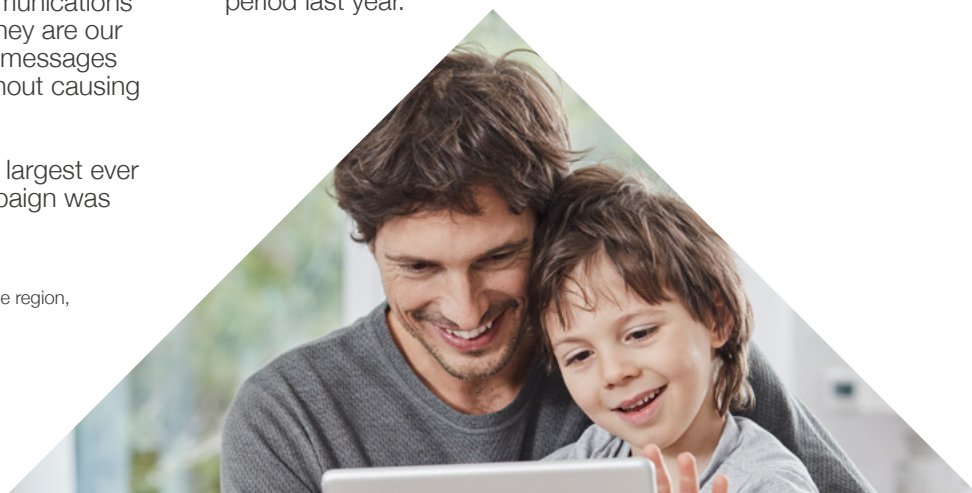
Our approach to winter preparedness communications is to make sure colleagues are informed - they are our most effective ambassadors - and that our messages to customers are clear and informative, without causing any panic.

Shaped by our expert Customer Panel, our largest ever winter preparedness communications campaign was launched in 2023.

* PSR customer satisfaction with unplanned interruptions in the region, during the month in which the event took place.

The campaign, helping customers to ‘Be Winter Ready’ ran before and during winter and provided advice around preparing for adverse weather and potential power cuts; this included information for customers in vulnerable situations on the benefits of signing up to our Priority Services Register.

Through a mix of radio, bus, digital, social media and print advertising, as well as emails and texts, we reached more than 16 million customers. Page views for our website’s Winter Hub rose by 76% to over 46,000 and there were just under 15,000 sign-ups to the PSR, up 56% on the same period last year.



2023/24 winter preparedness campaign

The winter preparedness campaign delivered significant reach and impact across all metrics (see below) and therefore we plan to continue to update and build on our approach this year using PSR sign-up data and customer and expert stakeholder feedback to shape the campaign.

Emails, texts and letters	Email sent to 500,000 customers and text messages sent to 1.3 million customers	Contact Centre staff were provided script prompts to use in conversations with customers
Digital advertising	58 million impressions and 34,000 clicks	Part of a two-stage campaign utilising adverts on news websites and 24-hour digital takeover on four Reach Live Apps (Birmingham, Leicester, Wales, Cornwall)
Paid social media	1.25 million impressions, 29,000 engagements and 17,000 link clicks	Bespoke two-week social media campaign on Facebook and Instagram
Radio advertising	1.5 million reach, 4,700 spots and 17 million impacts (opportunities to hear)	Covered 11 stations within our licence area; Smooth, Gold and Heart. 30 second advert around power cut preparedness, signing up to the PSR and our Winter Hub
Bus advertising	2,000 interior adverts, 250 rear adverts and 150 streetliners, with an estimated 4 million reach	Two adverts on buses operating in our licence area with messaging encouraging PSR sign ups and helping people prepare for power cuts
Printed advertising	26 publications with a 538,000 readership	Half-page adverts promoting PSR and winter checklist along with advertorial articles in 14 titles
Website	46,000 website hits	Content on preparing for a power cut, safety tips, guaranteed standards and fuel poverty support

Year-round endeavours to protect customers during winter

NGED remains committed to ensuring the resilience of the network is of the highest priority. We have a programme of year-round network maintenance and tree trimming, backed up by effective plans in place to ensure all customers, including those registered for priority services, are prepared and protected in the event of severe weather.

The effective plans we had in place in advance of winter 2023 ensured that all essential maintenance due in 2023 was completed, as planned, by the end of October. In addition:

- NGED's scheduled tree cutting programme continued throughout the winter, including both resilience tree cutting and programmed sequential cutting along our 11kV routes. We continue to utilise LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) to identify any tree issues
- substation and circuit inspections continue, sometimes by helicopter, ahead of and during winter
- we operate a fleet of flood response vehicles with pumping capability to reduce reliance on the emergency services during times of heavy rain/floods. Vehicles carry 'Aqua sacs', which are considered far more efficient and environmentally friendly than traditional sand bags.
- two small boats and demountable flood defence barriers are stored at strategic locations across the region to maximise the effectiveness of our flood response
- we operate a fleet of five Eurocopters and the largest number of mobile generators in the industry, all of varying sizes
- all overhead line crews have 4x4 capabilities and we hire additional vehicles for transporting essential support staff into the office over the winter period
- restoration via mobile generation is considered on all faults where restoration via mains is not quickly achievable.

In respect to incident responses, we can mobilise staff around our four licensed areas as needed. This tried and tested method affords us significant flexibility, for example in 2022's Storm Eunice, our Midlands Control Engineers significantly assisted their South West/Wales colleagues in undertaking network switching operations.

Delivering effective support when it's needed most

Effective contracts with both the British Red Cross and the Nationwide Caterers Association ensure we can provide customers with welfare support in the event of a prolonged outage.

Furthermore, close working relationships with all Local Resilience Forums in our region have proven vital, allowing us to stay up-to-date with any community issues or customer needs as events unfold. Utilising our PSR data, these relationships ensure customers in vulnerable situations receive joined-up support.

As well as our existing 270 Contact Centre staff, we now have over 400 fully trained and experienced 'ramp-up' staff capable of supporting call activity when required and with minimal notice. The ability of 'ramp-up' and Contact Centre staff to work from home ensures they can be deployed to pick up calls without the need to commute, saving time and potentially dangerous travel conditions during severe weather. Having 'ramp-up' staff provides additional capacity, allowing us to handle increased volumes of calls during a prolonged incident, including calls to our dedicated PSR line. This has led to an effective and efficient service for customers requiring updates.

Plans for the coming winter

As is now standard practice, we have arranged to review our winter preparedness campaign with our expert Customer Panel. This allows independent feedback on the delivery mechanisms and campaign content from members who represent customers with specific communication and accessibility needs as well as those who may require a more tailored level of support in the event of a power cut.

Having robust winter preparedness measures in place to ensure all customers, particularly those in vulnerable situations, are supported if they are affected by a power cut is an important part of our role. We review these measures annually to consider their effectiveness and value. Last year, our thorough and detailed preparations worked well. However, this does not make us complacent and we will continue with our year-round maintenance programme and delivery of a preparedness communication campaign in time for the winter ahead.

As in previous years we will submit a winter preparation survey response as required by The Department for Energy Security & Net Zero and our 'looking forward' plan for this winter includes:

- supporting the Met Office "Get ready for winter" campaign
- continuing to play a vital role in LRF winter planning work
- ensuring key circuits are returned to service ahead of winter
- progressing with our established tree trimming programme
- having established contracts in place with partner organisations providing welfare support
- ongoing review of detailed weather analysis and forecasts to ensure planned interruptions are rescheduled if needed, during severe weather
- hiring additional 4x4 resource to assist with travel for customer service critical staff (call handlers, control engineers) in poor weather.



Appendix 1: Independent assurance

The confirmation below has been issued to us by the industry-appointed assurance assessor who has confirmed we have met the minimum requirements criteria of each metric.

Metric	Minimum reporting category	Minimum reporting category	Has the criteria been met?
PSR Reach minimum requirement	PSR Reach has been reported in line with the common methodology.	The PSR Reach actual performance is calculated in line with the agreed methodology and data provided by Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE).	Yes
	Confirmation that the licensee has attempted to contact 100% of its registered PSR customers to verify their data every 24 months.	Has the licensee attempted to contact 100% of its registered PSR customers to verify their data every 24 months?	Yes
Value of Fuel Poverty Services delivered minimum requirement	Assurance that performance against the targets has been calculated and reported in line with the common Social Value Framework methodology.	The £NPV value calculated is in line with the common Social Value Framework Rule Book.	Yes
		The £NPV value calculated is attributed to the value of Fuel Poverty Services delivered and the scope of the metric set out within Chapter 2 of the RIIO-ED2 Consumer Vulnerability Guidance Document.	Yes
		The values reported are accurate from the calculations in the relevant SROI model.	Yes
Value of Low Carbon Transition Services delivered minimum requirement	Assurance that performance against the targets has been calculated and reported in line with the common methodology.	The £NPV value calculated is in line with the common Social Value Framework Rule Book.	Yes
		The £NPV value calculated is attributed to the value of LCT Services delivered and the scope of the metric set out within Chapter 2 of the RIIO-ED2 Consumer Vulnerability Guidance Document.	Yes
		The values reported are accurate from the calculations in the relevant SROI model.	Yes

Appendix 2: Summary of performance against wider Customer Vulnerability Strategy commitments

In addition to the nine core commitments in our Business Plan relevant to customer vulnerability detailed in section 7 of this report, our **Customer Vulnerability Strategy** also proposed an additional 41 initiatives to drive the highest levels of service and positive outcomes for our customers. Of these, 24 sought to stretch our performance significantly beyond Ofgem's baseline expectations and our own high standards of industry-leading performance. These initiatives are summarised in the table below.

KEY

◆ Commitment supports or directly contributes to Ofgem's key principle

Commitment exceeds Ofgem's vulnerability baseline expectation

Vulnerability Strategy Commitment	Delivery in 2023/24	Principle			
		1	2	3	4
1 Publish social indicator mapping online with open-sourced data, inviting ideas to collaboratively develop new services. The data enables us to tailor outreach to gaps in our PSR take up, where the mapping suggests potential areas of vulnerability. Our approach will include more than 60 social indicator datasets.	Refreshed social indicator mapping published and continues to inform partners and projects allowing them to target areas of greatest need. Updated datasets this year (current total 42) include off-gas properties, customers on disability benefits and households in fuel poverty (see page 16).	◆	◆	◆	
2 Commission an annual horizon scan with the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) to identify additional datasets to incorporate into data mapping and potential new referral partners.	Latest Horizon Scan research shared with partners and published online along with details of more than 300 support organisations identified.	◆	◆	◆	
3 Encourage, reveal and promote innovative ways in which other organisations have made use of NGED's vulnerability data and mapping tools to deliver social benefits.	Best practice shared with partners and through our Energy Affordability Fund, which requires projects to demonstrate innovative use of data.	◆	◆	◆	
4 Develop innovation projects that use data to better understand the causes of vulnerability and identify relevant interventions to support those customers.	Innovative projects include 'Reach' which helps rural community energy groups to decarbonise by considering standardised, containerised equipment to link together EV chargers and batteries, for example.		◆	◆	◆
5 Have a PSR Data and Information Strategy in place and reviewed annually.	Our Data and Information Strategy is reviewed annually and includes information on the ways we will analyse, use and share PSR data to expand the reach of our PSR and maintain high quality data, allowing delivery of bespoke PSR customer support.	◆	◆	◆	
6 Maintain dedicated PSR data cleanse teams, to attempt to contact all customers registered on the PSR at least once every two years.	57% of registered PSR customers were contacted by dedicated expert PSR teams to verify their PSR data (see page 25).	◆	◆	◆	◆
7 Have data-share arrangements in place with suppliers, gas distributors and water companies, compliant with GDPR and Ofgem Data Best Practice Guidance. We have an ambition to extend data share arrangements to telecoms companies.	We share data with all participating water companies in our region and are working with the ENA, energy and water on a standardised industry solution (see page 21).	◆		◆	

	Vulnerability Strategy Commitment	Delivery in 2023/24	Principle			
			1	2	3	4
8	Maintain a network of referral partner agencies providing coverage across all four licence areas. Use data mapping to identify and target gaps in coverage to proactively reach out to local trusted agencies to expand our coverage (extend to telecoms and expand to 150 partners).	We now have 197 referral partners and use our data mapping and Horizon Scans to target gaps in coverage (see pages 16-19).	◆	◆	◆	
9	Work with local agencies, including those in the health sector, to broaden awareness and increase understanding of the PSR among customers in vulnerable situations and those who support them. We will provide all partners with training to share best practice, innovative approaches and interventions to support customers in a smart energy future.	We continue to work with local agencies, including those in the health sector, e.g. we have a new partnership in place with Kidney Care UK. We regularly share training material and hold quarterly best practice meetings for partners to share innovative approaches and widen smart energy support for customers.	◆	◆	◆	
10	Achieve external accreditations, ensuring independent experts assess and endorse our processes and continue to provide guidance and advice allowing us to set strategic direction (e.g. BSI inclusivity standard and Customer Service Excellence). We will achieve 'compliance' or 'compliance plus' in all 57 elements of the CSE assessment.	We have held the Customer Service Excellence standard since its inception and complied with the BSI Inclusivity standard for 11 years. We have already achieved 'compliance' or 'compliance plus' for all elements of the assessment.	◆	◆	◆	◆
11	Maintain Accessibility AA standards on our website. Achieve AbilityNet Accreditation for NGED website.	Our website meets Accessibility AA standards and we are working towards AbilityNet accreditation.	◆			
12	Customers can communicate with us via multiple channels including: X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, NGED Power Cut Reporter App, text message, email, WhatsApp and web chat.	Customers can communicate with us via multiple channels and this year we have added video call capability to provide immediate support to customers in an outage (e.g. to advise whether a fault is at the network or individual property level).	◆			
13	Translation services available 24/7 by telephone and on NGED's website for over 100 languages including RoboBraille function for customers to quickly and independently convert information or documents on our website into audio books, braille or another format.	We comply with BSI inclusivity standards and continue to deliver translation services 24/7, offering all of our information or documents in any format requested by customers.	◆			
14	SignVideo service, providing customers with the ability to contact NGED via a sign language interpreter free of charge.	We comply with BSI inclusivity standards and continue to offer SignVideo free of charge at any time.	◆			
15	Dedicated online content targeted at customers in vulnerable situations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> dedicated Priority Services Hub Power Cut Reporter App social media targeted campaigns. 	Dedicated online content targeted at customers in vulnerable situations includes our refreshed Priority Services Hub on our website.		◆	◆	
16	PSR customers provided with dedicated 24/7 phone number to call in the event of a power cut.	All PSR customers are provided with a dedicated 24/7 phone number to call in the event of a power cut.	◆			
17	Our average speed of response for PSR customers will be two seconds.	Our average speed of response for PSR customers during a fault in 2023/24 was four seconds.	◆			

Vulnerability Strategy Commitment	Delivery in 2023/24	Principle			
		1	2	3	4
<p>18 PSR customers provided 24/7 support during power cuts, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information on planned and unplanned outages • accurate information and bespoke alerts via online map and Power Cut Reporter App • collaboration with external agencies to provide welfare support • tailored advice for customers medically dependent on electricity. 	<p>PSR customers are provided 24/7 support during power cuts including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proactive information on outages using their preferred method • welfare support from external agencies such as the British Red Cross • medically dependent customers are provided tailored advice including discussion around back up plans. 	◆			
<p>19 Work with expert stakeholders to develop resilience planning specifically targeted at premises providing care and support for vulnerable customers, including care homes, refuges and shelters.</p>	<p>We have worked with our expert Customer Panel to provide information and advice for non-connected customers and those running businesses or care homes.</p>	◆		◆	
<p>20 Work with expert stakeholders, including our Customer Panel and expert referral partners, to refresh our definitions and understanding of vulnerability each year.</p>	<p>Research and engagement with trusted, expert stakeholders has driven our understanding of the changing vulnerability landscape (see page 16).</p>		◆	◆	
<p>21 Hold annual customer vulnerability workshops to engage expert stakeholders and work with them to develop our understanding of vulnerability, share best practice and understand the priorities which need to be addressed.</p>	<p>Our annual Social Obligations Workshop in November 2023 attracted 67 stakeholders in person and online (see page 7).</p>		◆	◆	◆
<p>22 Work with our expert stakeholders to update our Customer Vulnerability Strategy each year and co-create an ambitious annual action plan to develop new, innovative outreach initiatives for the vulnerable and fuel poor.</p>	<p>Our Customer Vulnerability Strategy is updated annually with input from our expert Customer Panel and delivery partners.</p>	◆	◆	◆	◆
<p>23 Our work with CSE on the ‘Smart and Fair?’ initiative will provide research that will enable us to expand our definition and understanding of vulnerability to reflect capabilities to participate in a smart network, considering how this evolves over time. We will collaborate to further develop the Capability Lens and offer profiling tools, enabling us to model and therefore identify the capabilities of vulnerable customers to participate in a smart, low carbon future. These will be used to: calibrate existing schemes; design and implement new interventions to support wider participation in a smart energy market.</p>	<p>This leading source of insights and innovation on delivering an inclusive transition has informed the development of our Low Carbon Transition support, providing impartial, trusted advice and grant support to enable customers in vulnerable situations to benefit from smart energy offers. The programme and its findings have also been key to the design of our Smart Energy Action Plan offering (see page 35).</p>		◆	◆	◆
<p>24 Work with key stakeholders to understand and serve the needs of disabled EV drivers, ensuring they are provided access to adequate charging infrastructure in a timely manner, delivered as part of local area energy plans.</p>	<p>We are engaging with Local Authorities to understand their Local Area Energy Plans, including the needs of disabled EV drivers.</p>			◆	

Vulnerability Strategy Commitment	Delivery in 2023/24	Principle			
		1	2	3	4
25 Collaborate with industry partners to create an online platform bringing together tools, advice and support for small and medium businesses to participate in the energy system transition, and provide energy resilience advice in relation to dealing with power cuts.	We have worked with cross-industry partners (including energy networks, high street banks and professional bodies) to develop the UK Business Climate Hub to provide net zero advice for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).		◆	◆	◆
26 Continue to maintain partnerships with Local Resilience Forums to assist in the co-ordination of community support during incidents such as flooding.	We continue to be members of 20 Local Resilience Forums in our area and work closely with them on severe weather, flooding and winter preparedness.	◆	◆	◆	
27 Core fuel poverty schemes delivered by expert lead partners.	Core fuel poverty schemes delivered by expert partners have contributed to £23.4m of savings delivered for 23,705 customers (see page 28).		◆	◆	
28 Power Up Smart, providing core interventions and tailored energy advice targeted at PSR customers with smart meters.	Power Up Smart has been replaced by Low Carbon Transition Services offered by partners, all providing smart meter advice.		◆	◆	
29 Power Up Health, providing core interventions in partnership with local health services and support groups. Customers referred to NGED by oxygen providers.	Power Up Health delivered £219k in savings for 674 customers this year.		◆	◆	
30 Annual fuel poverty innovation competition 'Energy Affordability Fund' seeking innovative projects to tackle fuel poverty.	The Energy Affordability Fund supported 3,166 customers to make £1.2m in fuel poverty savings (see page 29).		◆	◆	
31 Develop and implement new interventions for fuel poverty outreach schemes, specifically targeting advice to support customers in the energy transition and participate in the opportunities this provides to help them with their energy costs.	Through learning from our Smart Energy Action Plan pilot, new 'smart' interventions have been developed for fuel poverty outreach schemes and rolled out across all partners.		◆	◆	
32 Every NGED innovation scheme will formally consider the impacts and opportunities for customers in vulnerable situations.	Every NGED innovation scheme considers the impacts and opportunities for customers in vulnerable situations enabling maximisation of consumer touchpoints, signposting support for customers participating in trials and expanding referral channels for support schemes.			◆	◆
33 We will take a leading role in a coordinated approach with a range of industry participants (including funding for collaborations with community energy stakeholders and water companies) to share best practice and co-deliver schemes to ensure vulnerable customers are not left behind by the smart energy transition.	We continue with a coordinated collaborative approach with a range of industry participants, e.g. we collaboratively commissioned research into the lived experiences and issues for rural energy and water customers with specific needs (see page 17).	◆	◆	◆	
34 Enhance our internal App for all field staff, providing access to advice and information on identifying vulnerability, our support and the PSR.	Our internal app for field staff has been refreshed ensuring staff are equipped to help customers in need to join the PSR and access fuel poverty support.	◆	◆	◆	◆

Vulnerability Strategy Commitment	Delivery in 2023/24	Principle			
		1	2	3	4
35 Deliver customer vulnerability training to all 6,600 employees on an annual basis, with key training for all staff and specialist training for staff who regularly interact with vulnerable customers (e.g. field staff, Contact Centres).	Tailored training and PSR promotion internally is ongoing for all staff.	◆		◆	◆
36 We will continually review and expand the training provided to staff in line with changing customer needs. We will identify expert external training on individual factors which can give rise to vulnerability including the provision of support to ensure customers are able to participate in smart energy services.	Bespoke training has been given on ensuring vulnerable customers are not left behind in a smart future and the offer of Smart Energy Action Plans. We continue to provide staff with bespoke training (e.g. Dementia Friends, Kidney Care UK) and signposting material from external partners.	◆		◆	◆
37 As part of our induction process, all new employees receive training about the PSR and the services we offer customers in vulnerable situations ensuring this focus is embodied by our entire workforce.	All new employees and apprentices receive training about the PSR, including who is eligible, how to join and the benefits of being registered.				◆
38 NGED's Director of External Affairs, as Vulnerability Champion provides strategic direction and ensures consumer vulnerability is embedded in NGED's company-wide operations and embodied in our culture.	Due to internal restructuring, our Director of Corporate Affairs acts as Vulnerability Champion at executive level, attending our Social Obligations Workshop and engaging with our expert Customer Panel.	◆	◆	◆	◆
39 Appoint vulnerability champions at local depots to act as a point of contact for staff and to raise awareness of our customer vulnerability programme.	PSR champions will be in each customer facing team. Ensuring dedicated, specialist support is on hand across all regions.				◆
40 NGED policy ensures all necessary vetting and screening processes are conducted on relevant staff with Disclosure and Barring Service checks for all new employees and those who enter customer premises on a tri-annual cycle.	Disclosure and Barring Service checks are routinely undertaken for all new employees and those who enter customer premises.				◆
41 NGED's Social Contract will drive wider understanding of vulnerability for NGED staff through initiatives building links with the communities they live and work in.	A wider understanding of vulnerability for NGED staff has been driven through Social Contract initiatives, e.g. over 832 days spent by our colleagues volunteering in their communities.				◆

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