

# Electricity Distribution

Part three

# Consumer vulnerability outcomes

Ofgem Stakeholder Engagement  
and Consumer Vulnerability Incentive  
2022/23



# Welcome

National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED) is the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) responsible for delivering electricity to eight million customers across the East and West Midlands, South West England and South Wales.

This document is the third part of National Grid's submission to the 2022/23 Stakeholder Engagement and Consumer Vulnerability Incentive (SECV).

2022/23 is the final year of the eight year Business Plan period called RIIO-ED1. This stands for:

## Revenue = Incentives + Innovation + Outputs (Electricity Distribution 1)

It is the regulatory framework introduced by Ofgem and is designed to drive clear outcomes and benefits for consumers, and provide companies with strong incentives to step up and meet the challenges of delivering a low carbon, sustainable energy sector.

Ofgem's SECV Incentive is an annual scheme, which encourages network companies to engage proactively with stakeholders in order to anticipate their needs and deliver a consumer focused, socially responsible and sustainable energy service.

Our submission to this incentive is divided into three parts:

### Part one

Our stakeholder engagement and consumer vulnerability strategies and key evidence (demonstrating that we meet Ofgem's minimum requirements).

### Part two

Key outcomes resulting from our stakeholder engagement activities.

### Part three

Key outcomes resulting from our consumer vulnerability activities.



1

2



3



## Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Engagement shapes our objectives	1
3	Our customer vulnerability strategy in action	2
4	PSR reach and resilience to power cuts	3
5	Our core fuel poverty programme	5
6	Using innovation and collaboration to extend reach	7
7	A fair energy transition for all	9

- 1 Advisor talking to customers at our Contact Centre in Derbyshire.
- 2 Community Matters Fund recipient, Race Equality First – awarded this year for their outreach project working with minority ethnic communities in Cardiff.
- 3 Stakeholder at our workshop in Nottingham, September 2022.

# 1. Introduction

One of the key things we've learned from our ongoing engagement and collaboration with customers and stakeholders is that their needs are always changing. The legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic has driven major changes in how people go about their daily lives, and the increasing cost of living pressures faced by many is generating significant additional stresses for our customers, from physical and mental health needs to income and affordability.

Our job is to provide the local energy network that our customers need and that means stepping in and helping to tackle the challenges they face – especially those in vulnerable circumstances. From increasing the number of digital channels available to our customers, to offering targeted support on issues such as holiday hunger and fuel poverty, we've made sure our approach has adapted and responded to their needs throughout the year.

We pride ourselves on the direct interventions we take to support customers, and we have continued to expand the ways we work with our partners to maximise the support available. Throughout 2022/23 we have engaged 31 new referral partners, further extending the reach of our Priority Services Register (PSR) which now supports over two million vulnerable customers. We've also led the industry in efforts to achieve two-way data sharing with other utilities, such as water companies.

The collective efforts of our colleagues and our strategic partners have seen more support offered this year than ever before, with £15.2 million of financial benefits being achieved, supporting more than 24,000 customers who received an average benefit of £621 in their pocket.

There's always more to do and our commitments to vulnerable customers in RIIO-ED2 are greater still, however we are proud of the breadth and reach of the support we have offered customers at a time when support was so very much needed.

**Alison Sleightholm**  
Executive Sponsor for Customer Vulnerability



# 2. Engagement shapes our objectives

Last year brought unprecedented levels of uncertainty for many, with the impacts of the cost of living crisis and the volatile geopolitical landscape felt far and wide. As a result, stakeholders have been clear that identifying and protecting the most vulnerable in our communities and maintaining a reliable service is more important than ever.

Ongoing feedback loops - from customers, delivery partners, our Customer Panel and vulnerability experts - have all helped evolve our understanding of vulnerability within the current context and shape our subsequent response. A nuanced understanding of social and wellbeing issues, achieved via this extensive engagement, data and research insights, means we're able to tailor our interventions to specific customer groups, expanding and adapting our programmes to meet increasingly complex needs.

For example, at our annual customer vulnerability workshop, we collaborated with 54 expert, vulnerability stakeholders to triangulate the insights gathered to date, share best practice and enhance our understanding of customers' immediate needs. **Four key focus areas and five objectives** were identified where together we could work to provide the support that is needed.

These are outlined below:

<b>Focus areas</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to help those in immediate crisis and move them forward.</li> <li>How to increase the reach of our Priority Services Register (PSR) to help those most vulnerable in the event of a power cut and refer them onward for additional support.</li> <li>How to help those who are 'just about managing' but at risk of falling into fuel poverty.</li> <li>How to ensure everybody can access and benefit from the transition to net zero.</li> </ol>
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<b>Objectives</b>	<p><b>Increasing PSR awareness and understanding of eligibility for support.</b></p> <p>"The sheer volume of people needing help now makes it difficult ....a lot of people don't know what support is available."</p> <p><b>Charity stakeholder</b></p>	<p><b>Tackling reduced household income and rising energy costs.</b></p> <p>"We're encountering people in our areas who have to choose between fuel and food."</p> <p><b>Local Authority representative</b></p>	<p><b>Tackling the impacts of living in a cold home - particularly around a person's health and wellbeing.</b></p> <p>"From the community spaces we run, people are not only arriving from cold homes but they are also hungry. It's quite shocking."</p> <p><b>Utility representative</b></p>	<p><b>Supporting customers in immediate crisis - self-disconnection.</b></p> <p>"We have seen an increased number of people, that have told us they simply self-disconnect because they're so concerned about going into winter and not being able to pay for fuel."</p> <p><b>Charity stakeholder</b></p>	<p><b>Addressing customer misconceptions and trust in newer technologies.</b></p> <p>"There is a lot of fear out there. When you mention smart energy to vulnerable people, they very often panic. There are a lot of myths around it."</p> <p><b>Local Authority representative</b></p>
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Across all these areas: impact on people's mental health

# 3. Our customer vulnerability strategy in action

Our customer vulnerability strategy has been in place for almost ten years (Part one, page 4), and provides the essential framework for us to deliver against our stakeholders' priorities. Aligning with its three key principles, the below summarises how we have adapted our approach this year to deliver the objectives identified with our stakeholders, leading to positive, impactful outcomes for our customers and communities.



Social return on investment (SROI) allows us to quantify the benefits our services provide beyond the financial savings - such as improved health or reduced stress.

Embedded throughout our work this year, social value is used to inform the decisions we make and indicate where initiatives should be scaled up to deliver the greatest possible impact for our customers.

Across this submission, we have measured the social value of initiatives delivered as a combination of:

- Direct financial benefits to customers.
- The benefits of reducing carbon emissions
- Wider societal benefits.



## Increasing the reach of our Priority Services Register (PSR) and building customer resilience to power cuts

- Extending our network of trusted partners has opened up new routes into underserved communities across our regions, driven by increased collaboration with expert partners such as The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) to improve the accuracy of our data and effectiveness of our outreach - **64.9% of eligible households are now registered on our PSR.**
- Responding to the magnitude of issues currently being experienced across our communities, our customer service teams have received a suite of specialist training to support challenging conversations, targeting an increasing range of vulnerabilities, including suicide awareness from crisis charity Samaritans. This is enabling them to become more proactive and resilient in their delivery of relevant, tailored support.

## Addressing fuel poverty and cold homes

- We have adapted our industry-leading fuel poverty delivery models, leveraging strong foundations to increase the scale and depth of support available to our customers as more experience extreme hardship, many for the first time - **24,463 customers have been helped to save a record £15,202,317 this year.**

- To keep delivering more impactful outcomes for our customers we have challenged our partners to go beyond existing frameworks, encouraging and rewarding initiatives that are innovative and drive improvements that benefit as many customers as possible - our Community Matters Fund **awarded over £3.8 million to 759 grassroots organisations** in 2022/23, including £2.5 million to tackle fuel poverty in the communities we serve.

## A fair energy transition that works for all

- Looking at how different groups will be affected by the shift to a smart energy network, this year we have enabled inclusivity from the outset; taking proactive steps to build services that meet customers wherever they are on their smart energy journey. Our **innovative new Smart Energy Actions Plans (SEAPs)** offer customers a bespoke plan and expert guidance to help them to benefit right now from the smart transition.

The remainder of this submission will outline:

- **A selection of key initiatives that showcase our approach to partnership working in more detail:** and how this enables us to identify, reach and support customers in vulnerable situations.
- **How our actions align with our longstanding strategy:** and the positive outcomes they have generated for customers.

Everything we do is designed to be as holistic as possible, with our approach recognising the complexities of vulnerability and the intersecting nature of each strategic element.

For example:

- Our Community Matters Fund (page 8). Whilst targeted at fuel poverty support, also crucially feeds into our PSR services.
- Our Smart Energy Action Plan initiative (page 9) establishes key links into our fuel poverty programme.
- Our project with Good Things Foundation (page 10) was informed by the learnings of our Energy Affordability Fund (page 7).

# 4. PSR reach and resilience to power cuts

Support for customers in vulnerable situations during power cuts has been a long term focus of our customer vulnerability strategy, with our stakeholders confirming this year after year. At its core, sits the management, promotion and maintenance of our PSR and building customer resilience to loss of supply.

## Growing our Priority Services Register in partnership

<b>4 million</b> proactive PSR contacts	PSR reach <b>64.9%</b> of eligible households	PSR supports over <b>2 million</b> customers	<b>410,000</b> PSR records updated	<b>293,000</b> PSR records shared with water companies
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### Using social indicator data to target our reach

We continually update our social indicator mapping to enhance our understanding of vulnerability; refining and expanding datasets to locate and target our outreach schemes to areas where they can have the greatest impact.

Our social indicator data is open-sourced for anyone to use and proactively shared with a wide range of stakeholders, driving the development of innovative new services (e.g. via our Energy Affordability Fund - Part three, page 7) and collaborative opportunities.

The map enables us to target geographical gaps in our referral partner network, and identify areas most in need of support.

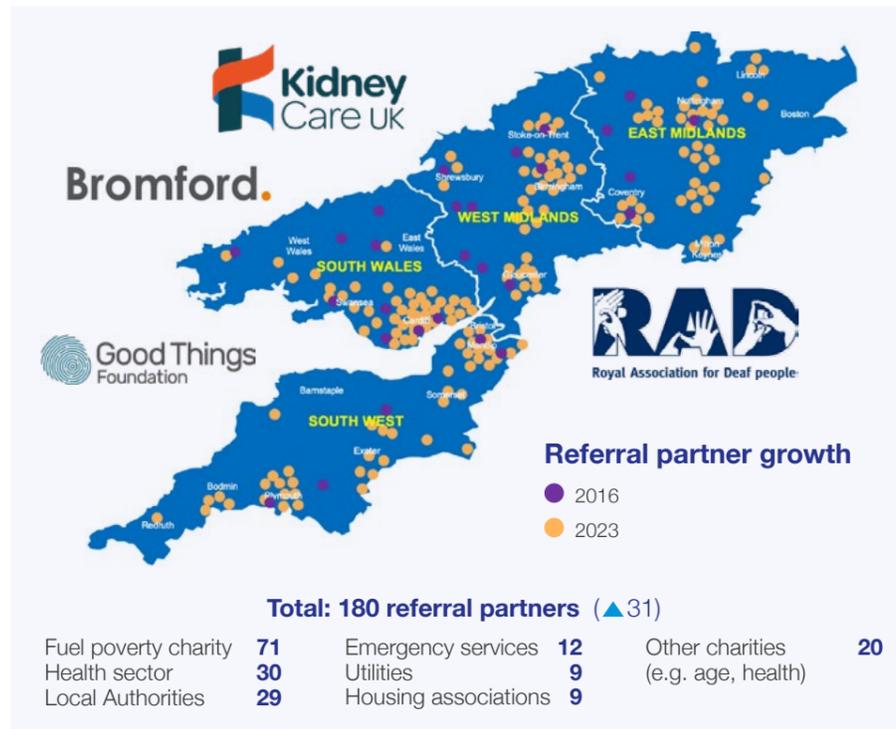
### Working with partners to target specific vulnerabilities

Our network of referral partnerships covers a broad spectrum of vulnerability focus areas.

While seeking to expand these partnerships to address **geographical gaps** in our reach, we also consider the types of organisation in our partner network, to identify and address **vulnerability gaps**.

This approach of horizon scanning and engagement with expert partners has enabled us to target and develop key partnerships in 2022/23, including organisations supporting:

- Digitally excluded customers, e.g. Good Things Foundation (Part three, page 10).
- Customers with specialist medical equipment or communication needs, e.g. Kidney UK and RAD.
- Social housing tenants, e.g. Bromford (see case study).



**Case study**  
**New partnerships to reach underserved communities**  
 Social housing tenants were identified as one of the most disadvantaged demographics when it comes to energy cost rises and the uptake of support. To bridge this gap, we partnered with CSE to support the Bromford Housing Group with training for 'neighbourhood coaches'. Each coach works closely with their tenants, and has been empowered to offer basic energy advice, promote the PSR and provide in-depth support.

**Outcome**  
 150 neighbourhood coaches and 40 money advice coaches have been trained this year, **with a reach of 30,000 customers.**

**Next steps**  
 We are hosting additional training to leverage learnings from our partnership with Bromford, open to all housing associations across our region. The training aims to share best practice, signpost further information and provide resources - and will allow thousands more customers to benefit from these services.

**Outcomes**

- We have expanded our PSR referral network to **180 partners** (a 21% increase on 2021/22).
- Two-way data share agreements held with seven water companies within our region - **293,000 customers benefiting from record sharing this year alone.**
- Improved mapping data has supported outreach activities** to target key gaps identified, e.g. RAD's British Sign Language video about PSR services reached 1,700 deaf customers.

**One-stop-shop for energy and water companies**  
 Customers and stakeholders continually tell us that PSR services need to be as simple as possible for customers and we are always looking at ways to improve our offering. We've collaborated with DNOs, water companies and gas networks to make it as easy as possible for customers to find and join the PSR, with a single landing page (thePSR.co.uk) that signposts all DNO Priority Services Registers. This is underpinned by improved data sharing with water companies in our region - creating a joined-up PSR for energy and water, so customers only have to join once.

## Equipping our colleagues with the very best tools and training

There is an increasingly complex and broad spectrum of vulnerabilities being experienced by our customers. It is therefore vital that our colleagues are provided with support and training to allow them to identify customer needs.

### Why we did it - vulnerability training

Frontline colleagues have told us they are encountering an increasing number of customers in acute distress, with the risk of serious harm becoming a genuine cause for concern (Part one, page 7). Stakeholder feedback confirms this:

**"It's incredibly difficult providing customer support at the moment. The extent and scale of the challenges people are facing is vast. Any additional support that can boost resilience is vital."** Charity stakeholder - September topic specific workshop

### What we did

We engaged expert organisations including Samaritans, Marie Curie and Dementia UK to provide suicide awareness and emotional resilience training across our Contact Centre teams; supporting their own wellbeing and helping them identify customers who may need additional support, and approach increasingly difficult conversations with sensitivity.

Bespoke PSR training was also delivered to all 3,700 field staff to help them identify and support customers they encounter in vulnerable situations.

### Outcome

**Specialist training delivered to 4,325 colleagues.**

### Why we did it - smart meter 'pinging'

We know from customer and stakeholder feedback that proactive support is incredibly valuable for vulnerable customers. That's why we introduced 'smart meter pinging' technology across our Contact Centre teams.

### What we did

Enabling us to remotely contact a customer's smart meter to establish if power is reaching the property, the 'ping' can also reveal where there is insufficient credit on the meter, triggering further conversations about energy affordability and the additional support available via our fuel poverty services. 90% of results are returned within 20 seconds.

**"Power cuts can be extremely stressful for customers, and talking through the necessary steps to establish the cause can be difficult and time consuming. Being able to 'ping' their meter helps us to help them more efficiently and effectively - reducing anxiety and frustration at an already difficult time."**

Nick Hardy Contact Centre Manager



### Outcome

For the four million smart meter customers in our region (over 1 million on the PSR), our teams can more efficiently determine the right course of action and appropriately **tailor advice/support in real time.**

## Building resilient communities through communications

### Why we did it

National Grid Electricity System Operator's Winter Outlook Report (October 2022) generated significant media coverage with headlines of rolling electricity blackouts and the possibility of Rota Load Disconnections (RLD).

### What we did

In response to the challenging winter outlook, we launched our largest ever winter preparedness campaign - helping customers to 'Be Winter Ready'. Advice on power cuts and winter preparedness was shared ahead of, and during, the winter months, along with PSR promotional materials signposting tailored power cut support. We worked with our Customer Panel to review and refine our approach and their feedback reinforced that the broadest range of communication channels should be tested - including new, targeted methods - to find the most effective ways of reaching as many people as possible and help pinpoint the most impactful approaches for future campaigns.

In tandem with the campaign, we developed and launched a 'one stop shop' online customer hub. Directing customers to a single, easy to access location, the hub acts as a central repository for all the resources, advice and information customers might need in the event of a power outage.

**"With a rising number of customers becoming vulnerable in the event of a power cut, you need to advertise the PSR more broadly and signpost people to the support available."** Vulnerable customer representative - June 2022 workshop

Communication channel	Reach	Outcomes
<b>Emails, texts and letters</b> to all existing PSR customers, advising them how to update their contact details and giving power cut tips and resilience advice.	<b>1.9 million customers.</b>	<b>9,561 PSR sign ups</b> in campaign period (up 95% on the same period last year).
<b>Digital news advertising</b> - article promoting winter preparation and the PSR, working with Reach, the UK's largest commercial, national and regional news publisher.	<b>260,000 page views.</b> Customer 'dwell' time (time spent on the webpage) ranged from <b>two to four minutes</b> (<1 min 30 secs is considered only skim read).	<b>44,623</b> customers proactively contacted us to update their PSR details.
<b>Digital advertising</b> - mobile banner and digital billboards displaying our winter preparedness message.	<b>&gt; 5.5 million impressions and &gt; 10,000 clicks.</b> Average 'click through rate' for our ads was 0.19% (compared to an average of 0.0008% for digital display ads).	Increase of <b>26,209 hits on our 'Winter Hub'</b> - compared with similar webpages in 2021.
<b>Paid social media</b> - two sets of adverts on Facebook and Instagram.	<b>2.2 million impressions, 46,000 engagements and ~25,000 link clicks.</b> Average engagement rate of 1.3% for PSR ads, and 2.5% for Winter ads.	<b>13,428</b> hits across our PSR pages and hub.
<b>Radio advertising</b> - Smooth and Gold radio networks.	<b>804 slots reached a total of 717,000 listeners.</b>	<b>Social value</b>
<b>Advertising on the back of buses</b> in the most populated areas of our region.	<b>300 buses with estimated reach of 3.5 million customers.</b>	While PSR sign ups due to the campaign generate a positive social value, wider benefits (e.g. customers updating their PSR records) were not quantifiable, resulting in a SROI of <b>-£0.32</b> for every £1 spent this year. These results, combined with the outcomes above, are helping us to identify improvements for future campaigns.
<b>Printed advertising campaigns</b> - two full page adverts in more than 25 daily and weekly titles, one promoting the PSR and the other winter preparedness.	<b>Total readership of 1.7 million.</b>	
<b>Total estimated reach of our advertising.</b>	<b>6.2 million customers.</b>	

# 5. Our core fuel poverty programme

In the current fuel poverty landscape, the need to provide better, more bespoke and accessible fuel poverty support is greater than ever. Stakeholders strongly endorse us using and expanding the broad network of outreach organisations we work in partnership with to deliver this support, working together to take actions that demonstrably alleviate the impacts of fuel poverty and achieve the best possible outcomes for our customers.

In response to Panel feedback, all DNOs have collaborated to align on clear and consistent fuel poverty reporting metrics to aid comparability, supported by a common definition of fuel poverty services and consistent, independently assured application of a social return on investment (SROI) measurement rulebook.

**24,463**

**Customers supported**

The number of customers who received direct in-depth services through 19 fuel poverty schemes.



**£15,202,317**

**Customer financial benefits**

The gross financial benefits to customers supported.



**£621**

**Average financial benefit per customer**

The average gross financial benefits 'in the pocket' of each customer supported.



**£1,113,097**

**Societal benefits**

The gross benefit of additional value delivered (including health benefits and reduced carbon emissions).



**£14,855,151**

**Net present value**

The total value delivered minus costs to deliver.



**£10.17**

**Social return on investment**

The value of all benefits delivered on top of every £1 spent.



The values above are aligned to the consistent common definition of fuel poverty services, and measure the in-year delivery of our entire programme of support including innovation, health and smart schemes and our core delivery models.

Our holistic support model means our partners also deliver additional interventions providing home measures and wider support tailored to customer needs e.g. accessibility rails, stair lifts, gas and fire safety visits.

We have also measured the combined financial benefits delivered by our entire programme this year, including these interventions:

**£20,629,527**

**Customer financial benefits**

The gross financial benefits to customers including additional home measures.



## Delivering effective support to those who need it most

National Grid has a long-standing fuel poverty programme providing direct one-on-one support for customers. Our two flagship schemes embody our model - Power Up and Affordable Warmth. Both operate as hub models where trusted, local experts deliver holistic support across nine core interventions.

1. Income maximisation
2. Energy saving
3. Befriending services
4. Energy efficiency measures
5. Boiler/heating replacements
6. Health/wellbeing measures
7. Managed referrals to water social tariffs
8. Managed Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES) applications and Carbon Monoxide (CO) monitors
9. Energy bill advice

Reported monthly, this data provides significant insights into what is working well, where improvements can be made and what can be shared as best practice across all delivery partners.

In turn, this provides the necessary foundation to achieve increased savings for customers year on year.

All of our schemes must be capable of delivering every intervention with detailed, measurable outcomes recorded for each and every customer.

This ensures customers' situations are considered in the round, providing qualitative health, wellbeing and quality of life benefits, as well as quantitative 'hard' financial impacts such as energy bill savings and debt relief.

Whilst embedded, this approach has been designed to enable us to adapt the scale and depth of support we offer our customers in response to new and emerging stakeholder priorities.

Fundamental to the success of this is the strong emphasis it places on partnership working, and leveraging local expertise to effectively target and identify customers in, or at risk of, fuel poverty.

Contractual arrangements are in place with every fuel poverty scheme partner to ensure we have the stability, capability and accountability to deliver what is really needed by our vulnerable customers at the time they need it most.

Since 2013, our model of support has continued to grow, using the detailed customer outcomes to identify improvements and share best practice across our partnerships. This year we shared our model in detail with other DNOs at our customer vulnerability workshop and at the best practice event organised by UKPN, including how our contractual agreements with partners mutually reinforces our capability to expand support for customers year on year.

The following outlines some examples of how our longstanding approach to the delivery of fuel poverty services has been adapted to respond to current customer needs throughout 2022/23:

Power Up

Customers on the PSR are referred to our 'Power Up' schemes by our Contact Centre, when we identify they are struggling to heat their homes.

With an appointed lead partner agency in each of our four licence areas that assesses and monitors every referral, a customer's bespoke needs are identified before a pool of specialist sub-partners deliver the necessary support.

### The challenge

Tackling reduced income and the rising cost of living.

### What we heard

"Increasing household income and enabling access to all available support is key."

### What we did

- Responding to customers' complex situations, our partners have increased the amount of time spent on each case to maximise the benefit/impact for customers.
- Built local partner knowledge, to strengthen support, keeping abreast of and navigating customers through the constantly changing grants/benefits available locally and nationally.
- Targeted support for inventions that increase household income.
- Provided tailored information relevant and specific to individual circumstances.

Case study

**NGED PSR services:** Andy in our PSR team spoke to Mr C and recognised that he was struggling to top up his prepayment meter. He offered the support of CSE.

**Lead agency:** After a detailed call about his individual circumstances, Mr C was provided with appropriate advice on using his Economy 7 tariff and storage heaters and was linked into a local energy advice scheme.

**Local delivery partner:** Although initially hesitant and unsure what he was entitled to, with encouragement Mr C was supported through the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application process, which was ultimately successful.

**Customer supported:** As a direct result of all the support provided, Mr C's income has been significantly increased and he is in receipt of a substantial back payment.

### Power Up outcome

Four schemes supported **7,886 customers** to save **£2,972,941**.

### Social value

The direct financial benefits for customers, reduced carbon emissions and wider health benefits of living in a warm, well-insulated home, have generated a SROI of **£3.57** over and above every £1 spent this year.



### Outcomes for Mr C

- Supported to access all available entitlements:
  - £7,873 better off each year - £912 of this attributed to in-depth support on how to reduce energy costs responsibly, avoiding self-disconnection.
  - £11,462 awarded in back payments.
  - **£20,247 saved in total.**

Affordable Warmth

'Affordable Warmth' schemes generate their own referrals in their hub areas.

We fund four lead partner agencies to identify and support customers in fuel poverty across our communities making referrals to the PSR.

Using our social indicator mapping to target outreach, partners use a network of trusted local organisations to provide one-to-one support.

### The challenge

Tackling the impacts of living in a cold home.

### What we heard

"Cold, damp homes can have a devastating effect on health and proactive action is crucial to avoid this."

### What we did

- Supported a 'fabric first' approach to providing a warm, healthy home with advice focusing on long term benefits, not short term fixes, e.g. external wall insulation.
- Strengthened our focus on reducing overall energy use for households, appropriate to the individual.
- Prioritised advice where savings are cumulative across the lifetime of measures, supporting customers through the application process for schemes such as ECO4.
- Focused on preventative measures that reduce or eliminate the health impacts associated with living in a cold home, easing pressure on frontline services.

Case study

**Lead Agency:** Ms D is a single parent living with her three-year-old in a cold, mouldy home - worried about the impact this has on their health. Through her local housing authority, she was identified and referred to our Affordable Warmth scheme for an in-depth assessment.

**Local delivery partner:** Nottingham Energy Partnership referred Ms D to Nottinghamshire Healthy Housing, who determined her eligibility and secured a grant for a new boiler, hot water tank and funding for solid wall insulation.

**Customer supported:** Ms D is now living in a warmer, more comfortable, mould free home - and feeling much happier. The increased efficiency of the new measures enabled her to significantly reduce her energy bills long term.

**NGED PSR services:** Ms D was identified as being eligible for our PSR and supported to join.

### Affordable Warmth outcome

Four schemes supported **12,243 customers** to save **£12,379,301**.

### Social value

The direct financial benefits for customers, reduced carbon emissions and wider health benefits of living in a warm, well-insulated home, have generated a SROI of **£15.42** over and above every £1 spent this year.



### Outcomes for Ms D

- **£17,237 of benefit received in total** this year, with subsequent energy savings of £1,637 each year.

"I want to say a huge thank you, as a single parent things can feel very difficult and it's hard to scrape together the money needed for these sorts of things. I am so pleased with the service, my home feels 100% warmer." Ms D

# 6. Using innovation and collaboration to extend reach

We must continually seek new and innovative ways to extend our reach, collaborate and trial new initiatives to improve and refine our services. Where benefits can be proven via impact measurement metrics and social value, we embed successful approaches into our core programme, increasing the reach and impact of support available to our customers.

## Looking out for young families

### Why we did it

The town of Walsall in our region struggles with serious pockets of deprivation. It ranks as the 26th worst performing area (of 326 Local Authorities) for child poverty, putting it in the worst performing 8% nationally. A survey conducted by Child Poverty Action Group also revealed that 64% of people were not prepared for the costs of having a new baby, or aware of possible benefits they may be entitled to.

### What we did

We know that both financial hardship and having a young family can increase customer vulnerability, so in response, we piloted a project with local charity Hope4U who specifically support new and expectant mothers. In partnership with NHS community midwives, they deliver vital support such as access to maternity benefits, housing support and essential baby equipment.

Based on successful pilot outcomes, including partner feedback and significant SROI generated (£10.60 on top of every £1 spent) we have extended and embedded the project into our core delivery programme. The interventions and detailed outcomes delivered for each customer are captured and reported to us monthly, allowing us to discuss developing customer issues. This year, the project was scaled up across four NHS trusts, targeting the broader 'at-risk' demographic of families.

Our partnership network has also increased in size and range, now including 13 representatives from the Fire and Rescue Service, schools, mental health charities and housing associations. Partner schools are also offering surgeries and outreach events to families within their communities to provide advice and referrals, and promote the project.

### Social value

The direct financial benefits for customers, reduced carbon emissions and wider health benefits of living in a warm, well-insulated home, have generated a SROI of **£12.03** over and above every £1 spent this year.

### Case study

Living in a one-bedroomed flat with her husband, newborn baby and daughter aged four, Saz was identified and referred through to the project by her midwife. Communicating in English was a challenge for the family, and their home was cramped, damp and mouldy.

Our project partner gathered evidence of Saz's situation and supported her with writing letters and making phone calls to find a more suitable home for her family - bringing in additional proof and support from her GP. As a result of the support provided by the project, Saz and her family have now been rehoused to a warmer, safer, bigger property.

**"I am so happy with the service and support. They were like a dear friend."** Saz

**"As a relatively new organisation, to receive the support and encouragement from National Grid was invaluable. The security they provide us ensures the project can grow and as many individuals/families as possible can be helped."** Carole Arnold, Director at Hope4U

### Outcomes

**727 customers saved a total of £1,366,213**

**Identification of new, associated vulnerabilities** acting as a barrier to the access of support; with steps taken to address these, e.g. language line/translation services have being made available to customers and caseworkers.

**Increased the reach of our PSR - 256 referrals made.**

## Using local insights to deliver innovative local support

### Why we did it

Following the success of previous Energy Affordability Fund (EAF) projects, stakeholders noted the importance of driving innovation, by supporting organisations on the ground with new ideas to maximise the positive impact for customers in vulnerable situations.

**"National Grid can't be expected to solve all the problems themselves and there's no single most effective channel for reaching excluded customers. It's important therefore to develop and put forward a wide range of ideas."**

Academic Institution - customer vulnerability workshop

### What we did

A new round of support (delivered in collaboration with CSE) was launched in August 2022 to engage new not-for-profit organisations as well as those who have delivered via the fund before, to help vulnerable people in their local areas.

Having previously targeted support around digital exclusion and the impacts of Covid-19, the current EAF has supported six innovative new projects responding to the cost of living crisis, with a particular focus on engaging and reaching often overlooked or excluded communities. These were:

- 1 Faith groups** - Pop-up workshops and 121 consultations with experienced, multilingual, local advisors in mosques where participation in advice services has proven to be low.
- 2 Hospital leavers** - Piloting hospital advisors to engage with outpatients (focusing on women and children) with an animation shown in waiting rooms to raise awareness of the project.
- 3 Non-native English speakers, pensioners on a low income and single parent households** - Community outreach and education targeted at three key at risk groups within a large, inner city area.
- 4 Rural mentors** - Training community mentors in rural Wales where both isolation and language are barriers; using thermal imaging surveys to help customers visualise home heat loss; new community hubs providing energy assessments and translation services.
- 5 Rural advisors** - A mobile drop-in service for advice and support as well as take home kits (e.g. thermal leak detectors and energy monitors).
- 6 All** - Creating networks of community energy champions across a broad spectrum of frontline workers (health care teams, schools, churches) and upskilling them to identify, support and connect with people who are currently at risk.

### Outcomes

**999 customers have been supported to save £740,162** through current round (to date - delivery is ongoing).

Applied learnings from previous EAF projects to **upscale and further target support** wherever possible - e.g. Good Things Foundation (Part three, page 10).

### Social value

The direct financial benefits for customers, reduced carbon emissions and wider health benefits of living in a warm, well-insulated home, have generated a SROI of **£8.92** over and above every £1 spent this year.

### Next steps

Proven to be a successful model for delivering new and innovative solutions, we have further extended the scheme so better outcomes can be achieved for more customers. In March 2023, we launched an additional 12 month EAF with increased funding to provide greater stability and resourcing for delivery partners, driven by our Customer Panel and strongly supported by stakeholders at our customer vulnerability workshop.

## Directly investing to support the communities we serve

### Why we did it

Originally developed in response to Covid-19, our Community Matters Fund has proven to be a vital channel for delivering meaningful, far-reaching support. Complementing our core fuel poverty models, it ensures local organisations continue to play a key role in supporting our communities, going beyond a basic funding model. We work with our core fuel poverty partners to provide training, advice materials and support to fundees.

Driven and developed in collaboration with stakeholders, funding is targeted at five key areas where our expertise and partnerships can achieve the greatest benefits for customers: education, diversity, safety, low carbon initiatives and supporting customers in vulnerable situations.

### What we did

Four new phases of funding were delivered this year, targeting projects and initiatives that address specific areas of vulnerability. Established using insights from partners and expert panel members, and refined and substantiated via our broader stakeholder workshops and focus groups, these were:

- Mental health, loneliness and isolation** - e.g. befriending services, bereavement support and counselling sessions.
- Festive giving** - e.g. providing warm meals and gifts and clothing for vulnerable people at Christmas.
- Holiday hunger projects** to support families facing difficulties during the Summer holidays - e.g. food parcels, school holiday clubs, cookery and food budgeting classes.
- Fuel Poverty** - e.g. warm banks, energy efficiency guidance and products, income maximisation advice.

### Sharpening the focus on fuel poverty

Stakeholders encouraged us to go even further with the provision of our fuel poverty funding this year - elevating its impact and reinforcing its role as much more than a charitable donation. So we:

- Increased the funding in this area fivefold - offering £2.5 million (compared to £500,000 in 2021/22).
- Placed significant focus on supporting projects where enduring benefits could be realised and demonstrated.
- Tracked the delivery of projects, so the learnings and impacts could be readily shared and applied to future fuel poverty work and funding phases.

### Outcomes

Our Community Matters Fund has awarded over **£3.8 million to 759 grassroots organisations** in 2022/23, including £2.5 million to tackle fuel poverty in the communities we serve:

Theme	Funding amount	Organisations supported	Customers supported	SROI (this year)
Mental health	£500,000	81	11,559	£1.16
Holiday hunger	£510,000	217	70,314	£2.61
Fuel poverty	£2,500,000	319	138,032	£1.71
Festive giving	£318,000	142	175,465	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£3,828,000</b>	<b>759</b>	<b>395,370</b>	

Funding recipients are supported to join our PSR referral network and trained to provide resilience advice and add customers to the PSR - contributing to **over 80,000 requests for direct sign-ups** to our PSR this year.

### Case study



Avonmouth Community Centre - providing a warm hub for disadvantaged and vulnerable people.

Awarded: **£10,000**

Beneficiaries: **300**

**"At a time when the pressure to cover our own costs is tough, this will help us to be even more generous to the community around in providing quality shared meals, fun intergenerational activities, and space to talk about the struggles people are facing."**

**It will encourage shared resilience. The Community Matters Fund says that Avonmouth Village matters. Thank you National Grid Electricity Distribution for believing in our community."**

Avonmouth Community Centre

### Next steps

We have committed to use the fund to continue to support the most vulnerable in our communities over the next five years; distributing at least £1 million of shareholder funding each year.

# 7. A fair energy transition for all

Stakeholders have been clear that we must take a leading role in ensuring the net zero transition is fair and inclusive for customers in vulnerable situations - so no customer is left behind.

## Smart Energy Action Plans

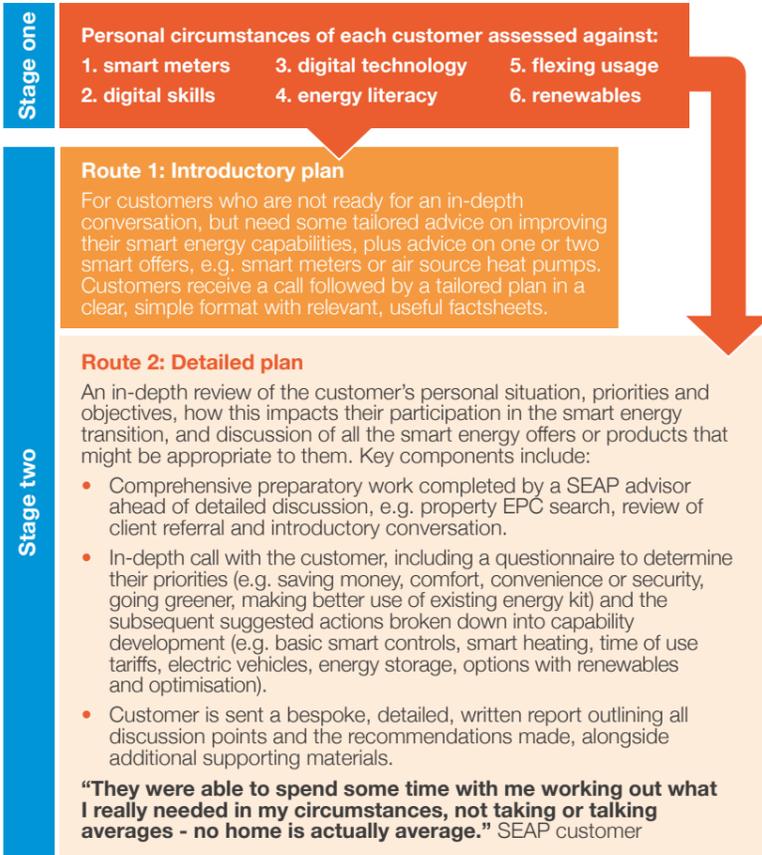
### Why we did it

**“We all need to recognise that people are on different stages on the journey to net zero, so efforts need to be tailored to moving them to the next step along. It’s all about meeting users where they are and helping them as appropriate.”**  
Charity stakeholder - customer vulnerability workshop

For us this means proactively building services that are flexible, offering customers the opportunity to participate in a way that suits them and with the capabilities to evolve with any future/emerging offers. Understanding how different groups could be affected by the shift to a smart energy network is therefore crucial. In 2019 we joined forces with Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) and expert partner CSE to create a bespoke research programme, ‘Smart and Fair?’ laying the foundation for turning ‘no one left behind’ from theory into practical delivery.

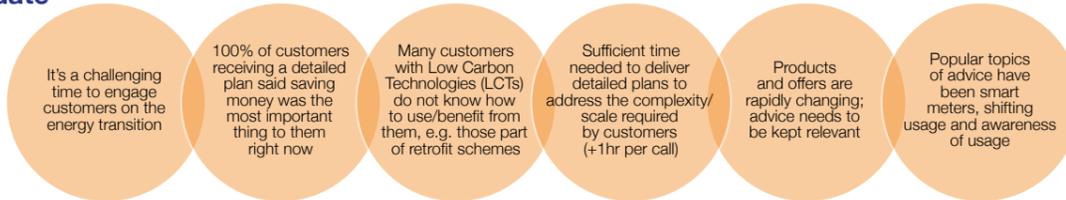
### What we did

Combining the insights gained from ‘Smart and Fair?’ and our longstanding fuel poverty programme, we collaborated with CSE to develop a pilot to offer customers a bespoke **‘Smart Energy Action Plan’** (SEAP), which could be rolled out at speed and significant scale across our existing partner network and/or new projects. Focusing on customers who would typically need extra support (e.g. PSR customers referred via Power Up), SEAPs are tailored to individual circumstances and offer support across six key topics, via two distinct routes.



### Key learnings to date

The pilot has provided invaluable insights into the efficacy of the scheme, informing our approach to maximising the benefits it can generate for our customers:



### Outcomes

- 162 customers supported via the SEAP pilot: 136 received an introductory plan, 26 received a detailed plan - customer satisfaction 84%.
- Hosted inaugural DNO collaboration event in February 2022, focusing on a fair energy transition for all - we will continue to share learning across the industry as the initiative develops.
- Training provided for 37 SEAP advisors.
- Suite of new training materials (e.g. factsheets, guidance documents) and tools developed; enabling partners to provide bespoke advice around how a customer could participate and benefit from smart opportunities.
- A rolling evaluation and refinement of delivery tools, templates and strategy, with in-depth follow up interviews with customers that identify recommendations for next steps.

### Next steps

- We have committed to rolling out the project to our entire fuel poverty partner network, increasing the scale so 600,000 PSR customers are offered a SEAP each year from April 2023.
- Delivering bespoke training across our Contact Centre teams to enable them to effectively assist and refer PSR customers.
- Developing ‘self-serve’ tools for customers who do not need the additional support from an energy advice agency - based on customer and stakeholder input.

## Closing the digital divide with multi-partner collaboration

### Why we did it

Our ‘Smart and fair?’ programme and ‘on the ground’ feedback from partners identified the barrier that digital skills and access could bring to participation in the energy transition, especially as an increasing number of services are accessed and delivered via digital means.

Citizens Advice’s 2022 ‘Access Denied’ report suggests that 1 in 20 adults do not use the internet, and 1 in 5 lack some of the ‘essential digital skills for life’.

### What we did

When considering the environmental impacts of our technology supply chain, National Grid’s Social Contract Working Group (Part 2, page 3) identified an opportunity for greater social benefits to be delivered via National Grid’s IT refresh process.

Conceived and driven by the working group, a pilot initiative trialled whether decommissioned iPads could be recycled and delivered to customers in an effective, responsible way.

Working with social change charity, the Good Things Foundation, who specialise in helping people improve their lives through digital technology, we donated 465 iPads to digitally excluded customers via a network of 42 trusted charity partners in our region (including mental health organisations, care homes, domestic violence charities, housing associations, youth support charities, schools and libraries).

Every customer supported by the project also received in-depth digital skills training and free mobile data, texts and calls via The National Databank in collaboration with Virgin Media, O2, Vodafone and Three - ensuring they had all the necessary tools and support to make the most of being online.



**“Your support is contributing to a more sustainable and circular economy, helping us fix the digital divide - for good.”**

**Rob Shapiro**, Partnerships Manager, Good Things Foundation



**“Some of the people fleeing the situation in Ukraine have made very difficult and often dangerous journeys to arrive in the UK; bringing very few items with them.”**

**Almost all areas of life are made easier if you have access to the internet and for our Ukrainians the project has enabled them to: access benefits; continue University education in Ukraine; communicate with loved ones back home; and access online translation apps and support not available in their local area.”**

Carmarthenshire Homes for Ukraine Team

### Outcome

465 households able to access online services provided by iPads with mobile data and digital skills training. In addition, relationships fostered between charities and customers is providing enduring support.

### Social value

The benefits delivered for customers in vulnerable situations, who received a refurbished iPad, mobile data and training to improve online connectivity, have generated a SROI of **£3.91** over and above every £1 spent this year.

### Some of our project partners:



### Next steps

As a result of the high SROI and positive feedback received from customers and partners, we are upscaling and embedding this approach via our Social Contract. In 2023 we are donating 3,000 more devices with a view to all redundant devices being recycled and redistributed to vulnerable customers via the scheme going forward.

## Enhanced visibility of vulnerable customers

### Why we did it

Accurate, up-to-date data is an invaluable tool and allows us to build a digital picture and provide targeted support to our customers. With 4 million of our customers having a smart meter, and over 1 million of these also on our PSR, the smart meters on our network provide one such example, offering us a wealth of data on customer consumption patterns and usage. Feedback from fuel poverty partners and vulnerability stakeholders reinforced the need to use all available data quickly and effectively to be proactive in tackling fuel poverty.

### What we did

Our Low Voltage Network Visibility project (Part two, page 7) is testing the use of smart meter data insights, at both an individual and vulnerability group level, to improve our understanding of customers’ needs based on energy consumption patterns. Using this data we can proactively identify potentially vulnerable customers and/or those struggling to manage their energy use (e.g. self-disconnecting), overcoming the need for them to recognise or self-disclose potential vulnerabilities in order to gain access to valuable support offerings.

Specially trained Contact Centre advisors can have instant access to this data via a bespoke dashboard tool, enabling them to tailor conversations with customers from the outset; increasing the quality

and impact of touchpoints and supported referrals to our Smart Energy Action Plans and wider fuel poverty support.

Aggregated by type of vulnerability (e.g. PSR needs codes) the data will also enable us to analyse typical energy use for different vulnerable groups, providing insights around macro changes across the vulnerability landscape so we can target the delivery of critical support, with both speed and agility.

### Outcomes

- Enabling 183 agents to access customer consumption profiles at their fingertips whilst engaging with the ~1 million PSR customers who have smart meters.
- Insights into the consumption patterns of different vulnerable groups can be shared with partners to help target delivery of customer support.
- Agents able to increase referrals to our core fuel poverty services for tailored, in depth support and our bespoke Smart Energy Action Plan scheme.



The Forget-me-not Chorus, a support organisation for those living with dementia from Penarth and recipient of our Community Matters Fund

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