

Social Obligations Workshop

Feedback and actions



nationalgrid

Social Obligations Workshop

Designed to discuss how the company can support the resilience of its customers during the cost-of-living crisis



- The event, held on 1 November 2023, was divided into four sessions:
 - Our vulnerable customer strategy
 - Our fuel poverty delivery model
 - Smart energy showcase
 - Winter preparedness
- The hybrid format was hosted simultaneously in person at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre and online using Zoom
- Each session consisted of a short presentation given by a National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED) representative or partner, followed by facilitated group discussions at roundtables or in virtual breakout rooms
- Attended by 67 attendees representing a range of different stakeholder groups, including charities, community energy groups, utilities and energy consultants
- This document details the high level actions we will consider in the coming year in response to feedback obtained at the event
- We will work with our expert Customer Panel to refine the detail of those actions

Turning feedback in to action – fuel poverty support

Key feedback:	Possible actions:
<p><i>The unrelenting demand for support is a major issue, resources of assistance organisations are stretched and solutions restricted to firefighting in the short-term</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve information on our website and provide partners with factsheets/links for further information, enabling them to identify support and grow their networks 2. Run a Horizon Scan webinar for partners
<p><i>‘Funding’ and long term assistance and financing emerged as the main challenges for the organisations</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Continue to provide funding for innovative projects 4. Continue with Community Matters schemes into 2024
<p><i>Partnership work between NGED and stakeholders should focus on increasing awareness of fuel poverty support</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Develop methods to allow partners to identify and grow networks of support and share knowledge and solutions
<p><i>Leveraging trusted frontline community workers to signpost the support available would be the best approach (some urged the company to provide grassroots groups with training to maximise outcomes)</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Increase community frontline worker training through our fuel poverty outreach

“At my organisation, the big challenge is the volume of applications for support from us. We need to find a way to cope with the scope of this crisis and meet the needs of consumers contacting us. Internal resources are also a struggle, as a lot of our network is made up of volunteers.”

- Charity

“As well as funding, we need resources. What has been really powerful to us as a charity is having time. National Grid is providing frontline resources and has provided trained people to give advice to answer the phones.”

- Charity

Turning feedback in to action – the smart transition

Key feedback:	Possible actions:
<p><i>There are significant potential barriers to adopting smart energy, including high costs, overly complex information about smart tariffs, and a general mistrust of utilities and the new technologies involved</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">10. Utilise partner feedback to develop and continuously update consistent customer advice and information for partners11. Identify new opportunities to target and deliver smart energy action advice to specific customer groups12. Utilise our partner hub to enable NGED and partners to share information on new and updated schemes13. Review and update web content to ensure we are providing upfront advice on the smart transition targeted to customers in vulnerable situations

“More promotion is important. We need more frontline work to build confidence and inform people about the benefits of us coming to their home, providing a face-to-face engagement platform. NGED needs to get the message out, potentially through organising events.”

- Energy Consultant

Turning feedback in to action – communication (e.g. on Winter Preparedness) and collaboration

Key feedback:	Possible actions:
<p><i>NGED was also advised to focus on effective communication about available support, with stakeholders urging NGED to address trust issues and embed inclusivity</i></p>	<p>7. Review information partners are using (e.g. with our expert stakeholders such as our Customer Panel) and how that is best communicated with customers</p>
<p><i>Stakeholders 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 to more vulnerable customers</i></p>	<p>8. Seek out cross-funding opportunities partnering with Local Authorities/Housing Associations to provide cost effective scheme delivery opportunities for organisations</p> <p>9. Continue to work with industry partners on a single PSR solution</p>

“ You have an issue with getting people to trust energy companies, even when they’re trying to help. The most success we have had in signing people up has been at community events with stalls.”

- Charity

“ Energy providers are good messengers, but they need to make sure that they provide the information to us so that we can signpost any relevant customers to the support available. This is something that we and NGED could work together on.”

- Energy Consultant

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