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north west

Bringing energy to your door



OUR ANNUAL VULNERABILITY REPORT 2024 / 25

Helping you take charge

Glossary

We have abbreviated terms throughout our report, where doing so improves clarity and readability. We provide the full form of an abbreviation at first use and then the abbreviation thereafter. A full list of the abbreviations and commonly used terms is provided in the glossary below.

BAU	Business-as-usual	Fuel poverty	Fuel poverty in England is measured using the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) fuel poverty metric, which was set out in the Fuel Poverty Sustainable Warmth strategy published in February 2021. The LILEE indicator considers a household to be fuel poor if it is living in a property with an energy efficiency rating of band D, E, F or G; and its disposable income (income after housing costs and energy needs) would be below the poverty line
At risk of being left behind	Customers who fall in scope align with the definition of ‘vulnerable situation’. These customers may be in circumstances such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being eligible for, or registered on, the Extra Care Register Being digitally excluded from participating in the energy system, limiting ability to take up opportunities which will support either financially and/or allow participation in the energy transition Financial vulnerability Living in areas of deprivation Having a lack of opportunity to participate Lack of willingness to take risks on new technology Lack of understanding of new technology Lack of knowledge of new technology 	ISG	Independent Stakeholder Group - our panel of impartial, external experts and representatives who ensure that we consider and act on the views, needs, and rights of all relevant parties who have an interest in our operations
CSAT	Customer satisfaction survey score, an overall satisfaction rating informed by responses to the question ‘overall, using a scale of one to ten, where one is very dissatisfied and ten is very satisfied, taking all aspects of the service from ENWL into account, how satisfied were you with the service provided?’	LCT	Low carbon technology, such as electric vehicles, electric heat pumps, smart meters, solar and wind energy
CVI	Consumer Vulnerability Incentive, the CVI evaluates a distribution network operator’s performance against targets set under five common out-turn performance metrics. It uses an automatic mechanism to determine whether a reward or penalty should be applied at the end of the second and fifth regulatory years of RIIO-ED2	NPV	Net Present Value, is the discounted sum of future cash flows, whether positive or negative, minus any initial investment
Digital inclusion	Digital inclusion covers 1) digital skills i.e. being able to use digital devices, such as computers or smart phones and the internet 2) connectivity i.e. access to the internet and 3) accessibility i.e. services being designed to meet all users’ needs, including those dependent on assistive technology to access digital services	Ofgem	Office of Gas and Electricity Markets - the government regulator for gas and electricity markets in Great Britain
DNO	Distribution network operator - company licensed to distribute electricity in Great Britain by the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem)	RIIO-ED1	Electricity distribution price control period, 2015-2023
ECR	Extra Care Register, is the new name for our Priority Services Register, and offers enhanced support to customers in vulnerable circumstances	RIIO-ED2	Electricity distribution price control period, 2023- 2028
ECR Reach	ECR Reach means the total number of households registered on our ECR out of the total number of households in our distribution services area that are eligible to be registered	SROI	The monetary value associated with positive outcomes received, and costs avoided by society because of a given initiative
Energy transition	The energy transition refers to the process of changing the energy system (including power, heat, and transport), from a system based on carbon intensive fossil fuels to one based on low carbon technology	Stakeholder	Stakeholders are those parties that are affected by, or represent those affected by, decisions made by ENWL and Ofgem. As well as consumers, this would for example include Government and environmental groups
ENWL	Electricity North West Limited	Strategic partners	The relationship with a range of other companies and charities that work together through structured service level agreements to deliver funded support services to vulnerable customers. Includes, but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carer and medical support i.e. NHS services, oxygen providers Charity networks i.e. Age UK, Stroke Association, Mind Customer service networks i.e. Institute of Customer Service Local authorities Local business Other utilities
		The ENA	The Energy Networks Association, the trade body that represents the gas and electricity transmission and distribution companies in the UK
		Vulnerable customer	When a consumer’s personal circumstances and characteristics combine with aspects of the market to create situations where they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significantly less able than a typical consumer to protect or represent their interests in the energy market; and/or Significantly more likely than a typical consumer to suffer detriment, or that detriment is likely to be more substantial
		Whole System	Solutions arising from energy network companies and system operators coordinating effectively, between each other and with broader areas (not just the transmission or distribution networks), which deliver value for consumers

Our report at a glance

As a distribution network operator (DNO) focused solely on the North West, we take pride in delivering power to 2.4 million properties and over 5 million customers.

This is the second year of the Annual Vulnerability Report (AVR) and we are proud to present our progress and performance which shows how, through our activities, we are:

- accountable for implementing our vulnerability strategy commitments;
- meeting, if not exceeding, Ofgem’s vulnerability baseline expectations; and
- delivering tailored support services to customers in vulnerable situations.

Over the last 12 months of the regulatory year we have embedded a robust strategy and made significant progress in delivering on the multifaceted commitments made in our RII0-ED2 Business Plan and evolving our activities to meet our stakeholders needs.

Our 2024/25 report starts with an introduction and reminder of our strategy. After that, each section starts with a strategic overview. This consistent format aims to provide a solid understanding of the breadth of activity that has supported ‘our numbers’. It provides the strategic context, within which the case studies that follow delve deeper and illuminate areas of best practise, learning and forward plans.

Annual Vulnerability Report Contents

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To ensure our report is accessible, we have used clear formatting and a legible font style and size. We have included relevant images, charts and graphs illustrate key points. Additionally, we have used plain language whenever possible.

2024/25 engagement highlights

01 **Over 145,000** customers supported through referral networks

02 **143 active** partnerships, up from 87

03 **95.7%** eligible households registered to the ECR, a **13.3% annual increase**

04 **£10.2m of benefits** realised among fuel poor customers

05 **94.8% satisfaction** with Take Charge support services

06 **22% public awareness** of Take Charge in first 12 months, up 13% on last year

07 **100%** of colleagues trained to spot vulnerability

08 ISO 22458 **Inclusive Service Provision accreditation** achieved for second year

09 **29,875** highly vulnerable customers contacted ahead of winter

10 Power restored to **100%** of customers **within five days** in major incidents

1. Introduction from Stephanie Trubshaw



I'm thrilled to present our second AVR—a moment to celebrate what we've achieved and prepare us for the challenges ahead.

Introduction from our Chief Operating Officer

People often ask me, as director of a key institution in the region, what keeps me up at night professionally? It's the safety of our customers and communities, especially those at heightened risk during power cuts. But beyond that immediate concern, it's what drives our entire organisation—making a meaningful difference to people's wellbeing.

We protect our communities using data insight, a performance-driven mindset, grant funding, and our ability to bring people together. We work to prevent harm, support those in need and strengthen resilience. Because no single organisation can tackle issues like energy affordability, inefficient homes, fuel poverty and rising health costs alone, we play a vital role across the North West. These complex challenges demand a joined-up approach—breaking down barriers and silos—to truly serve our community.

This year, our performance has been industry leading. But we never lose sight of the fact it's about the people, colleagues and customers, behind the metrics. In today's turbulent geopolitical and economic landscape, people are feeling uncertain and vulnerable. **That's why trust, honesty and principles matter—perhaps now more than ever:**

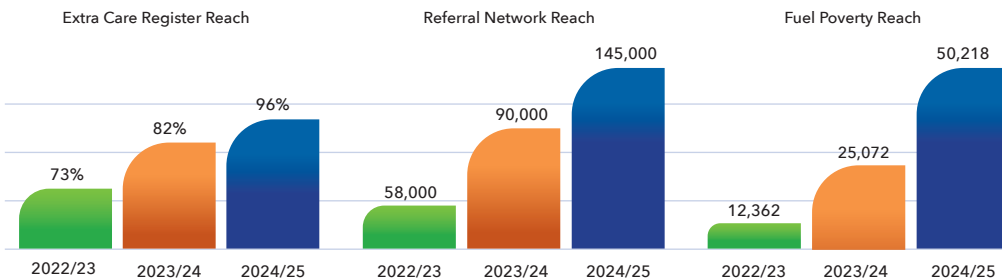
- In uncertain times, customers seek organisations they believe will act in their best interests and evidence this. For us and the wider energy sector, this trust isn't nice-to-have – it's essential.

- As we shift to sustainable energy, we need customers and stakeholders to engage and adapt. That won't happen unless we're honest and transparent—bringing them along every step of the way.
- Trust fuels advocacy and goodwill which is crucial when disruptions occur. Customers are more likely to answer calls, open their doors and follow advice if they trust us and our partners.

This year, Storm Éowyn affected some 110,000 of our customers with power outages, making it the most significant incident we've ever managed. **Our response shows how far we've come in recent years**, not only have we greatly improved the average response time, but we've also dramatically cut the time required to restore power to the very last property.

Our metrics tell the story of our progress: Extra Care Register (ECR) rose from 82.3% to 95.7% of eligible customers this year, satisfaction among members who experienced power cuts and used our support reached 92%, our battery trial and door-knocking checks received excellent feedback, and with guidance from our advisory panel, we enhanced support for medically dependent customers.

Through our flagship Take Charge programme, we have risen to the challenge and become the leading DNO for fuel poverty support. We've delivered £10.2 million in realised benefits to 50,218 customers over two years and achieved 94.8% satisfaction, surpassing our targets.



It hasn't all been smooth sailing. **We prioritise data quality**, as accurate records are just as vital as growing ECR numbers. When contacting customers for data checks or advice on winter readiness, we also face increasing concerns about data security and scams.

Trust is our licence to operate and a cornerstone of every stakeholder relationship.

In breaking down inclusion barriers, engagement remains our strongest tool. This year's [case study on our Go Low Carbon advice service](#) highlights how user feedback directly shaped a new approach—overcoming previous barriers to engagement and leading to a significant breakthrough. Although we've had an outstanding year and met all our KPIs, our culture reminds us to stay humble in a changing world. The forward-look at the end of this report sets out a clear, adaptable roadmap for the years ahead.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our entire stakeholder community for your unwavering support, time and insights – without them, none of this would be possible. I look forward to building on our progress, together, in the year ahead.

Stephanie Trubshaw,
Chief Operating Officer

1.1 Our Strategic Framework

This section outlines our strategy for addressing customers in vulnerable circumstances. It identifies the challenges faced by electricity users, describes our approach to supporting the North West region and details the principles and themes guiding our efforts.

[The Electricity Users in Vulnerable Circumstances Strategy](#), for the five-year period to 2028, has been informed by holistic, thorough and multi-layered customer and stakeholder engagement. It builds on the **strong track record** established during the eight years of RII0-ED1.

From this secure platform, our strategy centres on **continuous improvement and agility** – responding to evolving markets and shifting customer needs. Stakeholders have placed their trust in us not only to deliver now, but also to anticipate what our communities will need in the next five years and beyond. That's why **horizon scanning**, exploring future trends and potential vulnerabilities with our stakeholders, is a critical element of our approach.

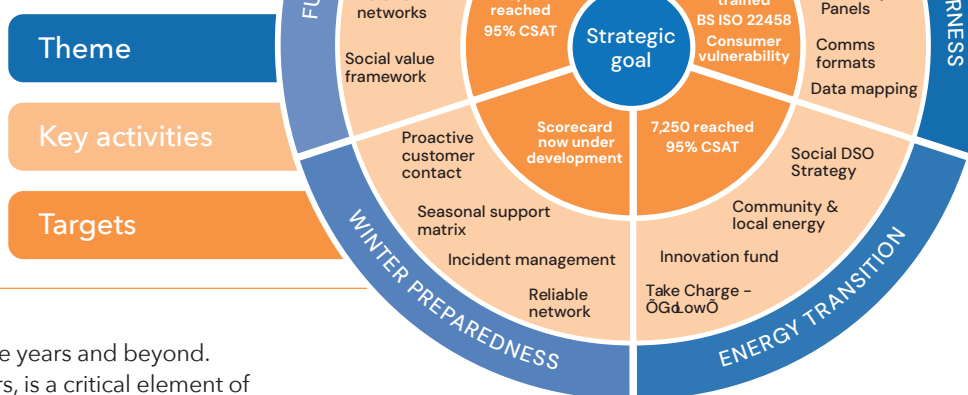
This year, stakeholders reaffirmed their confidence in our strategy, opting for stability and consistency rather than “reinventing the wheel”. They provided oversight of our performance measures, helped refine our focus areas to enhance responsiveness to new policy developments, and advocated more effective targeting—with attention concentrated on initiatives where our efforts can yield the greatest impact.

Our ongoing research and engagement programme monitors evolving trends in vulnerability issues and consumer sentiment. Our approach prioritises removing barriers that prevent customers from accessing our services and tapping into the wider regional support network.

Figure 1: Our strategy wheel

Common thread

- Customer centric
- Data driven
- Partnership powered



Our 'strategy wheel' aligns core activities and targets across five strategic, priority themes, each crafted to meet or exceed Ofgem's standards while addressing the expectations of our customers and stakeholders. This report is organised around these themes and provides progress updates.

The most pressing vulnerability issues of the day - how are North West consumers currently feeling?

1

Energy bills remain the top concern, with 58% of adults worried in Spring 2025 and energy bills consistently outranking other household bills

2

40% of young people worry about money at least daily and 50% are often afraid to look at their bank balance

3

51% of people in the North West report feeling less safe than five years ago—a reflection of rising uncertainty

4

There is growing mistrust in businesses' ethical conduct amid political and economic uncertainty and rising fears of scams

5

Just 19% of people in the North West feel they can make a meaningful contribution towards achieving net zero

Sam Loukes, Head of Inclusion, said: “While we can’t control every barrier to community participation, we remain committed to acting as a responsible, trusted business, using our convening power to unite local stakeholders around shared solutions. For example, this year we’ve worked with others to raise awareness about the phase-out of legacy equipment like radio teleswitch meters, providing additional support to customers on the Extra Care Register.”



Meaningful input from our stakeholders

We operate two key advisory panels.

The Consumer Vulnerability Oversight Panel, with six members, monitors our progress toward RIIO-ED2 targets and acts as a critical friend, providing valuable insights for strategic decisions.

The Partnership Panel, with 30 representatives from funded and non-funded organisations, works with us to deliver timely messaging and community support. Both panels meet regularly and share an independent chair, who also contributes to the Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG) to assess our performance against business commitments.

Data-driven, partnership powered

We invest in collecting, processing, analysing, reporting, and sharing data to work smarter – **guiding resources to the right areas at the right time for the best value and return.** Our partners are often better placed to deliver the enhanced support vulnerable electricity users need to make sustainable, positive changes. We review partnerships annually against our plans and emerging risks, identifying trusted organisations to fill gaps.

While partners provide direct, on-the-ground support, we work closely with them to leverage the daily community contact of our frontline teams. We train colleagues to spot signs of vulnerability and make appropriate referrals, **maximising every interaction to deliver real benefits.**

Jenny Willis, Independent Chair of our Consumer Vulnerability Oversight and Partnership Panels said:

“Established last year in its current form, the Consumer Vulnerability Oversight Panel made strong progress this period. A key focus was deepening its understanding of the monitoring methods and calculations behind the business commitment ‘scorecard’ to effectively **scrutinise ED2 performance.** After a member review, the group agreed to hold more frequent meetings centred on a single topic and expressed interest in at least two in-person meetings per year.

A recurring theme was trust, seen as essential for customers to feel confident accessing advice and support. Long-term partnerships were viewed as a key foundation, and where Electricity North West engages directly, such as through Take Charge campaigns, multiple contacts may be needed before customers feel ready to act. Panel members voiced frustration that some metrics prioritise customer numbers over the **value of sustained engagement** and the trust it builds.

Looking ahead to ED3, the Panel offered helpful guidance on information and evidence Electricity North West could gather to support future investment decisions. Meanwhile, the Partnership Panel reviewed **ECR gaps and welcomed progress, with some high-gap areas successfully addressed** through focused joint action. Members showed strong interest in using current data to target future ECR registration efforts.

At its final meeting, the Partnership Panel discussed how to help customer-facing staff adopt person-centred, **empathetic approaches** when working with diverse communities, sharing experiences to support the company’s efforts.

Together, the Panels continue to play a vital role – keeping partners informed, enabling scrutiny, and sharing insights and lived experience to strengthen impact.”



Jenny Willis

Independent Chair of our Consumer Vulnerability Oversight and Partnership Panels

2. Progress against our key performance indicators

This section of the report addresses our performance in relation to the standard metric targets established with Ofgem, and the broader DNO community, as outlined in the CVI and RIIO-ED2 Consumer Vulnerability Guidance.

2.1 Consumer Vulnerability Incentive metrics

Of the five core performance metrics, we have robustly tracked each one over the past year.

Table 1 CVI metrics - ongoing performance

Metric	Year 1 outcome	Year 2 outcome	Year 2 target	Year 3 outcome	Year 4 outcome	Year 5 outcome	Year 5 target
1. Priority Services Register reach (which we refer to as the Extra Care Register)	The proportion of eligible households that have registered for the Extra Care Register						
	82.4%	95.7%	60.0%				60.0%
2. Social value of fuel poverty services delivered (NPV)	The net value* of benefits to customers from fuel poverty services, after deducting all costs						
	£5.06m	£10.22m	£7.62m				£26.02m
3. Social value of low carbon transition services delivered (NPV)	The net value* of benefits to customers from low carbon advice, after deducting all costs						
	-£0.05m	-£0.12m	£-0.40m				-£0.49m
4. Average fuel poverty customer satisfaction survey score	The average satisfaction rating from service beneficiaries on a scale of 1 to 10						
	9.53	9.45	9.00				9.00
	(9.48 across the 2 years)						
5. Average low carbon transition customer satisfaction survey score	The average satisfaction rating from service beneficiaries on a scale of 1 to 10						
	n/a	9.00	9.00				9.00

*The valuation year (price base year) is 2021

We acknowledge the negative net present value (NPV) target for our low carbon transition support during the RIIO-ED2 period, where the cost of delivering these services currently exceeds the benefits to customers. While a negative NPV might seem unfavourable, it reflects the longer lead time required for these services to yield benefits compared to other DNO initiatives. For example, supporting customers in obtaining low carbon technology (LCT) has a longer benefit accrual time than providing immediate advice on participating in a low carbon energy transition. **We are confident that these activities will result in a positive NPV over the long term.** In the case studies that follow we provide additional narrative to accompany Table 1 which expands on the progress made and performance against the Year 2 and Year 5 targets.

Independent Assurance Providers report

Sirio Strategies independently assured DNO common performance metrics. We have published their final assessment on our website, evidencing our 100% compliance with the requirements outlined in Ofgem’s RIIO-ED2 Consumer Vulnerability Guidance Document.

2.2 Case Study: From enrollment to engagement - Managing the Extra Care Register

Strategic Context

Based on data from the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE), approximately 978,000 households qualify for our **free ECR**, which offers additional support during power cuts. **Our goal is to reach and register as many eligible households as possible.**

We use 2011 census data and mid-2020 population estimates as our baseline, recognising that population changes, such as births, deaths, relocations, and evolving household needs, mean eligibility shifts over time. To avoid leaving anyone behind, we aim to exceed 100% registration.

To deliver high-quality service, we rely on **accurate, up-to-date data, including valid contact details and information on vulnerabilities at each address.** Only households with confirmed contact information are counted in our reach as without it, we cannot tailor or deliver our support effectively. Maintaining this data requires **consistent customer engagement**, which can be challenging due to customers’ legitimate concerns about scams. Nevertheless, re-establishing contact is essential to ensure we continue reaching those most in need.

What we heard

Our customers and partners consistently tell us that rebranding the Priority Services Register as the Extra Care Register has clarified the support available and made it easier to explain to their communities.

By the end of 2023/24, benchmarking showed DNOs registered between 57% and 93% of eligible customers, with the North West achieving the third-highest rate at 82%. In response, stakeholders urged us to maintain this momentum in 2024/25, progressing toward our revised stretch target of 90% registration by 2028, without compromising data quality, and leveraging partnerships to register under-reached groups.

Our data-driven strategy highlighted the largest gaps in membership by location, with eight of the top ten gaps being in Greater Manchester. By category, the most under-represented groups were families with children under the age of five, those with sight loss and those living with dementia.

In 2019/20, Blackpool showed high levels of vulnerability, including significant fuel poverty. In partnership with Cosy Homes in Lancashire, we promoted the ECR, delivered energy efficiency assessments, and provided grants to fuel-poor households. **The now self-sustaining programme has grown its reach from 52% to 93.6%.** Stakeholders have since called for this **successful model to be replicated** through closer collaboration with local authorities. **To expand outreach, we consulted our advisory panel for partner recommendations.** They suggested working with organisations supporting carers and parents of young children and engaging primary care networks to reach social prescribers.

What we did

We continued our mature embedded **five-step approach** to the management, promotion and maintenance of our ECR while adopting a continuous improvement approach:

1. Data sharing with other utilities and suppliers to create a ‘one stop shop’

We use embedded processes to ensure customers only **register once** for a Priority Services Register shared across utilities. Through data sharing with energy suppliers, water companies, and gas transporters—aligned with best practice—customers who submit our form consent to their data being used for ECR support during power cuts and shared with relevant utility providers.

The data we receive through this mechanism, as presented in the table below, is at an individual level rather than a property level. We remove duplicate records and conduct further investigative work where no contact details are provided in the data we receive (see step five).

Table 2: The impact of our ECR data sharing programme

Sign-Ups	Activity	Volume this year	Volume last year
	Enable a one stop shop for customers		
	Two-way data share with energy suppliers	298,482	243,594
	Two-way data share with United Utilities	124,122	98,010
	Data received from Cadent	6,271	5,238
	Outcome	428,875 (+24%)	346,842

2. Making every contact with customers count

Our ‘We’re Switched On’ approach **empowers our customer-facing colleagues** to view every interaction as an opportunity to inform customers about the ECR. They proactively ask whether anyone in the customer’s household or network could benefit from the service.

This past winter, starting in October 2024, we launched our **‘One in a Million’ campaign**. The name resonates more effectively with colleagues and stakeholders, representing the number of eligible individuals we aim to identify and register, rather than focusing on the remaining percentage.

As we approach our goal of one million registrations, the **challenge of finding the remaining individuals intensifies**. However, each new registration becomes a celebrated achievement, further motivating our teams to continue their efforts.

Table 3: The impact of ECR promotion by our frontline staff

Sign-Ups	Activity	Volume this year	Volume last year
	Make every contact count		
	‘We’re Switched On’ campaign additions	92,022 (+9%)	84,661

3. Proactive and targeted advertising of the ECR

We focused our promotion on areas where data showed gaps in ECR reach by location and vulnerability type.

Promotion via Electricity North West channels (tracked)

Our 2024 winter awareness campaign encouraged customers to sign up for the ECR if they might struggle during a power outage. This year, our **radio advertisements** aired on Capital Manchester, Capital Lancashire and Heart North Lincs and Cumbria. Customers may also have heard them on **smart devices** like Amazon Alexa.



Advertising tracking showed particularly **strong results on Facebook, especially among the 65+ age group**. By targeting the top 10 geographical areas, we delivered cost-effective messaging focused on specific regions of need. The video creative featuring “Nan” resonated especially well with Meta’s older audience.

We’ve refreshed our [registration landing page](#) to make it **easier to register, update details, or leave the register**. Updates now take less than a minute. If customers aren’t sure whether they’re registered or what information we hold, they can simply resubmit their full registration and we’ll take care of the rest.

Partner-led awareness campaigns

We also used our intel on gaps towards targeting our partnerships in the right areas, a selection of which are provided below.

Partner	Region	Target	Mechanisms used to engage
NHS East Lancashire Maternity Services	East Lancashire	Families with children under the age of five	Videos via Badger Notes Maternity App. Signposted by midwife team (approx. 600 births per month)

This year, we embarked on a pioneering collaboration aimed at addressing significant challenges faced by new parents and the NHS.

Recognising the overwhelming amount of information new parents receive upon discharge, we have developed a series of videos featuring midwifery colleagues. These **videos** provide standardised, engaging and accessible information on essential postnatal topics.

By downloading the **Badger Notes app**, families can easily access these resources both in the hospital and at home. The content is available in the **ten most spoken languages** in the region and includes **subtitles**. Within the content, there is prominent promotion of the ECR, clearly highlighting the benefits of the service for **families with children under five**. This approach enhances the postnatal experience for families and also unlocks time savings for NHS staff. Moreover, the platform and approach is **replicable across any NHS Trust**.



Partner	Region	Target	Mechanisms used to engage
Regenerate	Lancashire, and also Bolton	State pension age, dementia	In-store posters, TV screens and staff engagement



Our long-term partner Age Concern (Lancashire) has rebranded as Regenerate, aiming to support more older people across North West England by expanding services such as home visits and specialist dementia care. This year we worked together to **promote the ECR through Regenerate’s network of 13 retail stores**.

Dual-branded materials feature in store windows, supported by a new retail superstore at Middlebrook Retail Park in Horwich, Bolton, which includes a waiting area and a large TV display with ECR information. Promotional materials raise awareness about power cuts and encourage preparedness among **service users, carers, and family members**. Regenerate staff also engage shoppers to boost sign-ups.

More widely we continued to **work more closely with local authorities** such as Bolton Council, who promoted Extra Care for the first time in their **2024/25 council tax bill**.

Table 4: The impact of ECR promotion with partners

Sign-Ups	Activity	Volume this year	Volume last year
	Promotion via ENWL channels (tracked)	52,207	42,332
	Partner-led awareness campaigns	11,508	15,746
	Outcome	63,715 (+10%)	58,078

4. Proactive contact with existing members to maintain our database

We aim to contact every ECR customer at least once every two years, and we reach out to all highly vulnerable (medically dependent on electricity) customers annually. **In 2024/25, we proactively contacted 763,626 members to ensure their information is accurate.** Customers can update their details or leave the ECR via pre-paid mail, an online form, phone or SMS.

Table 5: The impact of proactive contact with members

Updates	Activity	Volume this year	Volume last year
	Members updating contact information	205,271	109,044
	Opt-outs in response to proactive contact	(23,697)	(8,567)

5. Data cleanse Lexis Nexis methodology

Although we make repeated efforts to contact all members on a two-year cyclical basis, some remain unreachable or unresponsive. Over the past three years we’ve invested more than £500,000 in a partnership with Lexis Nexis to **verify contact details** for members not reached through our annual campaigns.

Records we trust completely are retained with full confidence. Duplicates, deceased individuals and those traced to addresses outside our service area are removed. Pending removals are held while we verify eligibility through our contact strategy—ensuring no one who could benefit from the service is mistakenly removed.

As a result, the proportion of reviewed records removed dropped dramatically—from 27% in 2022/23 to just 1% in 2023/24. This shift highlights **the significant improvement in data quality**. This year, we focused data validation efforts on 26,000 records where gaps were found. This enabled us to retain 13,239 records, in full confidence that we can provide the most effective customer support and include them in our reach measure.

Table 6: Records removed following verification

Updates	Activity	Volume this year	Volume last year
	Additional data cleanse		
	Records removed	12,761	8,948



What we learnt

Through our engagement with the advisory panel and customer focus groups, we’ve heard growing unease about using “vulnerability” as a catch-all term. Their concerns include:

- **Lack of clarity:** ‘Vulnerability’ is often used without a clear definition, leading to conceptual ambiguity. Terms like “vulnerable life situations” are preferred, as they avoid labelling entire groups and emphasise the temporal, situational and structural nature of vulnerability.
- **Stigmatisation:** The use of the term “vulnerable” can reinforce harmful stereotypes of passivity and dependency, and often serves as a barrier itself, deterring people from seeking or accessing support.
- **Obscuring structural factors:** Broad usage of ‘vulnerability’ can mask systemic issues such as poverty, discrimination or inadequate access to services, focusing on individual traits rather than the wider context.

In response to this feedback, our Extra Care campaign, launched in spring 2025, will spotlight the extreme lengths some customers might go to for support during a power cut while making it clear that there’s an easier (and safer) way!

We’re deliberately stepping away from traditional imagery and conversations that label people as ‘vulnerable’. Instead, we’re reframing the narrative—highlighting the situational or structural contexts that may lead someone to need extra support, without assigning a permanent label.

By leading with empowerment, advocacy and normalisation, our campaign encourages people to not see asking for assistance as a sign of weakness, but as a positive decision for their safety and wellbeing. We’re using inclusive, situational question prompts (e.g. “Do you need extra support during a power cut?”) rather than labels, and inviting the industry to adopt this more respectful, context driven style of communication.

‘Vulnerable’ is outdated language



More widely we’ve taken these insights and our collaborative ethos into a nationwide pharmacy campaign in partnership with other DNOs. This initiative included:

- **Printed pharmacy guide:** Over 250,000 copies distributed to around 5,000 pharmacies, promoting the Priority Services Register and offering power-cut and energy-efficiency advice.
- **Micro-website for pharmacy patients:** Featuring the same information, reaching 1.5 million readers electronically.
- **All-DNO email campaign:** Priority Services Register promotion sent to over 100,000 individuals who opted in via their pharmacy.

Customer Impact

We calculate our ECR reach using a standardised methodology, focusing on thoroughly cleansed and verified records.

This year, enhanced marketing, strategic partnerships and improved accessibility increased our ECR reach from 82.4% to 95.7% of eligible customers, reducing the gap to just 4.3%. Over the past two years, we’ve achieved a 23% increase in ECR reach.

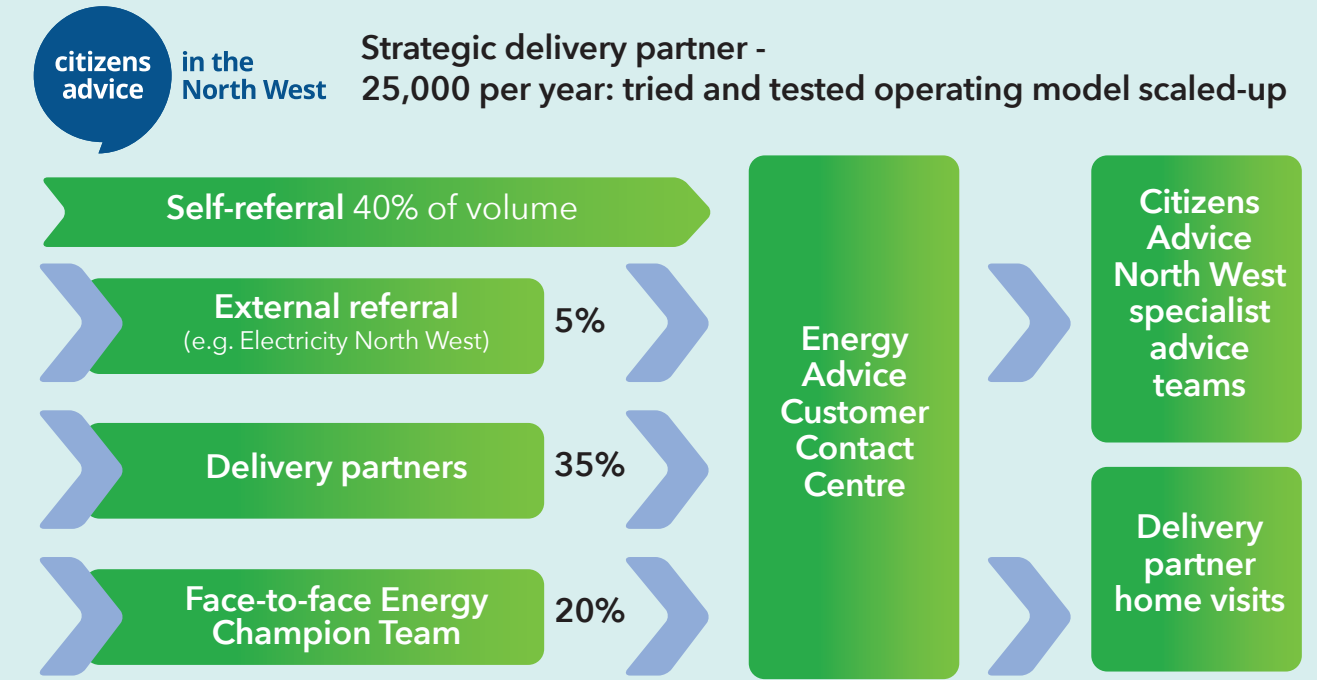
Membership offers both individual and community benefits, including:

- **Enhanced resilience during power cuts;**
- **Reduced anxiety and distress and minimised lost time through proactive updates; and**
- **Improved wellbeing at home, such as access to backup power for medically dependent electricity users.**



Our insights, together with the government’s changes to the winter fuel payment, informed our focus. Under the new eligibility rules for winter 2024/25, recipients must be receiving Pension Credit or another means-tested benefit by 21 December 2024 to qualify. **Knowing that advice provision must continuously adapt to evolving policy, we prioritised our marketing campaign and revised our communications scripts to stay agile and responsive, ensuring we maximise access for eligible service users.**

Figure 2: Take Charge operating model - coordination of awareness raising and referral pathways




Our team ran drop-in sessions at libraries, job centres, and Sure Start Centres, and continued using a mobile advice centre in areas with high poverty rates. Advisors visited over 50 locations, including barbershops, bingo halls, bus stations, faith centres, food banks, healthcare sites, markets, schools, and supermarkets.

In warmer months, we partnered with GPs to send SMS messages promoting Take Charge and encouraging attendance at pop-up events. New this year, we also worked with employers such as Asda to support lower-paid employees through tailored money and energy advice.


We made strong progress collaborating with housing associations to deliver energy advice to tenants, supporting landlords without in-house resources and helping tenants who may hesitate to discuss debt. In some cases, we facilitated three-way calls with translators for inclusivity and provided letter-writing and advocacy services for complex issues. These efforts demonstrate our commitment to comprehensive, user-focused support.

Building on our marketing strategy, we maintained our core principles—customer focus, data-driven insights, and clear, inclusive messaging—while adapting our approach to enhance digital conversions and foster stronger partner collaborations. Highlights were as follows:


Marketing Channels




Transport for Greater Manchester Metrolink, buses etc.




Radio – commercial and local




Website



Community outreach in-person events



Social channels



Printed leaflets, posters, thermometer cards

191,876,674
Total opportunities for the campaign to be seen or heard

94,232
Digital engagements (link clicks)

30,585
Microsite users, predominantly new visitors

2,751
Enquiries and calls directed to Citizens Advice North West

Our marketing built on seven animated characters to deliver core messages, adding new scenarios and introducing an eighth character, Amir, across promotional materials and the www.takechargetoday.co.uk microsite.

Our collaboration with Transport for Greater Manchester brought Take Charge characters and messaging to a wide audience via passenger information screens, digital displays, posters at 99 Metrolink stops, 50 interchanges, 72 departure screens, as well as bus headliners and onboard screens.

Delivering our service portfolio

The success of our marketing programme is evident, with 40% of this year’s service users self-referring to Take Charge (see Figure 2). This highlights the strength of our brand.

Our network of delivery partners across the North West serves as the next largest referral source, directing clients to us with confidence in our ability to provide support. Additionally, Electricity North West contributed 5% of referrals, thanks to our colleagues identifying signs of vulnerability among customers. Beyond these reactive channels, our proactive outreach efforts, particularly in-person pop-up events, accounted for 20% of the total referral volume.

Changing course to deliver better value for money

During year one, Take Charge focused heavily on Greater Manchester—a densely populated urban area that accounts for 57% of customers connected to our network (compared to 31% in Lancashire and 12% in Cumbria). In year two, the focus shifted to expanding our reach into Lancashire and Cumbria. Recognising that previous investment in direct marketing (leaflets through letterboxes) delivered poor value for money, we reallocated budget from direct mail to a dedicated engagement resource aimed at reaching low-income households through in-person events.

This expanded activity included:

- Engaging a wide range of community organisations that support less digitally engaged audiences, such as libraries, community hubs, churches and faith groups, warm spaces, community shops, social prescribers and community champions.
- Identifying and attending networking groups, forums and local events to build connections with potential referral partners such as the DWP, health professionals, local councils, carers’ groups and disability organisations.
- Distributing marketing materials to 59 delivery partners and 171 third-party organisations to help them reach their service users and staff. This included bespoke content such as TV screen ads in five NHS hospitals, up from two last year.
- Becoming active members of seven (of a possible eight) Integrated Care Communities (ICCs) in the Lancashire & South Cumbria Health Partnership region. We now regularly attend community liaison meetings to deliver presentations about Take Charge.



In response this year we’ve broadened our reach across the North West.

Through a combination of out-of-home advertising and targeted partnerships, representation outside Greater Manchester has increased significantly, now making up around 30% of the customers supported.

Focusing on impact over quantity

Our approach prioritises making meaningful changes in people’s lives, focusing more on the quality of the advice provided rather than simply achieving high volumes. With the highest-quality training and a ‘go-for-gold’ ethos for every customer, our Energy Team has cultivated a culture where advisors celebrate every high score and remain open and curious about areas for improvement. **We believe in measuring quality and are proud that our 94.8% performance rate (over two years) demonstrates consistent service, eliminating any postcode lottery.** However, we acknowledge that scores don’t always reflect the true service experience. For instance, users disappointed about not qualifying for certain government grants may still feel under-served. To address this, we dedicate as much time as possible in each interaction to personalised advice and support. We’ve also boosted survey opt-ins to gather richer feedback and we are continuously analysing trends and root causes to drive further improvements.

Customer Impact - an outcome we are proud of

The Take Charge programme has significantly surpassed its year two financial and quality targets (see Table 1, CVI metrics).

We’re proud to have supported 50,218 service users over the past two turbulent years, truly making a difference when it mattered most.

After deducting programme costs and applying a standard approach to calculating NPV, our support delivered £10.2 million in benefits, averaging over £200 pure value per person (net). The biggest contributor was direct financial gain for consumers, primarily through income maximisation putting cash back into people’s pockets.

At the end of 2024/25, we conducted a second phase of our fuel poverty awareness research, reaching over 900 customers. **22% were aware of the Take Charge campaign, up from 9% in year one.** This achievement is a strong foundation to build momentum in year three. In addition:

- 76% felt less stressed, depressed or anxious because of receiving advice.
- 94% would recommend the advice service to a friend.



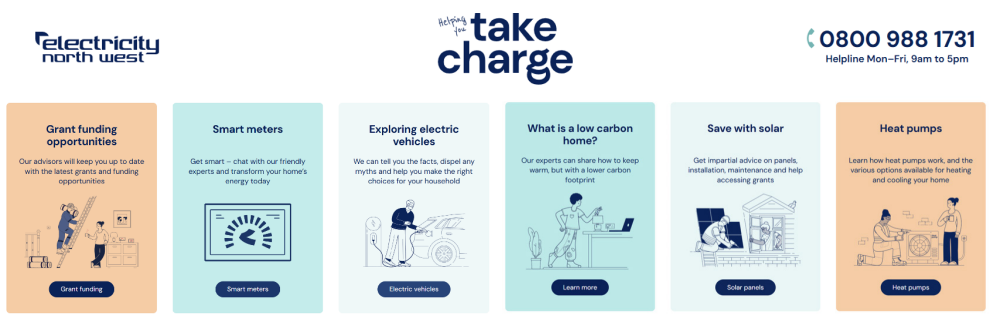
What we learnt

Ofgem’s 2025 State of the Energy Market report highlights a trend toward greater debt and arrears intensity per individual, rather than an increase in the overall number of customers in debt. This aligns with our partners’ experience, which shows longer engagement times and more support services required per person. This additional value is not fully captured in our reported NPV £ and reflects a limitation in the incentive measurement. We found that our service users continue to skew female (65%) rather than male (35%), a trend supported by research showing women are nearly twice as likely as men to manage day-to-day household budgeting and finances. In many heterosexual households, women are the primary contact for money and energy advice, speaking on behalf of partners and families. This year, our outreach also skewed older, with 30% of users aged 65+, up from 15% in year one, driven in part by our focus on winter fuel payment eligibility. Notably, 37% of our users come from ethnically diverse backgrounds, a figure well above the 13% population representation, demonstrating strong engagement with these communities.

Forward look

- We will continue to target under-represented audiences and adapt our approach as required. Year three plans include:
- Expanding from our success with ICCs in Lancashire and South Cumbria to reach North Cumbria and Greater Manchester.
 - Engaging with partners working with priority groups currently less likely to seek help from Take Charge.

2.4 Case Study: Take Charge - Go Low Carbon Advice



Strategic Context

In 2022-23, the DNO community agreed on a common definition for those at risk of being left behind during the energy transition. However, in the first year of AVR submissions, the scope and scale of LCT interventions varied considerably across companies, highlighting how embryonic this area remains in terms of research and development.

In late March 2024, we launched a free, impartial advice service to help customers explore their low carbon energy options and make informed decisions. We chose to pilot the support using in-house resources to maximise learning, refine the customer journey and quickly adapt or discontinue approaches that didn't work, and we remain open to alternative delivery models in the future.

From April 2024, we began marketing under the **Take Charge brand**, using channels tailored to customer preferences. Options include a freephone number, email, an online form and a [dedicated microsite](#). We anticipated that the primary support channel would be telephone conversations, and we positioned the microsite to drive that call to action, not as a standalone source of advice, to ensure a personalised customer experience.

Our initial insights revealed that a 'build it and they will come' mentality is ineffective. Issuing calls to action through marketing campaigns isn't enough to drive usage of the service. In the first six months, we supported just 30 customers by phone.

What we heard

We used engagement to explore how best to adapt the Go Low Carbon advice service, ensuring we offer the right advice, use an effective marketing mix to overcome accessibility and inclusion barriers and expand our reach.

Feedback from our Stakeholder Advisory Panel

Trusted partners, such as Age UK South Lakeland, reported frequent enquiries about LCTs and often needing to spend days identifying the right answers. We heard that our service fills a vital gap in impartial advice, but that we should adapt our approach:

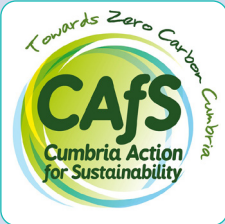
- Service entry points:** People moving into properties with LCTs—such as older adults in assisted living—often lack the knowledge to use them and need immediate support. Additionally, owners of LCTs need advice, not just those who are considering them.
- Customer segmentation:** Distinguish between those in fuel poverty and those who can afford LCTs but are not yet engaged. Explore how best to segment audiences and whether to reach them directly or via partners.
- Community outreach:** Engage people in familiar spaces, rather than trying to draw them into unfamiliar or artificial settings.
- Supplier signposting:** While we must remain neutral to maintain trust, we could equip customers with the right questions to ask and indicators to look for when choosing suppliers.
- Addressing scepticism:** Use of the word 'free' can trigger distrust. Clearly communicate why the service is impartial and trustworthy to support engagement, particularly among social housing tenants and landlords.

Feedback from the Electric Vehicles (EVs) Made Easy Household Driver Survey

In partnership with Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS), we gathered evidence from local communities to better understand the key issues, benefits and appetite for the transition to EVs. A total of 805 citizens took part, 416 from Cumbria via CAfS channels and 389 through our Voice of the Customer Feedback Panel, capturing additional views from Greater Manchester and Lancashire.

Key insights

- Appetite exists:** 28% of respondents say they intend to buy an EV within the next five years. However, engagement is significantly lower among ethnic minority groups, low-income households, and residents in rural areas.
- Top barriers:** Cost, charging infrastructure and range anxiety remain key concerns. 30% of households cannot access off-street parking and will require on-street charging options.
- Support is needed:** Confidence could be improved through resources such as informal 'ask the expert' webinars.



What we did

In response to stakeholder feedback, we enhanced our programme by integrating proactive outreach, adding 19 in-person engagement events and pop-ups in community settings.

We participated in events planned by community groups and set up stalls in shopping centres, supermarkets, at coffee mornings, local authority referral network gatherings and business events. To reach those most under-represented, we prioritised events in communities with particularly ethnically diverse populations, language barriers and rural areas where residents are often isolated and struggle to access support online.

We heard powerful stories from people who felt disempowered about making an impact on climate change. However, discussing smart meters sparked curiosity about flexible time-of-use tariffs to shift energy use to off-peak times. Similarly, members of the Jewish community showed interest in communal energy setups and community solar schemes. **These conversations revealed that engaging people in familiar, everyday settings helps them feel at ease and more open to exploring energy solutions and new technologies.**

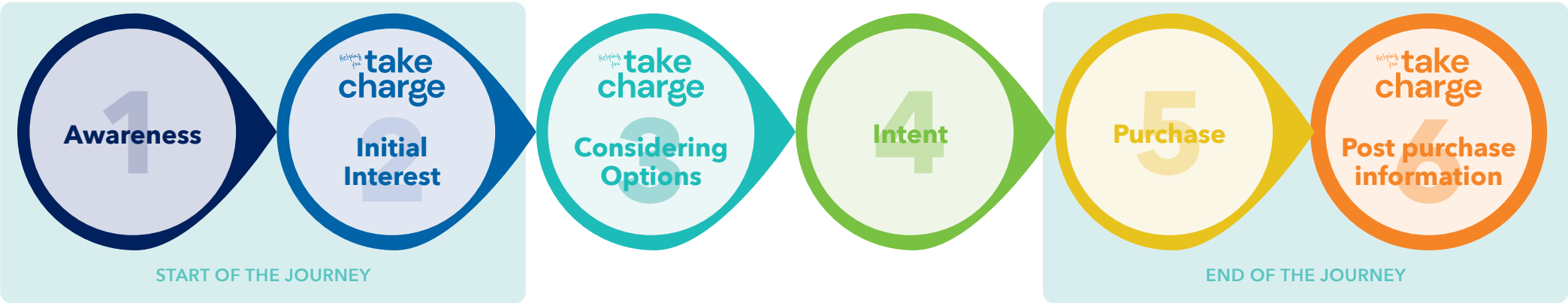
To expand our support, we partnered with Together Housing on a low carbon retrofit programme, including heat pump installations. We delivered tailored advice to help tenants get the most from their new systems.

By applying stakeholder feedback, we enhanced three major unlooping schemes, **extending our focus to post-installation support to ensure long-term benefits for existing LCT users.**



We explored stakeholder feedback on **customer segmentation** and discovered that existing LCT advice services, including Cosy Homes in Lancashire, LEAP, Groundwork, National Energy Action (NEA), and other non-profit organisations, are typically geared towards low-income households. This raises a key question: **How can households that are not in fuel poverty receive trusted advice, local installation solutions and follow-up support?**

Figure 3: LCT customer journey, indicating where Take Charge - Go Low Carbon best fits



To address this, we **co-funded the ‘Greener Homes in Lancashire’** pilot in January 2025 under the Take Charge umbrella, delivered in partnership with Green Rose Energy. Green Rose Energy, a not-for-profit community interest company, was commissioned to deliver this **low carbon advice to households that had contacted Cosy Homes but were ineligible for grants** as they were identified as ‘able to pay’. These residents received tailored energy advice by phone, or in-person during community events.

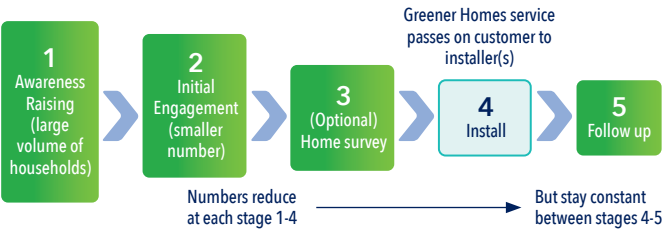
Figure 4: Difference in customer segmentation: existing schemes vs. our pilot programme



The pilot enabled Green Rose Energy to support 150 customers, providing expert advice on LED lighting, smart meters and home automation, solar panels with battery storage, EV charging and assistance available from energy suppliers and network operators.

The customer journey began with targeted awareness raising, followed by an optional home survey and, where suitable, a handoff to a third-party installer for implementation.

Figure 5: Greener Homes in Lancashire Customer Journey



The pilot highlighted that **telephone advice works effectively when customers have proactively opted in** and requested support, helping explain why traction for our broader Take Charge service was comparatively lower. Partnering with Green Rose Energy also allowed us to leverage their strong reputation and expertise in LCTs and broaden our reach to include homeowners at the start of their home improvement journey, (older) homeowners that aren’t comfortable with digital solutions and confident households that want recommendations for installers.

Despite our efforts, we identified a significant limitation as survey response rates remain low. This hampers our ability to gather meaningful feedback and accurately assess the impact of our interventions. Enhancing response rates will be a key focus in the next phase of the project.

Green Rose Energy is committed to continuing this service irrespective of additional support. However, its reach, capacity, prioritisation and overall effectiveness are significantly influenced by contributions from partners. The aspiration is for Greener Homes in Lancashire to become the official, council-backed, not-for-profit retrofit service for able-to-pay households and landlords in the region.

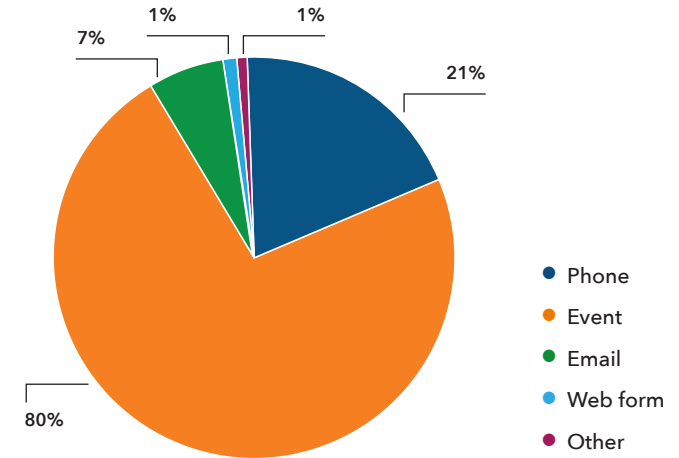
We sought broader insights from our EVs Made Easy Survey to shape the information, guidance, and support we offer, with the goal of building confidence in EV adoption.

In response, we partnered with CAFS to develop the EVs Made Easy module. This was delivered both at a community engagement event and via an online webinar, to test interest in accessing low carbon information in this format. Our aim was to overcome key barriers to service uptake. Both events were well attended, and the feedback was excellent. As a result, we are evolving this into a sustained programme of webinars and lunch-and-learn sessions for different LCTs such as ‘Solar Made Easy’.

By pivoting our engagement strategy to include both **proactive and reactive advice channels** and focusing on segments of the customer journey previously deprioritised (such as owners of LCTs and those ready and able to pay), we built remarkable momentum in the second half of the year. **We’ve supported 411 individuals with personalised advice, 80% of which was delivered through our events programme.**

Figure 6: Difference in customer segmentation: existing schemes vs. our pilot programme

Personalised advice channels 2024/25: % share of service users



Customer Impact

Through a common **DNO social-value framework**, we measure the financial benefits to LCT users, quantified as bill savings from their adoption, alongside carbon emissions avoided and health improvements from income maximisation. This year, our most impactful advice focused on LEDs (60% of service users acting on advice), solar PV (20%), and smart meters (16%). Looking ahead, we aim to build momentum around EVs (2% this year) and heat pumps (3%) through new partnerships. We recognise these technologies require significant upfront investment and face adoption barriers, but there is strong interest. That’s why we’re proud to provide their options without pressure.

Cont. on next page >

Our advice service already achieves a 90% satisfaction rate, helping users feel confident about taking the next steps. We also know that when customers adopt LCTs, the benefits accrue over the long term, meaning a single year's NPV doesn't capture the full picture.

Beyond individual advantages, there are broader impacts whereby participating in the energy transition, users contribute to societal progress. In this way, our advice service fosters both personal and collective agency—exactly what's needed to tackle the major challenges ahead.

Feedback

A customer who received advice from the Take Charge service said: "I've never been eligible for this kind of support before because I'm not on benefits. The advice I received was clear, thorough, and impartial. I wasn't being sold anything. I now feel more confident about what to do next."

Jill Hendry, Customer Inclusion Innovation Manager, said: "The input from our customer panels is helping us design a tool that offers free, tailored plans with personalised home energy-saving recommendations. We are also using this research to understand who will use the tool, what they want from it, and how it integrates with our other channels—for example, enabling users to follow up on the tool's suggestions through a conversation with one of our telephone advisors. It is one of several exciting developments we have in store for year three!"



What we learnt

To deepen our understanding and learning we invested in further research and engagement to inform the design of the year three Take Charge marketing strategy to increase engagement with Take Charge - Go Low Carbon, particularly among ethnically diverse and rural communities, fuel-poor households and our younger audience.

Agent Academy supports young people with free, industry-led programmes combining practical learning, real-world challenges, and coaching to help them build meaningful careers. We commissioned Agent Academy to develop campaign strategies to encourage wider use of our advice service, especially among younger audiences, bringing a fresh engagement perspective.

We met with Agent Academy learners four times, including a joint session with our Stakeholder Advisory Panels. The learners requested access to experts, data, and success stories, and carried out outreach engaging 250 people through surveys and vox pops. They also consulted stakeholders across build-to-rent, co-living, multi-family, single-occupancy, and student housing sectors.

Key insights

- Offering advice only by phone risks excluding digitally engaged audiences. A deeper level of online information is needed—wireframes aren't enough, a full website is required.
- Encouraging family conversations around LCTs can be powerful, given the influence of younger generations, rising intergenerational living and the tendency for young people to absorb and pass on knowledge.

Forward look

In response, we are consolidating our separate Take Charge microsites—Energy and Money Advice and Go Low Carbon—into a single, enhanced Take Charge website. This course correction will strengthen our digital offer, ensuring that those who prefer to engage online can access meaningful, personalised advice through this channel. To support this work, we have established three engaged customer panels of customers who have not yet adopted LCTs.

3. Regularly reported evidence

This section of the report evaluates our performance concerning regularly reported evidence (RRE) across four key areas critical to achieving the CVI aims and benefits, as outlined in the RIIO-ED2 Consumer Vulnerability Guidance. Metrics one and two are reported annually, while metrics three and four are reported cumulatively. This approach ensures that the most current and accurate data from completed regulatory years is used to inform the best estimates for the volume of services to be delivered in the upcoming years.

Table 8: Regularly reported evidence metrics

RRE Metric	Ofgem baseline expectation	Actual		Forecast		
		Year 1 2023/24	Year 2 2024/25	Year 3 2025/26	Year 4 2026/27	Year 5 2027/28
1. Frequency of ECR customer data cleanse (reported on an annual basis)	Network has attempted to contact all ECR customers to verify their data	100% compliance	100% compliance			
2. Customer satisfaction score among ECR customers who have experienced a power cut (reported on an annual basis)	9.01 target	9.00	9.18			
3. The volume of fuel poverty services delivered (reported on a cumulative basis)	Forecast volume of fuel poverty services delivered for RIIO-ED2	25,072	50,218	75,218	100,218	125,218
4. The volume of low carbon transition services delivered (reported on a cumulative basis)	Forecast volume of low carbon transition services delivered for RIIO-ED2	0	411	1,661	4,161	7,261

For metric three, it’s important to note that the volume of fuel poverty services delivered represents in-depth support provided. This excludes general awareness-raising efforts, which reached well in excess of 25,000 customers in 2024/25.

In the case study that follows (3.1) we provide additional narrative to accompany Table 8 which expands on the progress made and performance against the year two and year five targets.

3.1 Case Study: Using the information held about ECR Customers to target, or prioritise, support

Strategic Context

Electricity users in vulnerable situations are at higher risk during power cuts. While losing power can cause concern for anyone, it can be harmful for those already facing challenging circumstances. **Our goal is to ensure that all customers, regardless of their situation, receive fair treatment and easy access to high-quality information, help and support.**



We tailor the customer journey, communication, and support provided during a power cut to efficiently deliver the most appropriate assistance based on each customer’s specific needs - prioritising resources for those who need it most, especially individuals medically dependent on electricity.

What we heard

We collaborated with One Voice Blackburn to conduct six focus groups over five months with 52 participants from marginalised communities, including Indian, Pakistani, Arab and African ethnic backgrounds, aged 29 to 83. Around 58% had experienced a power cut, and 81% had health conditions personally or in their family. **The goal was to understand their awareness of the ECR and what they needed during power outages.**

Key insights

- Language remains the biggest obstacle:** Participants who could speak but not read either English or their native language struggled to understand text messages or phone communications during power cuts.
- Social media is a powerful tool:** Across all age groups, including those with limited English, platforms like TikTok and Instagram are key sources of trusted information.
- Community champions enhance reach:** Engaging trusted local figures within ethnic communities ensures messages are culturally relevant and more likely to be trusted.
- Children as communication channels:** Adults, especially those aged 50+, rely on children and grandchildren to translate and share critical messages.



Last year, focus groups with ECR customers revealed that power cuts can be life-threatening for those medically dependent on electricity. Through our ongoing engagement with other DNOs, we decided to trial [UK Power Networks’ ‘Power Protect’ project](#), providing batteries to medically dependent ECR customers during planned outages.

UKPN’s [Independent research](#) found that **medically dependent customers worry most about battery duration, weight, and power capacity.** Over half would need help positioning the battery, and more than 40% would require assistance operating it. Besides medical equipment, customers are also concerned about powering phones, internet routers, refrigerators (for medications), electric blankets, kettles, and lighting (to prevent falls).

What we did

Information held about ECR customers helps us to target, or prioritise, support

This year we embedded our support matrix, providing tailored support for different temperature scenarios (summer/winter) and times of day (day time/night time). This framework ensures **consistent and fair treatment of customers while allowing our teams the discretion to address individual customer needs with services beyond standard guidelines.**



Through Charis Shop, colleagues provided vouchers to households affected by extended power outages, typically for supermarkets, cafes, or online food delivery services. When large clusters of households experience prolonged power outages, we activate **partnerships with local cafés and community centres to establish Extra Care hubs.** These hubs offer warmth, hot beverages and refreshments, addressing the specific needs of affected communities.

During Storm Éowyn in January 2025, we responded quickly to diverse community needs. We partnered with McDonald's in Platt Bridge, supplying a backup generator to keep the restaurant operational. This allowed them to serve hot food and drinks to local residents affected by the storm. [Josh Simons MP shared a video from outside the establishment](#), highlighting the support we provided.

For customers significantly disadvantaged by a power outage, we offer free accommodation. Some customers may prefer gym day passes for hot showers, and while not available everywhere, many areas do offer this option.

Multi-channel information provision during supply interruptions

Customers can obtain information about power cuts through multiple channels, by calling us (via voice or automated messaging), receiving SMS or automated voice updates, checking live power cut information on our website, or through social media networks. Increasingly, our updates are often re-shared by customers in local WhatsApp or Facebook groups.

We provide [written information in various formats](#) to meet diverse communication needs, including braille, large print and translations into the top 10 languages spoken in our area. Our partner, Big Word, offers real-time translation in over 240 languages for customers who call us. Furthermore, our website translates into 100 different languages.

This year, One Voice Blackburn continued to integrate key informational videos in Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Arabic and English across their community networks to enhance safety and

preparedness for power outages. **These videos, featuring local community champions and shared via platforms like TikTok, are crucial for effectively communicating with individuals who may have limited literacy in any language.** By utilising spoken words, the initiative ensures that messages are both culturally relevant and more likely to be trusted.



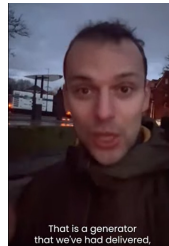
After four hours of a power cut, we contact all highly vulnerable customers to assess their needs and offer support—ranging from deploying generators and batteries to coordinating with carers to relocate customers to safe locations.

New initiative

- **Background:** Need for reliable backup solutions for power outages
- **Product:** High-capacity, long-lasting lithium batteries with compact design and safe
- **Trial:** Lancashire pilot with medically dependent customers during a planned power cut
- **Extra Care:** Power provided to critical equipment providing enhanced customer support
- **Next steps:** Expand battery stock and continuously improve based on feedback.



Fast Facts



UKPN selected the most suitable battery, and we have developed unique processes for safely managing and charging them. We've seen from our partners that fire call outs involving lithium batteries are increasing, so extra caution is essential. To protect vulnerable customers, we collaborated closely with our Safety Team to ensure every aspect of the portable battery trial was rigorously evaluated before deployment.

These proactive measures guarantee that our battery support system is not only effective but also safe for customers and staff:

- Our portable battery trial is built on a robust safety framework where every Clayton Power LPS II 3000 unit has undergone comprehensive fire risk assessments covering storage, charging, transport and in home use.
- The units incorporate integrated safeguards including automatic overcharge cut off, internal safety breakers, fuses, and RCD/RCBO protection within a sturdy metal enclosure, bringing household level electrical safety.
- Batteries are stored indoors in clean, dry conditions and transported under strict Dangerous Goods protocols, with specialist staff trained under guidance from our Dangerous Goods Safety Advisor. Annual PAT testing and routine inspections maintain ongoing reliability.

The ongoing trial will inform whether it could be rolled out more broadly, offering a reliable alternative to generators during extended outages.

Current trial and impact

We’re currently trialling 30 long-life lithium batteries in South Lakes and Lancashire. So far, 127 customers medically dependent on electricity have been supported with 3kW battery packs, ensuring continuous care during power outages. Our focus has been on Planned Supply Interruptions (PSIs), where advance coordination enables timely delivery and tailored support.

Mini spotlight case study

As part of our Smart Street programme, we invested £200,000 in innovative voltage optimisation technology to reduce domestic electricity demand. This delivers up to £40 in annual bill savings per customer, along with associated carbon reductions, without requiring any customer action. To install the technology, a planned power cut affected 667 customers in Blackpool. Using our ECR data beforehand, we identified medically dependent customers and contacted them. Of those, two requested additional support:

Household 1

- Uses a sleep apnoea machine and stair lift
- Diesel generator was unsuitable due to the home layout
- We provided two indoor batteries—one by the armchair and one for the stair lift



Household 2

- Uses a nebuliser to administer medication
- Osteoarthritis, therefore required electricity for heating
- A diesel generator was suitable to power the entire home



For Household 1, one battery had to be carried up a flight of stairs by two people, as the socket was on the landing. We positioned the stair-lift battery and left the chair at ground level, ready for use. Both customers were checked on during the planned supply interruption and after power was restored. After installing the batteries, our team visited the substation to meet engineers, then followed up with other medically dependent customers who had not responded initially, through door-knocking.

A customer provided with a battery and giving a 10/10 satisfaction score said:

“I was in hospital the day before, and I believe your support team did everything they could to help. They kept my home warm, so I didn’t need to stay in hospital. Two young women came around checking on people—they even made my disabled neighbour a cup of tea. They were so caring and went out of their way to make sure we were all safe.”

Table 9: Comparison of the use of generators and batteries

Decision factors	Generators - powering the home	Batteries - powering the room
Power and run time	Can run indefinitely with fuel—ideal for long outages, whole home use, and high wattage devices like dialysis machines	Store limited energy—sufficient for a few hours to power essentials (fridge, lights, phone, router), but deplete after use
Installation and location	(Especially for diesel) must be installed outdoors on concrete pads, with ventilation, transfer switches, permits, and window setbacks	Indoor safe, compact, quiet and easy to install with minimal structural requirements and permits
Maintenance	Requires regular servicing (oil/filter changes)	Low maintenance with no fuel costs; batteries replaced only every 15 years or so
Safety and emissions	Produce CO and noise; need outdoor placement and CO alarms to prevent poisoning	Silent, emission free but require fire safe indoor placement

Customer Impact -

In 2024/25, we achieved a much-improved CSAT score of 92%, up from 90% in 2023/24.

The batteries provide vital backup power for essential medical devices including ventilators, feeding pumps, oxygen concentrators and sleep apnoea machines. Some customers have shared anxiety about falling asleep during outages due to their reliance on life-sustaining equipment. Our proactive approach, combining technical support with welfare checks, has substantially reduced this anxiety, particularly for those with complex health needs or caring responsibilities. By sustaining power to critical devices, these battery packs help households remain safe, functional and independent, significantly reducing the need for emergency services or hospital admissions.

Other positive impacts include:

- Enabling a social return on investment of £28 for every £1 spent over 12 months, enabling societal benefits, including minimising distress. during power cuts, making it easier to access updates and reducing the need for primary healthcare services.
- Building trust through a physical presence in local communities and multi-channel communications.
- Tailored welfare provision, including refreshments, based on individual needs, making it easier to cope without power.
- Increasing individual and household power cut resilience for customers, especially those in vulnerable circumstances.

4. Our benefits measurement framework

This section sets out our framework for measuring the benefits of our initiatives, including the use of social return on investment (SROI).

4.1 SROI is embedded in senior-level decision making

How we measure the impact of our initiatives

Our business embraces wider social and environmental objectives and adopts a performance-based culture. **We measure the impact of our investments to target our resources towards initiatives that deliver maximum value for our customers.**

We make a full assessment of the **societal impact** of our initiatives and **triangulate** this with other metrics to inform and prioritise our business cases and investment plans. Financial and non-financial benefits are consistently evaluated.

SROI is one of our tools for measuring impact at both programme and project levels.

We apply it where outcomes and benefits are clear and tangible, such as supporting vulnerable customers, improving communication, reducing environmental impacts, and shortening power cuts.

We pay particular attention to the **direct financial benefits** that can be realised by customers through bill savings and additional cash in their pockets. Beyond this we also measure **environmental benefits** (avoided carbon emissions) and **health benefits** (improved wellbeing).

Social value guides our partnership decisions

The Partnership Funding Programme

Our Partnership Funding Programme supports charities and organisations in identifying North West households at increased risk during power cuts. We allocate £500,000 annually, with average grants of around £21,000 and no arbitrary funding cap.

Since 2021/22, we have incorporated a forecast of each project's social value at the application stage, using these estimates to **inform our funding decisions**. Increasingly, we extend multi-year funding to specific partners on a case-by-case basis, and we use SROI (comparing actual outcomes to initial forecasts) as a key input in those decisions.

In most investment cases, multiple proxies are available, so our challenge is selecting the most appropriate. By working closely with external partners, we ensure the chosen proxy from the tool's library (over 200 options) accurately reflects each project's benefits. This helps avoid both overclaiming and underclaiming, as partners' initial applications often miss measurable impacts.

Why use SROI?



Compare investment scenarios



Defining our partnership model across our network areas



Measure and monitor impacts delivered

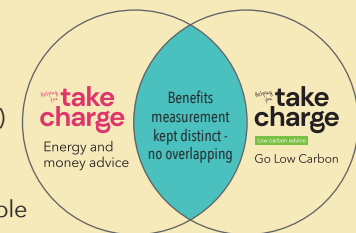


Managing performance to ensure delivery of social value remains on track

The Consumer Vulnerability Incentive

We continue to align our SROI methodology with the Common Social Valuation Framework, enhancing consistency across GB networks. We adopt the same price bases as other networks (2021) to facilitate direct comparisons. **Our strategy prioritises full standardisation by utilising common proxies** from a central bank, adjusting calculations only when more accurate local data is available from our partners.

While some services offered to fuel-poor customers under the money and energy advice umbrella, such as education leading to smart meter adoption, meet the criteria for LCT services, we have ensured no overlap, excluding any additional low carbon benefits realised by money and energy advice customers from our calculations. This approach also reduces the risk of beneficiaries confusing services received when participating in customer satisfaction surveys.



Forward look

This year, after co-creating with customers and stakeholders, [we launched our Social Distribution System Operation \(DSO\) Strategy](#) to achieve our vision of being the leading Social DSO in Great Britain. Its goal is to ensure a fair, inclusive energy transition that maximises social benefits for the North West.

Unlike traditional appraisals focused on financial returns, the Social DSO model aims to optimise value for wider society. This will expand our use of SROI and, through our role chairing the ENA DSO Collaboration Forum, help develop common proxies to measure societal benefits.

We're also exploring how existing services like Take Charge, Smart Street, and flexibility schemes can support vulnerable customers, and launching a Social Impact Fund for community-led projects such as EV charging hubs, battery storage, and solar schemes.

5. Making strides with our Business Plan Commitments

Following comprehensive engagement with our North West customers and stakeholders, we made several bespoke [vulnerability strategy commitments in our RIIO-ED2 Business Plan](#) before the introduction of the CVI. These commitments are unique compared to other DNOs. It is equally important to be open and transparent about our progress in delivering these commitments, which this section of the report outlines.

5.1 Business Plan Commitments

Table 10 sets out for each vulnerability strategy commitment:

- a short description of the commitment;
- a short description of the expected benefit or outcome;
- the milestones involved in implementing the commitment over RIIO-ED2;
- a red / amber / green (RAG) status indicator of progress with its implementation; and
- an explanation for why the milestone has received its red, amber or green rating.

A **red** status indicator is a milestone that is at significant risk and highly likely to be missed, **amber** indicates progress is delayed but is likely to be achievable before the end of the RIIO-ED2 and **green** indicates progress against the milestone is on track. Where a commitment does not have specific milestones, an overall RAG rating is provided for the commitment progress overall.

Table 10: progress on our vulnerability strategy commitments

Vulnerability strategy commitment	Description	Expected outcome/benefit	Key milestones	RAG status	2024/25 status update
1 Collaborating more closely with other utilities	Utilities Together forum with Cadent, Northern Gas Networks (NGN) and United Utilities (UU)	An enhanced and cost-effective service to support vulnerable customers, achieved through improved coordination	Active membership	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 18 collaboration meetings held during 2024/25
			Leveraging opportunities to work together	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We continue to work closely with other utility providers, both within our region and across the UK• Our data-sharing process with United Utilities is now well established, and we are leading the technical approach to implementing an automated solution from WD0225• We are also taking the lead—and providing sole funding—for a collaborative initiative with United Utilities, Cadent, GMCA, and other public-sector partners to develop and embed a coordinated support network for non-emergency ‘peacetime’ incident response• Additionally, we have contributed further work to the national pharmacies campaign, alongside other DNOs
2 Doubling investment in referral networks	£500k annual fund aiming to design and tailor services to meet the needs of our communities through a network of trusted partners	20% increase in referral networks Keeping customers safe during a power cut through ECR awareness and registration, and improved health and wellbeing by connecting customers to support services when needed	Promotion of Partnership Funding Programme	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 24 partner applications received during 2024/25• 12 partners received funding during 2024/25• Full budget used
			Growth in our network of funded and non-funded partners		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• During 2024/25, we increased the number of active partners we work with from 87 to 143 –an increase of 56 this year and 93 over the past two years, representing a 70% overall growth• New partners this year include East Lancashire Maternity Services, Hospice at Home, Manchester Care and Repair and Hidden Treasure Trust
			Growth in the reach of customers supported via our partnerships	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Together, these partnerships have supported over 145,000 individuals this year, up from 90,000 last year and over 235,000 over the past two years, representing 61% growth

Vulnerability strategy commitment	Description	Expected outcome/benefit	Key milestones	RAG status	2024/25 status update
Expanding the reach of our ECR	Register at least 60% of eligible individuals (exceeding 2021/22 levels), while striving to reach 90% by 2028	Greater resilience and improved health and wellbeing by reducing the stress and anxiety caused by power cuts	Research to identify barriers	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have been running multiple focus groups with specific customer demographics to provide more tailored research Groups engaged include those medically dependent on electricity, families with young children and people who need communication in different formats or languages
			Use of data to target promotion at biggest gaps	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECR data identified the top 10 localities with the largest registration gaps and the top five demographics under-reached, including families with young children
			Growth in ECR reach	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further embedding our ethos of supporting and safeguarding our customers when they need us most, we increased the proportion of eligible individuals registered for our Extra Care service from 82.4% to 95.7% this year
Creating an innovation fund to ensure no one is left behind	A £200,000 annual fund to identify barriers preventing the uptake of support services and to develop solutions in collaboration with partners	A future energy system that is both smart and fair and ensures that no customer gets left behind	Research programme to identify barriers	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2024/25, £127k from our innovation fund was utilised to support initiatives such as the fifth wave of a broader, independently facilitated, bi-annual DNO community LCT tracker. This initiative has reached over 4,000 households, monitoring awareness, perceptions and adoption rates of LCTs Insights from this research have directly informed our low carbon transition advisory service, Take Charge - Go Low Carbon The fund is also being used to gather direct insights from customers. Events are being leveraged to better understand the tailored support needed for those at risk of being left behind
			Improving access to existing services	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following best practice sharing with UKPN we have trialled their 'Power Protect' project, enabling the provision of batteries for customers medically dependent on electricity during planned interruptions. Following a lessons learned exercise the next phase of the trial will see the batteries deployed more frequently in unplanned power cuts and also severe weather incidents
			Developing new solutions with partners	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the launch of our Take Charge - Go Low Carbon advice service this year, 411 customers received support We collaborated with Energy Saving Trust to develop a Homewise energy advice tool. Due to launch on our Take Charge website in year three, it will enable service users to get a free, tailored plan filled with personalised energy saving home improvement recommendations
Supporting customers in fuel poverty	Work closely with trusted organisations to understand fuel poverty and deliver support services, investing £2m per year to reach 250,000 fuel poor customers by 2028	Improved health and wellbeing of customers experiencing fuel poverty	The reach of fuel poverty awareness raising (reported on a cumulative basis)	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This initiative continues to deliver strong results, directly supporting 25,146 customers over the year and generating a social return with an NPV of £10.2 million The campaign has raised awareness among 92,218 individuals through digital engagement and achieved nearly 200 million opportunities for people to see or hear our message Our convening power has enabled a multi-agency approach, ensuring the service is as comprehensive as possible and that customers receive the full range of available support Customer satisfaction with this service reached 94.8% at the close of 2024/25
Developing new customer advisory panels	An advisory panel for customers in vulnerable circumstances	Strengthening of consumers' voices in business decision-making, with improved outcomes for customers	Panel creation, membership and governance	Green	<p>We have two key Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversight Panel: Six members focused on monitoring progress against RIIO-ED2 targets, providing valuable insight and critical friend assessment to future strategy challenges Partnership Panel: 30 members from both funded and non-funded organisations collaborating with Electricity North West to reach communities with relevant messaging and support Both Panels share an independent chair who is also part of the ISG, which reviews our performance against all commitments. The Voice of the Customer panel is firmly embedded with 1,500 customers and colleagues registered and regularly giving feedback on tactical ideas and potential service improvements.

Vulnerability strategy commitment	Description	Expected outcome/benefit	Key milestones	RAG status	2024/25 status update
Home welfare visits for electricity users in vulnerable circumstances experiencing long duration power cuts	We'll proactively offer welfare visits to all customers in vulnerable circumstances who are without power for 12+ hours	Customer Welfare Officer to explain what is happening, provide reassurance and tailored support	Pilot of enhanced on-site welfare provision	Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The customer support vehicle is now operational, and our agents are conducting home visits to provide support The vehicle is equipped with essential resources, including facilities to keep medication cold, charge mobile phones and integrated technology that allows agents to access systems and provide real-time progress updates This initiative is currently in its trial phase, and learnings are being captured to inform future development
			Rollout and monitoring	Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rollout in 2025/26 will follow lessons learnt evaluation
All-colleague training for vulnerable circumstances and mental wellbeing	100% of colleagues trained to recognise and reduce vulnerabilities	The protection and fair treatment of customers in vulnerable situations	Education and awareness aligned to colleague roles and responsibilities	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual training is delivered to all colleagues to help them recognise and respond to any customer circumstances that could lead to detriment Additional enhanced training has also been provided to specific groups—for example, dementia awareness training for apprentices and frontline colleagues

5.2 Case Study: Strategic challenge from our advisory panels

Strategic context

In response to customer engagement, we've committed to a strengthened approach for contacting and offering in-person support to electricity users in vulnerable circumstances during prolonged power cuts. **Our aim is to explain the situation clearly, offer reassurance and provide tailored help.**

In RIIO-ED1, support was coordinated by a small, office-based welfare team. However, that centralised model no longer reflects our culture of shared responsibility. Now, with a comprehensive training programme in place, a core group of call agents are equipped to support on the ground, working alongside our dedicated door-knocking team, to ensure customers feel seen and supported.

What we heard

Research last year showed that customers find average power cuts of over six hours challenging. In response, we lowered the threshold for in-person visits and support down from 12 hours. **Our Consumer Vulnerability Oversight Panel has challenged us to tailor responses to those most at risk while going further to integrate processes in major incidents to routine faults.** This came as a government report claimed local authorities are not doing enough to enhance local resilience, particularly in the face of potential emergencies, citing a lack of coordination among different agencies.

During major incidents, Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) can legally access customer data via a secure portal to support emergency response. This can also be triggered during business-as-usual (BAU) operations in specific cases, with all data deleted once the incident ends.

We worked with the Greater Manchester Resilience Forum (GMRf) to explore approaches to enhanced resilience. Initial efforts focused on Wigan (which experienced significant flooding in January 2025), and Rochdale—areas lacking support and with relatively high ECR membership gaps. GMRf proposed £140,000 for enhanced outreach and data-sharing in those boroughs over two years. While the proposal is high-cost and untested, we recognised the value of door-to-door welfare checks and identifying hidden vulnerabilities. **We shared the model with Utilities Together**, but partners Cadent and United Utilities could not commit funding at this stage.

New Initiative: Fast Facts

- Background:** Business Commitment to provide home welfare visits during long duration power cuts
- Product:** 4x4 SUV, equipped with wifi, solar panels and power bank
- Trial:** West Lancashire with 30 colleagues taking part
- Extra Care:** Items available for distribution such as portable charger packs
- Next steps:** Review of trial to understand next steps

Paul Morris, Partnerships & Customer Inclusion Manager, said: *"Initial customer feedback has been very positive. We aim to expand this approach across our region, but the required resources and vehicles are costly. To inform the business case, we have set up a dashboard to track the number of customers supported, satisfaction levels, 24-hour complaint resolution, and ECR registrations and updates during the trial."*



What we did

To support communities, we launched a pilot in 2025 for a new mobile welfare vehicle to assist in areas experiencing extended power outages, such as those caused by neutral faults. The initiative aims to enhance customer engagement and build trust during network disruptions. The vehicle is equipped with:

- A portable battery with sufficient capacity to support customers with medical dependencies and essential equipment, like oxygen machines
- Facilities for providing hot drinks and portable medicine pouches designed to maintain medications at their proper temperature
- Wifi connection and battery power packs for phones and other communication devices.

We are initially trialling the service in West Lancashire, an area prone to power cuts and network upgrades, supported by our Preston depot and 30 colleagues. Operating as a mobile contact centre, **the unit delivers door-to-door updates during outages, provides reassurance, and offers practical support such as power banks, food vouchers, and compensation where appropriate.** Our on-site teams can also use four industrial-sized welfare cubes stocked with around 1,000 battery-powered radios, phone-charging cubes, thermos flasks, headlamps, and lanterns. Stored centrally, these can be deployed anywhere in our region within three hours and replenished within 24 hours.



We have signed an agreement with Groundwork who will tap into 'Communities Prepared', a national resilience programme.

We are funding two part-time roles to support this initiative who will leverage existing community connections. Working closely with the local authorities, the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector, LRFs, community emergency volunteers (CEV), flood warden groups, community members, parish councillors and other key partners, communities will be equipped to prepare for, respond to and recover from a range of emergencies, including interruptions to power or water supplies, flooding and heatwaves. The parties have agreed to collaborate to promote the benefits of the ECR and increase community resilience. **The project is also building capacity and capability through:**

- Recruiting volunteers and providing free training and support, online and in person using tried and tested resources
- Supporting volunteers to work with their neighbours and the wider community, to plan and deliver community priorities
- Community Emergency Plans to support vulnerable people in an emergency.

In the first few months since go-live (April 2025) **we have strengthened local relationships and networks** including the Environment Agency Flood Resilience Engagement Advisers, British Red Cross Education teams and the LRF and local authority emergency planners. We have also **shared ECR data with partners** at a lower layer super output area level across the three trial regions to inform engagement plans.



New Initiative: Fast Facts

- **Background:** Trial to enhance co-ordination among local agencies during long power cuts, not just major incidents
- **Product:** On-the-ground resources facilitating engagement, training, data sharing and new partnerships
- **Trial:** Over 400 community champions engaged across Wigan, Rochdale and Bury
- **Extra Care:** A strengthened network of community assets ready to respond to, and recover from various emergencies
- **Next steps:** Facilitate engagement, track progress and conduct testing during actual incidents

This initiative began as a joint effort; Greater Manchester agencies working in partnership

however, **we are now solely funding and leading it.** We continue to collaborate with broader utility partners, aiming for their co-funding participation in future development phases once a successful test case has been established.

It is all about **identifying leads in three communities (Wigan, Rochdale and Bury) and local support structures ready to assist, or with the potential to support customers impacted by power cuts**, through training and sharing of best practice (risk assessments) and resources (people, hubs, communication channels, coordination).

Customer Impact

The project will engage over 400 people through resilience workshops. In collaboration with GMCA, we've developed success metrics to track improvements in community preparedness and resilience using pre- and post-workshop questionnaires. Expected impacts include:

- **Collaborative efforts:** Enhanced coordination among local organisations, leading to improved resilience activities
- **Adaptation strategies:** Educated communities on adapting to climate change effects, including severe weather and utility disruptions
- **Emergency preparedness:** Strengthened community capabilities to prepare for, respond to and recover from various emergencies
- **Resource awareness:** Improved knowledge of available assistance, such as ECR and initiatives by local agencies
- **Community wellbeing:** Raised wellbeing and confidence through empowerment to address climate change effects.

Enhancing extra care to all customers experiencing prolonged power cuts via our support vehicle means customers find it easier to access the support they need and influences enhanced satisfaction and trust among customers. We estimate a social value of £15.66 in excess of every £1 spent over 12 months, with customers benefiting through reduced stress, anxiety and ill health.

Cont. on next page >

Forward look

We'll share insights from these initiatives with both of our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panels and aim to expand successful components.

One of our project aims is to develop community asset mapping, identifying the support that is available in the neighbourhood. To assist with this, we have signed an agreement with the Energy Innovation Centre, Egnida Innovation and nine other energy distribution and transmission networks to co-invest £315,000 in phase three of an Open Maps Vulnerability Visualisation Tool.

This phase focuses on developing functionality that enables stakeholder partners to access and share third-party datasets in a GDPR-compliant manner. A shared objective among partners is to implement a tool that allows users to draw a polygon around a specific area to identify existing service provisions. In the future, this capability could be expanded to overlay the locations of our ECR customers affected by power outages, staff member positions, available warm hubs and nearby food establishments that can be targeted to provide on-demand food and beverages.

This process is expected to reveal gaps in current service provisions and enable the partnership to discover more efficient methods for delivering services to vulnerable populations. For instance, Citizens Advice has recently experienced a high volume of calls from local residents who would benefit from access to warm spaces. Utility partners could utilise Open Maps to swiftly identify optimal locations for establishing new warm spaces and associated services within walking distance of the residents in the most vulnerable circumstances.

5.3 Case study: Embedding the protection and fair treatment of customers within our culture

Strategic context

License Condition SLC10AA - 'Treating Customers Fairly' requires that every domestic customer, including those in vulnerable situations, be treated with fairness. This case study exemplifies our commitment to fulfilling not just the letter, but the spirit, of that license obligation.

Our customer satisfaction and call-quality scores remain consistently high. Now, it's time to move beyond KPIs and, from a secure base, empower colleagues to connect with the people behind the numbers to personalise conversations and support. We want colleagues to consider what customers might not be saying, but should be saying, for us to ensure their protection and fair treatment.

What we heard

We recently held a roundtable with our Stakeholder Partnership Panel focused on elevating our training programme. Participants discussed how to help contact-centre colleagues adopt **a person-centred, empathetic approach with every customer**. They explored ways to make inclusion training more immersive, enabling agents to validate and empathise with the experiences of customers who face specific challenges (e.g. sight loss).

Following a visit last year to the Centre for Independent Living's showroom in Warrington, our frontline teams had the opportunity to explore realistic living environments and interact directly with customers living with disabilities. This resonated strongly, but we're mindful that such **training must remain sensitive and respectful**—especially since colleagues may engage with people whose lived experiences differ greatly from their own.

Stakeholders shared similar activities they'd experienced, for example, breathing through a straw to simulate respiratory difficulties or attending half a session with voice and sign-language support, then the second half in silence to approximate deaf culture. As noted,

"...this type of training illuminates some of the challenges they face, not what they cannot do"—and **it should be delivered with input directly from those living with the conditions, not by proxy**. Simulating experiences without their involvement is unethical.

They emphasised that exercises like blindfolded lunches teach the mechanics—not the lived experience or how to communicate with someone visually impaired. **These exercises must be designed thoughtfully, with direct engagement from those impacted.**



Karen Hunter, Customer Learning, Development & Inclusion Manager, said: "Phase one of our Empathy in Action training ran from January to April 2025. A total of 53 colleagues completed 40 hours of immersive training. Each session opened with this framing: If you could stand in someone else's shoes, hear what they hear, see what they see, and feel what they feel—how would you treat them fairly? This reflective prompt sparked meaningful conversations and led to powerful changes within our teams."

What we did

In 2024/25, we continued a tiered approach to ensure that every colleague is well-informed about our Extra Care services. We expanded beyond the general company-wide awareness (level 1) with a customised programme for frontline teams who interact with customers daily (level 2) and an 'ambassadors' programme (level 3) for non-operational staff across depots, enabling them to respond effectively to incidents and storms.

Our switch-on-to-extra care training was refreshed this year and fully integrated into our e-learning suite. This mandatory training is now undertaken by all colleagues, regardless of their role. Additionally, we rolled out targeted modules for specific groups, such as frontline teams who interact with customers daily and non-operational staff at depots, equipping them to respond effectively during incidents and storms.

These training programmes are delivered via **Elevate, our new learning and development platform** launched in the final quarter of 2024/25. By shifting from **reactive to proactive training**, Elevate ensures continuous enhancement of colleagues' skills, knowledge and performance. With rolling programmes throughout the year, colleagues stay fully up to date—empowering them to take ownership of their learning journey and excel in their roles.

This year, we launched a new partnership with Galloway's Society for the Blind, a respected North West charity with deep community roots and expert knowledge, to raise awareness of—and encourage sign-ups to—our Extra Care services. The aim of our **enhanced immersive empathy training** is to educate colleagues understand how significant sight loss can amplify difficulties during power cuts. We delivered four half-day, on-site sessions to key teams across our organisation, including the Customer Inclusion team, contact-centre agents, team leaders, Connections and DSO staff.

We have also launched a rolling 'Empathy in Action: Understanding Your Customer's Perspective' workshop programme for our contact centre, encouraging peer learning and meaningful conversations to drive behavioural change among agents.

A colleague who participated in the training said:

"Thank you for explaining what dementia is and exploring how we can better support those affected by it.

What I will particularly take forward is the knowledge that even if someone can't remember what's been said they remember how it feels, and the emotion stays with them. I'm going to be very conscious of the language I use and the tone of these conversations in future. I'm proud to have become a Dementia Friend."



Through our partnership with Dementia Friends, we're committed to understanding what it's like to live with dementia and turning that insight into meaningful action. Many people affected by dementia feel society doesn't fully grasp their experience. So far, 516 colleagues have become Dementia Friends through training that challenged assumptions about who might contact us during a power cut.

This year, our commitment to the highest standards led us to pursue and achieve re-accreditation to ISO 22458:2022 Inclusive Service Provision certification. This involved a comprehensive evaluation of our organisational culture, strategy and processes for identifying and responding to consumer vulnerability.

Over the course of an eight-day audit, more than 50 colleagues from leadership to operational engineers played a vital role in this achievement. Several teams were recognised for their outstanding practices.



What we learnt

The radio teleswitch service (RTS) delivers a radio signal that enables non-smart household meters with off-peak tariffs to switch between peak and off-peak rates. This service, provided by electricity suppliers, will be switched off from 30 June 2025.

We reviewed our data and identified over 20,000 customers who will be affected by this change, 8,000 of which are on our ECR. To ensure a smooth transition and fair treatment, we engaged with partners and stakeholders, [created a dedicated webpage](#), briefed our teams and contacted impacted customers via SMS, email or letter—advising them of the importance of replacing their meter.

Customer Impact

In our November 2024 climate survey, we sustained our highest ever colleague pride score (90%). The top two reasons cited were 1) being a safe organisation, and 2) working hard to resolve customer issues. This culture has positively impacted customers:

- The protection and fair treatment of customers in vulnerable situations.
- Over 1,000 referrals made to our partners in response to colleagues more readily spotting opportunities to provide extra care services.
- Following empathy training, there was an increase in satisfaction among ECR customers, reaching a high of 94% in March and April 2025.

Forward look

We will continue to work across our business to raise awareness and embed the understanding created through continuously improving our training programmes. By keeping protection and fair treatment of customers as our compass we will continue to enhance our services.

6. Winter Preparedness Strategy

During winter, customer demand for electricity is higher, especially in the late afternoon and early evening, and supply interruptions have the greatest financial and social impacts. Heating systems, lighting and other appliances are used more frequently, increasing the disruption caused by power cuts. This section of the report reviews initiatives that underpin another important aspect of our strategic framework – winter preparedness.

6.1 Case Study: Preparing customers prior to the winter period

Strategic context

Last year, colleagues from leadership, customer service, and field teams engaged directly with our most vulnerable customers through emails, letters, texts, calls, and door knocking. This effort aimed to provide reassurance and help customers feel confident and prepared for winter.



What we heard

To remain a trusted voice in the North West and the industry, we heard that we should build on our strong foundations and expand outreach, targeting customers and those missed by usual proactive campaigns.

Internally, we’ve discussed using a balanced scorecard to track financial, cultural, customer, reputational, and operational performance. Colleagues also noted we could improve benefit measurement by surveying customers after proactive contact campaigns.

What we did

We initiated the Winter Readiness 2024/25 campaign during the summer to ensure proactive outreach before adverse weather conditions, which have been occurring earlier in recent years.

A total of 387 colleagues from across the business supported the contact centre in reaching our most vulnerable customers–27,669 by phone and 2,206 through doorstep visits—to ensure we have the most up-to-date information to provide the most appropriate support. Our team prioritised reaching out to customers with landline-only contact details who had not been reached in our standard outreach campaigns.

What we learnt

Following our Winter Readiness 2024/25 campaign, we commissioned independent research to assess the impact of our interactions with ECR customers on their well-being and preparedness for winter. Within weeks of initial contact, 338 customers participated in our survey.

The perceived usefulness of our outreach was notably high (86%). Customers reported that our calls and visits provided peace of mind, confidence and security. They appreciated the reaffirmation of their ECR membership, confirmation that we held accurate contact details, and the assurance of knowing how to reach us with any concerns. Some customers did not recall registering initially and valued the reminder of the benefits available to them. While few took further action because of the contact, the majority expressed satisfaction with the reassurance provided.

However, the research also highlighted areas for improvement. Approximately 20% of respondents perceived the contact as potentially fraudulent and feared it was a scam. Some felt uncomfortable sharing personal or sensitive information over the phone, leading them to end the call prematurely.

This was exacerbated in some cases by colleagues diverting from the ECR to signposting other support services we offer such as our Take Charge - Go Low Carbon advice service. This is an impartial advice service that doesn't sell technologies, but mentioning it triggered fear in some customers.

These findings align with [recent research by Age UK](#), which indicates that nearly a fifth of individuals over 50 fear answering their phones due to potential scams. This underscores the importance of clear communication and trust-building in our outreach efforts.




Customer impact


Proactively engaging with customers before winter and potential power cuts strengthens their sense of safety, reduces anxiety and stress, and helps prevent health issues.


Key outcomes include:


- 92% overall satisfaction with the additional care provided.
- 23% discussed the ECR with friends or family.
- 85% expressed trust in our commitment to act in their best interest–12% higher than those not contacted.
- Our new data portal streamlines record-keeping by eliminating manual processes. 1,230 ECR records were updated during this year's campaign. This provides an accurate representation of our customers' needs, facilitating the delivery of tailored support services.


Customer survey comments:

- 

"Provides confidence and security, like someone is watching out for me"
- 

"It was informative and provided contacts in case of a power cut"
- 

"It allowed me to prepare for the future, prompting me to buy a battery pack"
- 

"Great service to offer, especially to those that really need it"
- 

"I now have a battery-operated radio and torch"

Forward look

WE LISTEN, LEARN, AND ADAPT TO MEET THE EVOLVING NEEDS OF THOSE WE SERVE.

This year's campaign is scheduled for September. Feedback indicates that the timing is generally not a significant concern for most customers. Survey findings will be shared with colleagues to demonstrate the direct link between their outreach efforts and the benefits experienced by customers. To ensure customers feel confident in the authenticity of our outreach, we will update our script and offer training, including peer-to-peer sessions. Guided by Age UK's advice, we will position the contact as a 'reassurance call'. We will avoid discussing LCT advice, keeping the message simple and clear. Furthermore, we'll educate customers on how to verify the authenticity of the call and the caller.

6.2 Case Study: Protecting customers during the winter period

Strategic context

Weather events (storms, wind, lightning, snow, and ice) are the most common network incidents affecting our operations. During major incidents affecting over 75,000 properties, the entire organisation mobilises to restore power within five days to protect customers.

What we heard

For our 2025 Priorities Research, we surveyed 1,244 participants – households, businesses, and potential future customers – on what should guide our investment. A top priority is a reliable network that delivers power whenever and wherever needed. Engagement with local authorities and LRFs also highlighted the need to keep improving multi-agency coordination during major incidents.

What we did

Senior leaders launched a focused improvement plan to enhance the incident management process through exercises and increased process awareness, aiming to boost efficiency, ownership, and collaboration for a faster return to BAU after major incidents.

Major incident declared in Wigan following severe New Year flooding

Heavy rainfall from New Year's Eve into 1 January 2025 caused widespread flooding across Greater Manchester, severely damaging the power network, homes, and transport links. A major incident was declared in Wigan, with Greater Manchester's LRF convening a Strategic Co-ordinating Group led by the fire service. Despite difficult conditions, engineers worked with emergency services to access flooded sites. Prior investments in network automation **restored power to 90% of 16,700 affected properties within three minutes**, though 750 remained without supply in severely flooded areas. Hundreds of staff were mobilised, handling over 2,000 proactive calls, while field teams visited hard-hit areas like Platt Bridge to provide welfare support, including powering a local McDonald's to serve food and drinks to residents.

Storm Éowyn 24-28 January 2025

Storm Éowyn, described by many networks as their most severe in decades, impacted nearly all major operators except UK Power Networks and Jersey. We restored electricity to almost 110,000 properties – 15,000 more than during Storm Arwen. Over five days, we resolved over 200 high-voltage faults, received 1.2 million website visits, handled more than 50,000 calls, knocked on 1,500 doors, delivered 4,000 hot meals and drinks, and issued 87,000 customer communications. During the incident we contacted our ECR customers to see if they needed any additional help. In addition to those known to have medical dependencies, we prioritised phoning any customers responding to our SMS who indicated they needed help.



Figure 11: Speed of Response: Storm Arwen (Nov-Dec 2019) vs. Storm Éowyn (Jan 2025)

Storm	Customers impacted	Quick(er) Auto-restoration	~90% Restored Within	Final Completion
Arwen	95,000	18,000 on day 1 (19%)	48 hours	12 days
Éowyn	110,000	25,600 on day 1 (23%)	48 hours	5 days



Mark Mercer , Network Operations Director, said: “Storm Éowyn caused more disruption than Storm Arwen, yet we restored power faster, reducing final outages to five days compared to nearly two weeks after Arwen. This highlights improved network resilience and response. While infrastructure and system investments were key, the biggest difference was our people. Over 600 colleagues – a quarter of our workforce – are trained in customer-focused incident response, supporting frontline engineers, meaning three-quarters of staff are dedicated to rapid recovery.”



Please scan the QR code opposite to watch a video where you can hear from all the people involved in the response and what it means to them.



Although most customers regained power quickly, some voiced frustration on social media after being told their supply was restored while still without power. To clarify, Chris Fox, Director of Operations (CML), [filmed a video](#) explaining “hidden faults” – damage beyond initial repairs that leaves some properties affected even when the wider network is restored. This direct response was well received.

Forward look

WE LISTEN, LEARN, AND ADAPT TO MEET THE EVOLVING NEEDS OF THOSE WE SERVE.

Our winter preparedness evaluation highlights strong systems—formal debriefs, feedback loops, and a Storm Steering Group—that drive ongoing improvement. Staff engagement is high: 90% know their incident roles, 84% supported Storm Éowyn, and 88% are proud of their contributions. Our new Incident and Response Steering Group ensures lessons learned are applied across incidents. For winter, we’ll refine door-knocking to reassure customers and reduce scam fears, and strengthen community resilience through better coordination with local agencies.

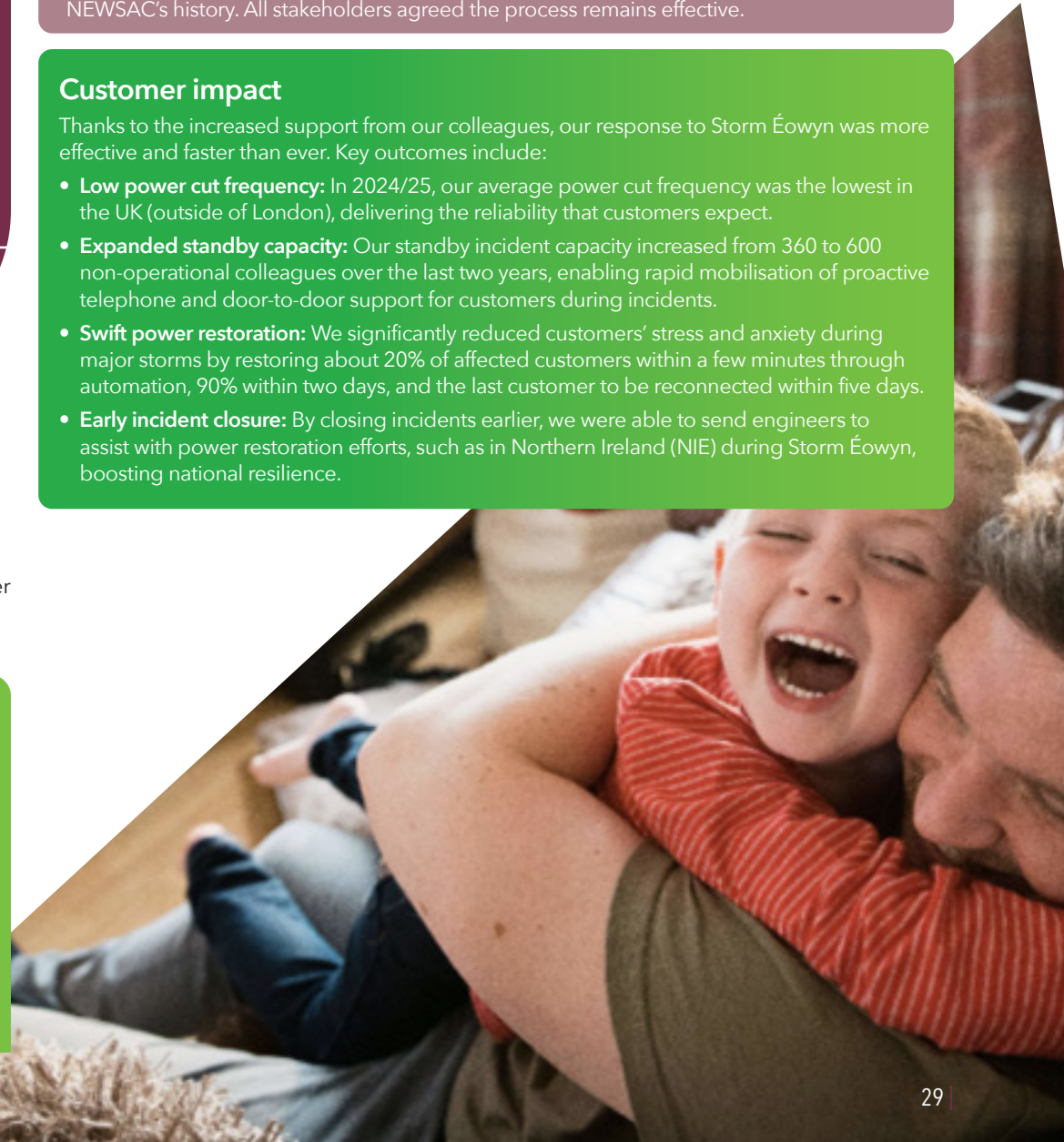
What we learnt

During Storm Éowyn, mutual aid via NEWSAC was vital. DESNZ requested post-meeting briefings to track resource deployment, which exceeded 1,000 assets—the largest in NEWSAC’s history. All stakeholders agreed the process remains effective.

Customer impact

Thanks to the increased support from our colleagues, our response to Storm Éowyn was more effective and faster than ever. Key outcomes include:

- **Low power cut frequency:** In 2024/25, our average power cut frequency was the lowest in the UK (outside of London), delivering the reliability that customers expect.
- **Expanded standby capacity:** Our standby incident capacity increased from 360 to 600 non-operational colleagues over the last two years, enabling rapid mobilisation of proactive telephone and door-to-door support for customers during incidents.
- **Swift power restoration:** We significantly reduced customers’ stress and anxiety during major storms by restoring about 20% of affected customers within a few minutes through automation, 90% within two days, and the last customer to be reconnected within five days.
- **Early incident closure:** By closing incidents earlier, we were able to send engineers to assist with power restoration efforts, such as in Northern Ireland (NIE) during Storm Éowyn, boosting national resilience.



7. Moving forward into 2025/26

Thank you for reading our review of delivery and performance during 2024/25.

Over the past year, we have co-designed a detailed roadmap of initiatives for 2025/26 and beyond which many of you will recognise from the ‘forward look’ sections throughout this document. As part of our ongoing Extra Care strategy, we will continue to enhance customer support through a series of targeted actions:

- **Narrowing the gap in Extra Care registrations via dedicated partnerships and unwavering commitment**
- **Scaling welfare vehicle and battery trials to provide support across our region during prolonged power outages**
- **Expanding the reach of Take Charge to include audiences previously under-represented in the programme**
- **Extending our ‘Go Low Carbon’ Advice Service, with more in-person events, partnership delivery, and an enhanced online offering**
- **Increasing proactivity around winter readiness, safeguarding customers and reinforcing scam-protection measures**
- **Leading efforts across the North West to fortify a community-asset network ready to respond to and recover from emergencies**
- **Embedding inclusion and fairness as guiding principles in everything we do.**

We remain alert, adaptable, and proud of our work as we continue collaborating closely with our stakeholders.



We invite you to join our expert advisory panels—your invaluable oversight, constructive feedback, and advocacy help shape our work. To find out more, simply scan the QR code and get in touch with us.

Stephanie Trubshaw

Stephanie Trubshaw, Chief Operating Officer

Helping you **take charge**

Ready to take control of your bills?

Take charge of your bills today, with energy and money advice you can trust.



Appendix

Helping you **take charge**

Customer testimonials

Our client (who is vulnerable due to numerous health conditions) contacted Take Charge to discuss their energy use and keeping their home warm.

The team supported the client with their application for an Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) grant to help make energy efficiency home improvements.

In April 2024, the Eco Flex team completed a full property review, and managed the installation of the following measures, worth over £20,000

- Cavity wall insulation
- Solar panels
- Hybrid air source heat pump
- Two energy efficient radiators
- Window ventilation
- Bathroom wall vent

Thanks to these measures, our client has significantly reduced their gas usage, going from in debit to in credit. The solar panels have helped reduce electricity bills by a third. The grant scheme has made a big impact on our client's health.

