

ANNUAL VULNERABILITY REPORT

2023-24



Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks

Powering our
community



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INTRODUCTION

We are delighted to present our first Annual Vulnerability Report, providing an update on our performance, our commitments and how we are supporting customers and communities who need it most.

Our refreshed Consumer Vulnerability Strategy, launched in February 2024, lays out our approach to consumer vulnerability, setting out how we will achieve our RII0-ED2 (ED2) commitments and our wider ambition to ensure we are supporting our customers. The Annual Vulnerability Report provides an update on how we have performed between April 2023 to March 2024.

As a Distribution Network Operator (DNO), we own and operate two licence areas: Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution (SHEPD) in the north of Scotland – including remote island communities – and Southern Electric Power Distribution (SEPD) in south central England.

We keep the lights on and deliver electricity to over 3.9 million homes and businesses across our licence areas – including remote island communities – whilst playing a pivotal role in the transition to a lower-carbon economy. We are doing this by providing the critical national infrastructure which will enable the ongoing shift to a decarbonised energy system and electrification of transport and heat.

Our customers and communities rely on us every day to provide a safe and reliable supply of electricity, this is especially true for those customers in vulnerable situations. Being there for our customers during power cuts and adverse weather, providing communication and welfare when needed, is essential (pages 12, 24-27).

The ongoing cost of living crisis means the support through our partners is more vital than ever. With an estimated 980,000 households across Scotland and 3.17 million households across England in fuel poverty, we need to ensure we are providing support with energy efficiency advice, income maximisation and benefits checking (pages 15-17).

We are seeing a significant uptake of low carbon technologies across our network. Understanding customers needs, especially those who are in vulnerable situations, helps us ensure the transition to net zero is smart and fair and does not embed unfairness into the future energy system (page 28).



SHEPD

795,437 customers'
homes and businesses served

49,727.01km
of overhead lines and underground/subsea cables

SEPD

3,148,028 customers'
homes and businesses served

79,131.27km
of overhead lines and underground cables



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The role of electricity Distribution Network Operators (DNO) in the fast-evolving energy landscape has never been more important in ensuring customers and communities have access to a safe, resilient and reliable power supply. It is a responsibility that we take extremely seriously, especially for those in our licence areas who are in, or are experiencing vulnerable situations.

As we reflect on the first year of our ED2 price control period, I'm very proud of the progress we've made and impact that we've delivered for our customers, which we're able to detail in this report.

A priority aim for us over the first 12 months of the new price control was to build on the strong foundations that we established throughout RIIO-ED1 (ED1), strengthening, deepening and enhancing services that we provide to our customers and communities.

To help us do this, we **refreshed our vulnerability strategy**, in order to refine our scope of focus, understand changes and emerging issues that we need to take into account, and hone areas where our actions are able to have the greatest impact. From this, three strategic areas emerged: Fuel Poverty Support, supporting the Low Carbon Transition (LCT), and providing and promoting the Priority Services Register. This has helped us target our engagement and prioritise our actions, ensuring we could start working at pace to deliver our ambitious plan.

To enable our ambitions to the fullest, we've dedicated time to **process improvement**, ensuring that our processes are set up to fully optimise opportunities and maximise delivery impacts. This has been unlocked by **extensive engagement** both with our colleagues internally and external stakeholders, through open and comprehensive dialogue about priorities, opportunities and challenges.

I'm extremely proud of the work undertaken this year to scale up promotion of and engagement with our Priority Service Register (PSR) which has led to more than **68,000 additional households joining our register**. This is something that we would not have been able to deliver without the key business decision to **double the size of our operational PSR team**, which includes a new dedicated team focused on delivering the vulnerability strategy.

Our **first Personal Resilience Plans**, one of our ED2 Customer Value Propositions (CVPs), were successfully rolled out to our initial customers using kidney dialysis this year, and this summer we commence the next stage which sees this initiative rolled out to 5,000 customers.

As ever, we provided enhanced and dedicated services to our customers over a challenging winter which saw eleven named storms and several other severe weather events. In our new revised welfare approach, we separated our PSR escalation and welfare teams. This delivered multiple benefits including the ability to make more strategic and informed decisions, such as the placement of welfare provisions, as well as enabling us to help more customers quicker.

Our work in ED2 will be characterised by partnership working to reach as many vulnerable customer segments as possible through trusted channels. This year I'd like to give particular thanks to Yes Energy Solutions for their support with helping our customers who are facing challenges regarding fuel poverty, and the Centre for Sustainable Energy for working with us to improve our data.

Our partnership framework has been overhauled this year, and I'm proud that we're the **first DNO to move to 2-year partnership frameworks**, which provides greater certainty and confidence to our partners, whilst enabling us to increase our impact and outcomes.

Building on our work to ensure a fair and equitable transition to net zero, our partnership working is also helping us progress LCT take-up amongst the vulnerable community. This is not an easy area to tackle, however our VFES and VIVID (page 29) projects are helping us to understand barriers and work on solutions. We look forward to reporting on the impacts that our recently launched Powering Communities to Net Zero Fund has in delivering LCT solutions for these hard-to-reach groups.

Finally, I'm delighted to welcome Carolyn Delehanty as the new chair of the Inclusive Service Panel. Alongside the invaluable role that Maxine Frerk brings as our Customer Champion on the SSEN Distribution Board, Carolyn has reinvigorated the panel, driving increased levels of engagement and value, through insight and challenge.

Our 2023-24 year has been a busy one, but I'm hugely proud of the work that our team have delivered for our customers who have the greatest need. It's a privilege to serve them and their communities, and we look forward to our continued work with them, our partners and stakeholders to deliver the exceptional services all year round.



ANDREW SCOTT
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICE



CUSTOMER VULNERABILITY INCENTIVE PERFORMANCE

OUR PERFORMANCE

A new set of metrics were introduced in ED2 which focused on Consumer Vulnerability, designed to ensure we were providing the level of service customers in vulnerable situations need.

These metrics are:

- **PSR Reach:** the percentage of eligible household currently registered on our Priority Service Register, as calculated by the Centre for Sustainable Energy.
- **Social Value of Fuel Poverty Service Delivered (NPV):** the value of benefits to our customers accessing our fuel poverty programmes minus our programme costs.
- **Social Value of Low Carbon Transition Services Delivered (NPV):** the value of benefits to our customers accessing our low carbon transition programmes minus our programme costs.
- **Average Fuel Poverty Customer Satisfaction Fuel Poverty Score:** based on the customer satisfaction score out of 10 for customers accessing fuel poverty services through our partners.
- **Average Low Carbon Transition Customer Satisfaction Score:** based on the customer satisfaction score out of 10 for customers accessing low carbon transition services through our partners.

Our performance in the first year has shown growth against our benchmark performance in ED1. However, there is work we need to do to improve this, specifically in customer satisfaction. We are working with our partners to increase the volume of surveys, with an added focus on low carbon transition services to support customers who are at risk of being left behind in the transition to net zero. Whilst we have outperformed our PSR Reach targets, this remains a priority for us.

The performance in the first year of ED2 has shown strong foundations, which we will continue to build on over the coming year.

SHEPD PERFORMANCE – CV-ODI ONGOING PERFORMANCE

Metric	Year 1	Year 2	Year 2 Target	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 5 Target
PSR Reach	64.4%		59.6%				69.5%
Social value of Fuel Poverty Services Delivered (NPV)	£0.638m		£0.478m				£1.13m
Social value of Low Carbon Transition Services Delivered (NPV)	£0.09m		£0.027m				£0.297m
Average Fuel Poverty Customer Satisfaction Survey score	8.81 / 10		9 / 10				9 / 10
Average Low Carbon Transition Customer Satisfaction Survey score*	–		9 / 10				9 / 10

*No customers surveyed in year 1.

SEPD PERFORMANCE – CV-ODI ONGOING PERFORMANCE

Metric	Year 1	Year 2	Year 2 Target	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 5 Target
PSR Reach	56.7%		59.6%				69.5%
Social value of Fuel Poverty Services Delivered (NPV)	£0.309m		£0.726m				£2.124m
Social value of Low Carbon Transition Services Delivered (NPV)	£0.317m		£0.051m				£0.559m
Average Fuel Poverty Customer Satisfaction Survey score	8.38 / 10		9 / 10				9 / 10
Average Low Carbon Transition Customer Satisfaction Survey score*	–		9 / 10				9 / 10

*No customers surveyed in year 1.



ACCOMPANYING PERFORMANCE

SHEPD REGULARLY REPORTED EVIDENCE (RRE)

RRE	Expectation	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Frequency of PSR Customer Data Cleanse	Licensee has attempted to contact all PSR customers to verify their data every 24 months.	42.16%				
CSS score for PSR customers who have experienced a power cut	9.01 target	9.24 / 10				
Volume of Fuel Poverty Services delivered	3,500 households supported across ED2.	1,685				
Volume of Low Carbon Transition Services delivered	186 households supported across ED2.	52				

SEPD REGULARLY REPORTED EVIDENCE (RRE)

RRE	Expectation	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Frequency of PSR Customer Data Cleanse	Licensee has attempted to contact all PSR customers to verify their data.	41.95%				
CSS score for PSR customers who have experienced a power cut	9.01 target	8.62 / 10				
Volume of Fuel Poverty Services delivered	6,500 households supported across ED2.	3,989				
The volume of Low Carbon Transition Services Delivered	344 households supported across ED2.	1,234				

OUR PERFORMANCE

Alongside the Customer Vulnerability Incentive Metrics, we have provided an update on other performance targets aimed at improving the service and support provided to customers in vulnerable situations.

These metrics are:

- **Frequency of PSR Data Cleanse:** the percentage of customers on our PSR who we have contacted to confirm the data we hold is correct. This is a 24 month cycle, with all PSR customers being contacted at least once every 24 months.
- **CSS Score for PSR customers who have experienced a power cut:** the customer satisfaction score (CSS) for PSR customers experiencing either a planned or unplanned power cut.
- **Volume of Fuel Poverty Services delivered:** the number of households who have accessed our fuel poverty support services through our partners.
- **Volume of Low Carbon Transition services delivered:** the number of households who have accessed our low carbon transition services through our partners.

Our performance in year one was lower than we expected, with less than 50% of our customers on the PSR being contacted to cleanse their data. We have made improvements to the process to ensure all remaining PSR customers are contacted in 2024-25.

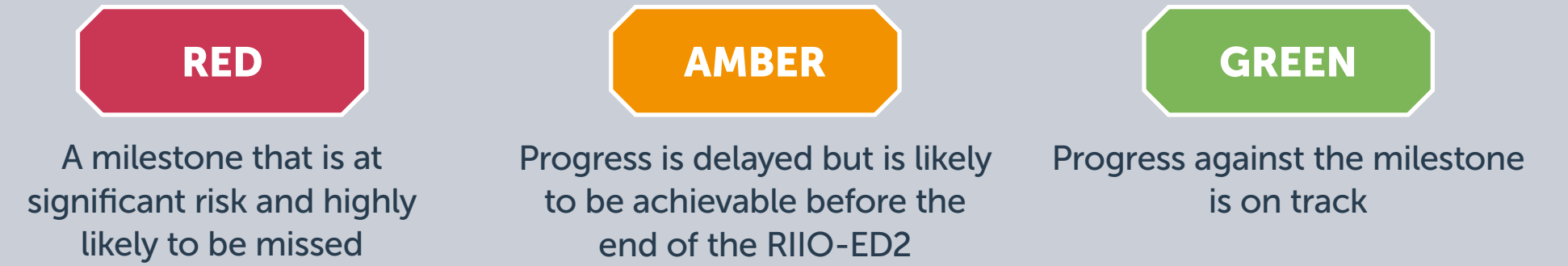
The CSS score in our SHEPD licence area was strong, coming in above target, and we came in slight ahead of our target for households supported, aiming to support a total of 6,000 households in year 1, allowing us to test our programmes and make improvements where needed. Going into year 2, our Service Design Authority will be making improvements to our interruptions (power cuts) processes to improve the CSS in our SEPD licence area.

This performance in this first year has enabled us to identify areas of improvement, implementing changes to benefit our customers.



OUR COMMITMENTS

This Annual Vulnerability Report (AVR) provides our customers, partners, stakeholders and Ofgem with an update on our performance and progress against our vulnerability commitments. This table provides an overview of performance for 2023-24.



Vulnerability strategy Commitment	Description	Expected outcome/benefit	Key milestone	RAG status	Status update
Vulnerability Strategy (Go to page 8 for more information)	Meet our obligations to treat all customers fairly, including those in vulnerable situations. Put in place a vulnerability strategy, to be reviewed and refreshed annually and our performance incentivised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our data-driven approach will help target our activities and register more customers who will benefit from our services. • Improved support delivered through our partnership approach as required. • £17.2m financial benefits delivered through targeted fuel poverty support and energy efficiency measures. • £3.7m societal benefits delivered through quality-of-life improvements, health benefits and carbon emission reductions. 	Annual Stakeholder Review of strategy & feedback.	GREEN	Stakeholder engagement took place in November 2023 with a further event planned for October 2024.
			Annual strategy refresh & publication.	GREEN	Strategy launched in February 2024 with a refresh due by end of 2024.
			Customer survey on our strategy, factoring in arising issues faced by our customers and communities by March 2026.	GREEN	We will be starting to plan this engagement following the release of our 2025/26 strategy refresh.
PSR Gap Analysis (Go to page 9 for more information)	Reach over 1 million PSR customers by 2028, refreshing our data every 24 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our data-driven approach will help target our activities and register more customers who will benefit from our services. • Improved support delivered through our partnership approach as required. • £17.2m financial benefits delivered through targeted fuel poverty support and energy efficiency measures. • £3.7m societal benefits delivered through quality-of-life improvements, health benefits and carbon emission reductions. 	Achieve 1 million PSR customers by March 2025.	AMBER	Last year, we increased the number of customers by over 68k, and will be scaling up promotion in 2024-25.
			Refreshed Customer Mapping Tool to further enhance PSR identification to be in place by March 2025.	GREEN	The Vulnerability Visualisation Tool rollout will start in September 2024, with it becoming fully embedded in the business by March 2025.
			PSR 1+ customer data refreshed annually with all other customers refreshed every 2 years.	GREEN	We have contacted all our highest priority customers (PSR1+) and have contacted 41% of PSR customers in total during 2023-24.

Continues overleaf

Vulnerability strategy Commitment	Description	Expected outcome/benefit	Key milestone	RAG status	Status update
PSR Customer Satisfaction (Go to page 12 for more information)	Improve PSR customer satisfaction scores to 9.4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our data-driven approach will help target our activities and register more customers who will benefit from our services. • Improved support delivered through our partnership approach as required. • £17.2m financial benefits delivered through targeted fuel poverty support and energy efficiency measures. • £3.7m societal benefits delivered through quality-of-life improvements, health benefits and carbon emission reductions. 	Implement 'Brilliant Basics – Meeting the Growing Needs of our Customers programme' to a achieve score of 9.2 by March 2025.	GREEN	Every customer journey at SSEN has now been mapped and 'critical milestones' have been established. These are key touch points in the customer journey which are targeted to be consistently delivered. This is delivering positive results and further progress will continue to be made over the next year.
			Implement Improved Channel Management programme to achieve a score of 9.3 by March 2026.	GREEN	We have now launched our Customer Channels programme, and in 2024 will award a contract to a contact channel partner to help us implement a long-term solution.
			Implement An Empowered Workforce programme to achieve a score of 9.4 by March 2027.	GREEN	More than 500 customer facing colleagues have now been through our Empowered to Care programme, a dedicated customer service training programme. This will be rolled out to a further 4,000 employees over the next 2 years, in addition to specialist training on supporting customers in vulnerable situations for relevant teams.
Fuel Poverty Support (Go to page 15 for more information)	By 2028 support 50,000 households (equivalent to 114,000 customers) with fuel poverty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our data-driven approach will help target our activities and register more customers who will benefit from our services. • Improved support delivered through our partnership approach as required. • £17.2m financial benefits delivered through targeted fuel poverty support and energy efficiency measures. • £3.7m societal benefits delivered through quality-of-life improvements, health benefits and carbon emission reductions. 	Set up 5 new partnerships to support customers over ED2.	AMBER	No new partnerships were launched in 2023-24, with two new partnerships launching in early 2024-25.
			Introduce new 2-year partnership frameworks for strategic partnerships by March 2025.	GREEN	62% of our partnerships have moved to the 2 year framework.
			Consult with stakeholders on 'partnership' fund for potential partners to bid for funding to support customers in key areas.	GREEN	Outline for 'Partnership' fund being created in 2024-25 with stakeholder consultation expected early 2025/26.
Training and development (Go to page 19 for more information)	Train 30 employees to the City & Guilds energy efficiency qualification and introduce 200 Vulnerability Champions across the business from the start of ED2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our data-driven approach will help target our activities and register more customers who will benefit from our services. • Improved support delivered through our partnership approach as required. • £17.2m financial benefits delivered through targeted fuel poverty support and energy efficiency measures. • £3.7m societal benefits delivered through quality-of-life improvements, health benefits and carbon emission reductions. 	20 employees to have completed City and Guilds Energy Efficiency Training by March 2025 with all 30 in place by March 2027.	GREEN	By March 2024, 25 employees had begun the 8-week City and Guilds training, with plans for a further 24 to complete training in 2024-25.
			80 Vulnerability Allies to be in place by March 2025 with all 200 in place by March 2027.	GREEN	42 Vulnerability Allies in place and onboarded by March 2024. Campaigns in place for further recruitment in 2024-25.

Continues overleaf

Vulnerability strategy Commitment	Description	Expected outcome/benefit	Key milestone	RAG status	Status update
Personal and Social Support Packs (Go to page 20 for more information)	By 2028, deliver 5,000 energy efficiency packs to fuel-poor households, and 5,000 power cut resilience packs to PSR customers, tailored to their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the resilience for customers during a power cut, and through the use of energy efficiency measures driving financial benefits. £0.5m benefits delivered to customers in vulnerable situations. 	Using customer insight to design and develop packs with zero single use items/plastics by March 2025.	AMBER	Scoping of packs underway, including stakeholder engagement with potential suppliers and partners.
			Issue 4,000 packs to customers by March 2026.	AMBER	A rollout plan for fuel poverty and energy efficiency packs will be in place by March 2025.
			Issue 6,000 additional packs to customers ahead of winter 2027.	AMBER	Following the rollout of the initial packs, we will review the plan to distribute the remaining 6,000 packs by November 2027.
Personal Resilience Plans (Go to page 22 for more information)	Proactively provide PSR customers with Personal Resilience Plans containing specific advice tailored to a customer's individual needs, helping them know what to do during power cuts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased service to customers in vulnerable situations through bespoke Personal Resilience Plans, providing £3.9m net consumer benefits. 	Work with stakeholders and vulnerability experts to create bespoke advice for Personal Resilience Plans by August 2024.	GREEN	We worked with Kidney Care UK to rollout PRPs to 13 customers. Ongoing collaboration with other partners to create targeted advice.
			1,000 batteries and 5,000 Personal Resilience Plans issued with customer feedback gathered by March 2025.	GREEN	Procurement of batteries is with our providers with a small, initial set of batteries expected to be delivered by July 2024 to test our rollout process.
			15,000 batteries and 250,000 Personal Resilience Plans issued by September 2027.	GREEN	Automation of PRP rollout in process with consideration for customers to self-serve.
			20,000 batteries and 374,691 Personal Resilience Plans issued by March 2028.	GREEN	Project plan in place to ensure delivery of all batteries by end of ED2.
Shareholder Fund (Go to page 21 for more information)	Introduce a shareholder-financed £500,000 annual 'Powering Communities to Net Zero' fund to support LCT accessibility initiatives for those in vulnerable situations, and community-led environmental and resilience schemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £8.2m financial benefits and £1.4m societal benefits enabled by ensuring customers in vulnerable situations can access energy transition benefits. 	Scope fund and launch initial round of funding by end of September 2024.	GREEN	Engagement planned for Q1 of 2024 to launch fund. Resilience portion of the fund expected to launch first, with the LCT portion later in the year.
			Ahead of round 2 of funding in June 2025, complete stakeholder engagement and review of fund, including SROI benefits of funds allocated to date.	GREEN	Engagement being planned for Q4 2024-25.
			Four rounds of funding completed by December 2027.	GREEN	Dates for future rounds to be confirmed following the engagement taking place in March 2025.



VULNERABILITY STRATEGY

Our commitment to our customers: Meet our obligations to treat all customers fairly, including those in vulnerable situations. Put in place a vulnerability strategy, to be reviewed and refreshed annually and our performance incentivised.

Our approach to consumer vulnerability is deeply embedded within our business, and is centred upon the following principles which are the golden threads linking all efforts to improve services for vulnerable customers:

1. Understanding the needs of our customers
2. Using data to deliver tailored support
3. Partnership and collaborative working to help deliver services
4. Embedding knowledge and learnings and sharing best practice
5. Tracking performance against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to ensure our efforts remain effective

Throughout the creation of our business plan, we engaged with customers and stakeholders to ensure our commitments would deliver value and benefits for our customers. We have committed to refreshing our strategy each year. In November 2023, we engaged with stakeholders on our strategy to ensure our approach remained meaningful and impactful. From this engagement, we refreshed our Consumer Vulnerability Wheel, which has remained popular since its inception.



CONSUMER VULNERABILITY WHEEL

The wheel provides a clear view of the outputs we committed to deliver to meet Ofgem's Principles/baselines standards. It also outlines the extra work we are doing to meet our own consumer vulnerability promises and go further in safeguarding our customers.

We are committed to engaging with customers in vulnerable situations, and the trusted organisations who represent them, to deepen our understanding of complex vulnerability including those who become temporarily vulnerable. We will work in partnership to deliver a wide range of services that target support where it is needed most in the communities we proudly serve.



INTRODUCING OUR CONSUMER VULNERABILITY TEAM

In 2023, we expanded our Consumer Vulnerability team to manage our Vulnerability Strategy, Partnerships and Personal Resilience Plan Projects.



PSR GAP ANALYSIS

Our commitment to our customers: Reach over 1 million PSR customers by 2028, refreshing our data every 24 months.

We are committed to enhancing support for Priority Service Registered customers and increasing partnerships to get more of our customers on the PSR. In doing so, we aim to:

- Raise awareness of the Priority Service Register (PSR).
- Improve the accessibility of our service so that no customer is left behind.
- Ensure the data we hold is up to date.
- Provide the right support to customers during a power cut.

To meet these commitments, we:

- Conduct regular gap analysis on our PSR data to ensure we are putting our focus where it is needed.
- Continue to promote the PSR in our communities, focusing on our top PSR gaps.
- Promote the PSR, thepsr.co.uk and psrscotland.com at every opportunity.

PSR PERFORMANCE

In April 2023, a new method for calculating our PSR performance was introduced.

The new calculation, PSR Reach, uses national data sets to calculate the number of households eligible for the PSR. Using this eligibility figure, working with Centre for Sustainable Energy, we are able to calculate the percentage of households registered. The new calculation gives us greater insight into where our PSR gaps are, meaning we are able to better plan our engagement to reach more customers.

Some needs codes, such as temporary need codes, are not included in the PSR reach calculation due to national data sets not being available, and have been excluded from our reported PSR figures.

These households receive the same level of PSR support during a power cut.

	PSR Eligible Households	PSR Households Registered 2023-24	PSR Households Registered 2022-23*	Growth
SHEPD	275,881	177,698	166,720	+10,978
SEPD	1,283,506	727,682	670,696	+59,986
SSEN	1,559,387	905,380	837,416	+67,964

*Calculated under the previous calculation

PSR RESEARCH

Working with Create Clarity, in March 2024 we commissioned research to better understand what messaging, imagery and methods of communication will allow us to accelerate and increase PSR registrations.

A mixed-methods approach, including 4 qualitative focus groups, 5 in-depth interviews, and 9 qualitative engagements was applied to contribute to the evidence base needed to understand what messaging and methods work best with customers across our regions. This research started in March 2024 and will continue into April 2024.

PSR DATA CLEANSE

Growing the number of households on our PSR has increased the focus on ensuring the data we hold is accurate. We are required to cleanse our PSR data every two years. However, we have committed to refreshing the data we hold for our customers with the highest priority needs codes (PSR 1+) every 12 months.

In 2023-24 we contacted over 350,000 PSR customers to ensure we hold the correct data. We also increased the size of our Priority Service team from 8 to 13 advisors to ensure we contact all remaining customers across 2024-25.

To ensure customer details are updated quickly, we introduced a new automation process to customers updating and registering through our website. This means our system updates with new registrations in a matter of minutes, as opposed to 2-5 working days under the previous process. The new process also reduces the amount of time it takes customers to sign up and receive their welcome pack.



PSR COMMUNITY TOOLKIT

Recognising the pivotal role that charities, Vulnerable Customer Representatives, Community and Parish Councils, and others play in creating better outcomes for communities, we launched a PSR Community Toolkit to support conversations on the PSR between organisations and their stakeholders.

With the first rollout, the toolkit was distributed to Parish Councils, Community Councils, Charities and SSEN partner organisations.

- Launched to 2,700 key stakeholders and partners from Parish Councils to key community groups providing them with digital assets/marketing toolkit to promote PSR
- Of those who received the toolkit, there was a 65% interaction & download rate. Phase 2 will launch in Summer 2024 with a wider reach including Local Authorities, Housing Associations, Carers UK and safe/cool spaces.

The Community Toolkit includes:

- Information on Priority Services which can be used for newsletters, websites, emails, or team meetings and coffee mornings.
- Social media assets to promote the PSR, accompanied by suggested text.
- Posters tailored for Scotland, England and community events.
- Resources can be requested in different accessible formats, including translated materials.
- Phase 2 will be enhanced with additional tools such as a PSR video and quick reference information sheets for support workers and field operatives.



Posters



Social media assets

CUSTOMER MAPPING TOOL

The use and reach of our Customer Mapping Tool (CMT) continues to grow, with over 35 new users being trained and granted access. Many use the overlay function, which allows social indicators to be combined to pinpoint where projects will have the most benefit.

We are collaborating with more organisations including SGN, on projects to promote the PSR and Carbon Monoxide safety awareness. Additionally, provision of access and training on the CMT has enabled the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to identify locations to door drop for residents who are eligible for the Fuel Payment programme.

Further organisations that we have provided access and training in 2023-24 to include:

- Thames Valley Police
- The Heat Project
- Highland Affordable Warmth
- Scottish Water
- The Scottish Flood Forum
- Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Council

ENGAGING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

We are delighted to have been invited to speak on the extra support available to communities with a range of groups:

- **GALE Centre (Gairloch):** As part of our work to raise awareness of the PSR and its benefits, Pamela Harvey, Customer Relationship Manager, visited Gairloch to deliver a presentation at the GALE Centre, where the local community learned more not just about the PSR, but also the company's Home Emergency Plans. (1)
- **Supporting communities in Hampshire and Wiltshire:** throughout Autumn 2023, our Customer and Community Advisors Melanie Grace, Helen Robertson, Mandy Driver and Rebecca Botto (2), provided valuable guidance on staying safe during power cuts, severe weather events, and energy saving advice to hundreds of customers across rural and urban areas. Events included supporting Sight West

of England and Wiltshire Sight at the Eye Can Exhibition (3 & 4), the Big Band Buffer (5) in Stockbridge's Test Valley School, the Stroke Club in Penton Mewsey, and Nether Wallop's 'Not on your own' club, to name a few.

- **Supporting Parish Councils in the South-East region:** Our Customer and Community Advisors Savana Walker and Lucy Holland, have promoted Priority Services and provided important advice regarding pre-planned supply interruption, including circumstances that may require road closures and other disturbances.
- **Brew with a Crew:** We are backing the Scottish Fire and Rescue initiative 'Brew With A Crew'. This innovative project aims to bolster community spirit, providing a welcoming space for open discussions on mental health, substance dependency, financial advice, and personal resilience over a warm cuppa. (6)



"Brew with a Crew events are a fantastic way for a wide range of groups and organisations to get together under one roof and raise awareness of the specialist care and support they have available."

Shona Horn | Customer Relationship Manager, North Caledonia



- **New Mum Wellbeing Group (Stonehaven):** Recognising that many home-based essentials such as sterilising kits and bottle warmers rely on electricity, we are keen to raise awareness of the support available to new parents on the rare occasions that there is an interruption to power supplies. Shona Horn, Customer Relationship Manager, attended the New Mum Wellbeing Group in Stonehaven, to raise awareness of the extra help available and provide peace of mind to this key audience of young families.
- **Women's Institute (WI):** Continuing collaborative efforts, we facilitated several talks to the Women's Institute (WI), including the Widows' Network. Talks have centred around the topic of vulnerability, the PSR and help available. From older members through to young mothers and their infants, members received information on the PSR and participated in discussions around relevant scenarios on vulnerability. By giving information and advice we can provide peace of mind and increase the personal resilience of WI members.
- **The Macular Society:** We have been working with the Macular Society and have attended monthly meetings in three areas of Portsmouth to promote our services. By working with the Macular Society, we aim to reduce the PSR gap for blind and partially sighted customers.
- **Older People's Working Group:** Our involvement in the working group – a Reading Borough Council Initiative – has resulted in the facilitation of PSR talks to several groups. The working group attendees include:
 - Citizens Advice
 - The Stroke Association
 - Berkshire Vision
 - Public Health & Wellbeing Team
 - Together UK
 - Help the Aged
 - Royal Berkshire Hospital
 - National Pensioner Convention
 - NHS Retirement Fellowship
 - ReadiBus and many more.
- Reading Borough Council have rolled out a Community Roadshow which visits four of the most deprived areas in Reading, and is attended by organisations including SSEN, Citizens Advice Bureau and Launchpad. Although in its infancy, the roadshow brings services to areas in which residents may otherwise struggle to reach.

We continue to carry out valuable community engagement, including coffee mornings for those over the age of 60. Such events let us engage with key audiences and extend advice and literature on the PSR, increasing sign-ups.

- We have been busy promoting the PSR and fuel poverty referrals throughout our regions. In West London this has included: community events at libraries, Salvation Army Coffee Mornings, Visually Impaired reading groups (including a feature in talking magazine, 'Uxbridge Amigos' June Edition) and older people assemblies attended by a range of organisations and charities.

TARGETED ENGAGEMENT FOR THOSE WHO SPEAK ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE, OR CANNOT COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH

THAMES WATER – SIKH GURDWARA



Through collaboration with Thames Water, we have increased our engagement with ethnic communities in the Thames Valley area. SSEN facilitated contact between Thames Water and community leaders from the Sikh Community, which has a significant presence in this region. This has allowed us to share information on free services and assistance available in the event of an interruption to power or water supplies, to this community. We organised a promotional event at Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Slough, which was attended by approximately 250-300 people. We promoted Thames Water's free services and SSEN's PSR and Energy Advice.

- We produce Priority Services Register leaflets in 11 different languages. Consequentially, information can be shared directly or taken home to discuss with family members, friends and loved ones, who could benefit from the free assistance available during planned and unplanned interruptions to supply.
- By working in collaboration with Thames Water, we have been able to provide a one-stop-shop for registration so customers are covered by both utilities, should they become vulnerable in a situation where they may be without electricity, water or both. Customers can also access YES Energy Solutions where they can receive information and tailored guidance on saving energy and money.
- Working in this way and showing up in communities also helps to raise our profile and show compassion with our customers who may need our support in the future.

MEASURES TO IMPROVE PSR PROCESSES



Participating in service design workshops to identify areas requiring service improvement to PSR communications and process.



Providing support on the PSR to contract partners working across our network, including communication on new process implementation.



Developing a Customer Coaching form to assist customer-facing operational colleagues in the identification of areas of success and improvement regarding the provision of PSR support. Subsequently, training for engineers and frontline staff has been carried out on how to support PSR customers where gaps in knowledge have been identified.



Producing a generator 'help sheet' for the PSR team and engineers for efficient decision-making regarding PSR assistance during critical situations. A similar resource has been created to identify trends in PSR requests, which has been valuable in the creation of resilience plans, as well as improving future networks' understanding of customer requirements.



Sharing best practice and problem-solving internally between the Customer Relationship Managers and Priority Service teams, so that we can better support customers who require extra help.



PSR CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Our commitment to our customers: Improve PSR customer satisfaction scores to 9.4.

The communities we serve are spread widely and cover a multitude of different, and often complex, customer needs. Therefore, the services we provide for all our customers need to be tailored, specific, inclusive and accessible, with a continual, future-looking lens.

Year after year, we remain committed to improving the service we provide for our customers and the training we provide for our colleagues. Through our detailed data analysis and stakeholder engagement, we were able to focus on improving the business terminology that filters through to our customers. This aims to improve the simplicity and comprehension of our customer communications, both online and offline.

		SHEPD	SEPD	SSEN
Planned Supply Interruptions	PSR Customers	9.75	8.08	8.91
	All Customers	9.18	8.30	8.74
Unplanned Agent	PSR Customers	9.28	8.75	9.02
	All Customers	9.31	8.91	9.11
Unplanned Message	PSR Customers	8.40	8.00	8.20
	All Customers	8.92	8.51	8.71
Overall Power Cuts Performance	PSR Customers	9.24	8.62	8.86
	All Customers	9.15	8.58	8.93

INCLUSIVE SERVICE KITEMARK



In December 2023, we successfully retained the Inclusive Service Kitemark (ISO 22458) certification by demonstrating and evidencing our ongoing commitment in supporting our vulnerable consumers.

NEEDS-SPECIFIC TRAINING

We continue to raise awareness of dementia and developmental conditions through the provision of staff training facilitated by Training 2 Care UK.

As well as fostering deeper understanding, the engaging sessions provide an array of techniques to handle unique situations, consequentially increasing confidence in supporting customers living with such conditions. Additionally, the lived experience and perspective of this community is represented on the Inclusive Service Panel (see page 27), reflecting our commitment to support vulnerable customers.

In 2023-2024 we saw an increase in customers registering for dementia and developmental conditions. The Ridgeway region in SEPD saw an increase in both dementia needs code (64%) and developmental condition needs code (44.5%).

- This year 20 members of staff took part in the Virtual Dementia Tour Mobile in the North licence area, and 45 in the South licence area.
- 26 members of staff attended the Autism-specific training in the South, which will be available to staff in the North licence area in 2024-25.
- This year 20 members of staff took part in the Virtual Dementia Tour Mobile in the North licence area, and 45 in the South licence area.
- 26 members of staff attended the Autism-specific training in the South, which will be available to staff in the North licence area in 2024-25.



“A thought-provoking experience which widened my understanding of dementia. The immersive experience and workshop allowed me to better understand the barriers and social exclusion that many sadly face, and prompted reflection on how we can better support customers and carers.”

Laura Erskine | Vulnerabilities Partnership Manager, SSEN



“Participating in the dementia bus simulation was an incredibly eye opening and challenging experience. The simulation made me feel overwhelmed, disorientated, and hyper-aware of my surroundings and allowed me to experience first-hand the sensitivities and cognitive impairments that can be associated with dementia. The experience has given me a deeper understanding of the struggles faced by people with dementia, which will help me to communicate more effectively when discussing power cuts and improve support to our customers.”

Sammi Farn | Social Media Officer & Web Content Editor, SSEN

INTRODUCING OUR SERVICE DESIGN AUTHORITY

In 2023, we launched our Service Design Authority, a new approach to improving customer experience across the business. The Service Design Authority takes the experience a customer has with us and designs an improved way they can experience it.

The reason for the new function and approach was that we assessed our operating model across the organisation and realised that our service improvement model was outdated and we were reactive to customer problems in the past. Instead the new model seeks to deeply understand customers needs, expectations, goals and behaviours and use these to design an improved journey, at accelerated pace.

The Authority is split into four customer journeys, each with their own Customer Journey Owner, who is the voice of the customer and guardian of the Customer Journey, and Service Designers, who identifies problems in the customer journey and designs and delivers solutions, to support the rollout of improvements:

- Interruptions
- Minor Connections and General Enquiries
- Major Connections
- Digital

Each customer journey has been built with critical milestones to improve the service, with opportunities to enhance the service provided to our most vulnerable customers called out. These milestones have been created through customer and colleague insight to ensure our services remain accessible.

CHOOSING BETTER WORDS

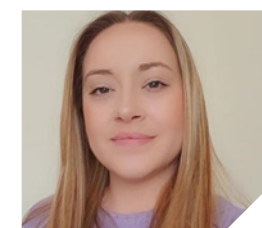
Inclusive and accessible communications are essential given the diverse audience we engage with. Our customers told us our language is at times too technical so we knew we needed to do something different.

We have worked with Better Company, a creative team dedicated to improving the communication of organisations to find the most engaging and inclusive words to connect with their customers. We undertook research and found that:

- 1 in 6 adults in England have poor literacy skills.
- 1 in 4 adults in Scotland experience challenges because of lack of literacy.
- As a guide, all gov.uk content is written for a reading age of 9.

We surveyed over 1,000 SSEN customers and found that the wrong words make communications very unclear and can confuse and exclude people. In addition to our online customer survey, we also carried out:

- A desktop review of our SSEN communications.
- Researched best practice in similar organisations.
- Researched best practice from expert organisations working in literacy.
- Led a workshop with our Inclusive Service Panel (ISP).
- Led a focus group with a cross-section of SSEN staff.
- Interviewed our partners at Citizens' Advice.



“Better words is a methodology used to keep the information you provide to customers simple and easy to understand, removing all jargon and thinking more of how a customer would think, not, a business. We have been reviewing all communications and changing the way we present information to customers using this methodology and customers are responding very well. We are now starting to see that changes in our customer satisfaction surveys for the new financial year.”

Charlee Mills | Service Designer (Customer Experience Team), SSEN

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATIONS

Insights from customers and staff enabled us, with the support of Better Company, to co-create 5 ways to better words. Designed especially for SSEN, these broad principles bring together our knowledge, our research, global best practice and our customer insight in 5 easy-to-use principles. We created a team of ambassadors to spread better words to their teams.

THE 5 PRINCIPLES ARE:



OUR BETTER WORDS NOW ENSURE THAT:

- Our important information is crystal-clear.
- Straightforward words reduce stress, worry and fear for the customer.
- We can build better connections with our customers.
- We are actively including groups with lower levels of literacy.

NEXT STEPS

We plan to embed these principles into our call centres and written documents, such as our Planned Supply interruption letters, to improve our communication with customers.

PLANNED SUPPLY INTERRUPTIONS

One of the first projects our Service Design Authority started was to improve the communication we provide to customers during a planned supply interruption.

- Starting with the letters we send to customers, we reviewed the design and the language used to ensure we are providing the right level of detail whilst remaining accessible to customers with additional communication needs.
- In March 2024, we started a trial to increase the communication our customers receive on the days of the planned power cut. We have been monitoring the impact of this trial through touchpoint surveys, and have seen a 22.97% increase in customer satisfaction for those customers receiving all milestones.
 - **74%** average customer satisfaction when receiving the letter only
 - **91%** average customer satisfaction when receiving all customer milestone updates

CASE STUDY

NEW AND IMPROVED ACCESSIBLE WEBSITE

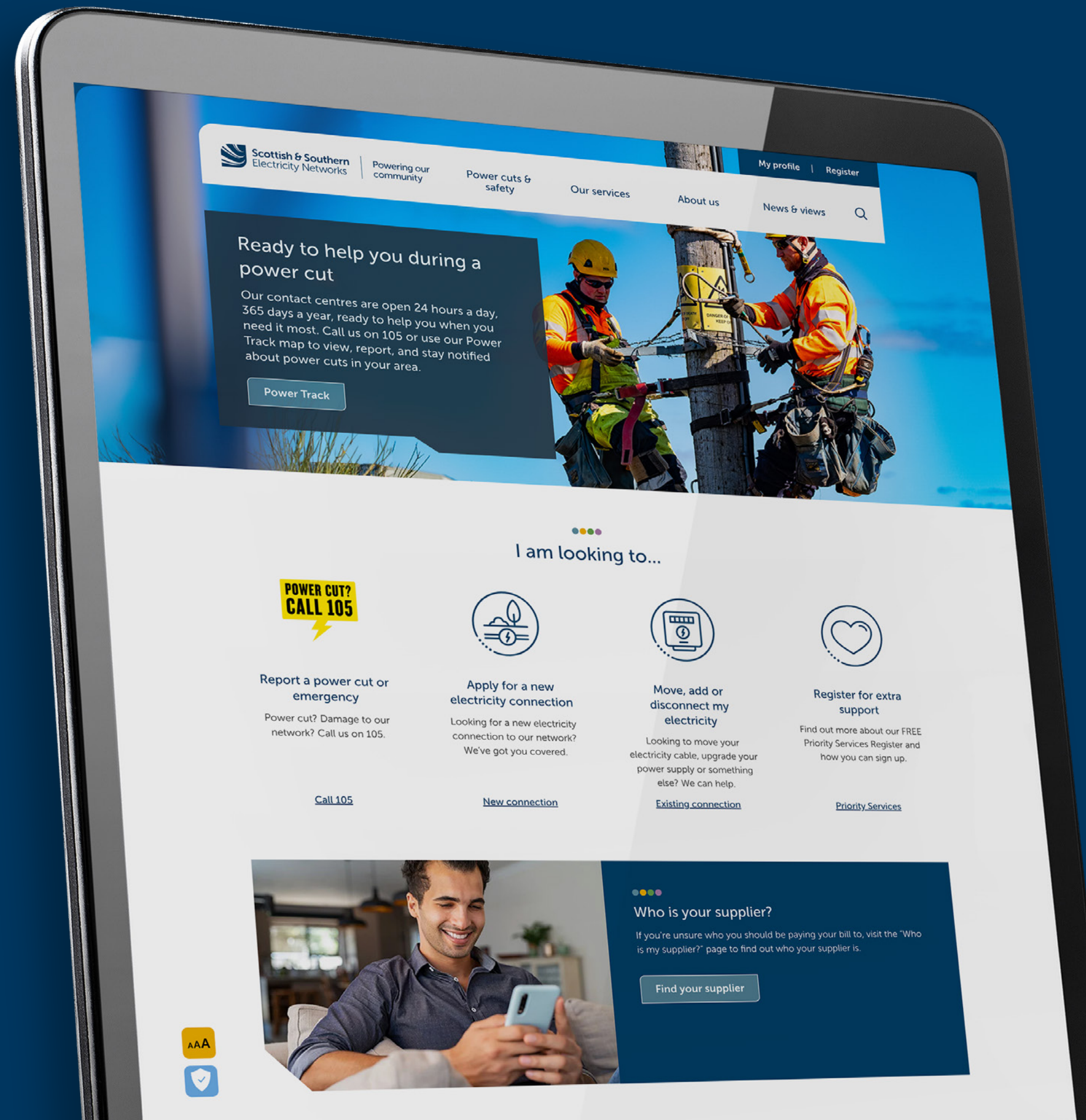
We launched our new SSEN website this year and a top priority was ensuring our accessibility and inclusivity was embedded throughout.

In addition to revamping the content to make it easier to find out more information about services, we also wanted to improve our accessibility record. We chose Mando, a digital agency based in Liverpool, to help us deliver this project as they had experience in our industry and specialised in making accessible websites.

- The website was delivered to AA WCAG standards which we maintained through Sitemorse during the build phase of our project. Sitemorse is a tool that checks our website content and gives us a score out of ten for key areas like spelling, code quality and accessibility.
- The ReciteMe toolbar continues to provide an inclusive experience through accessibility and language options to enable anyone to customise our website in a way that works for them.



These additions have led to our highest Sitemorse accessibility score, ranking us first for digital accessibility with a score of **6.12**



"We've been involved in assisting SSEN with the accessibility of their online presence since 2017. We're passionate about making the digital experience as inclusive as possible for all, and work closely with the team at SSEN, ably led by Mike Dotts, in ensuring continuous improvement to the level of accessibility throughout the digital landscape. Through training and development, Sitemorse are proud to assist SSEN in alignment with our mutual pledge to be as inclusive as possible not just now, but in the future, too."

Sitemorse



"Ensuring our website is accessible to all users is not just requirement set by our regulator OFGEM but a deep commitment to inclusivity and excellent digital customer service."

Accessibility expands our reach, improves user experience, and demonstrates our dedication to the communities we serve. I constantly tell my team we're not competing against other utilities' websites; we're always competing with the last website our customer has visited, and Sitemorse has helped us from day one understands how we can improve and maintain the high accessibility standards we set for ourselves."

Michael Dotts | Journey Owner (Digital), SSEN

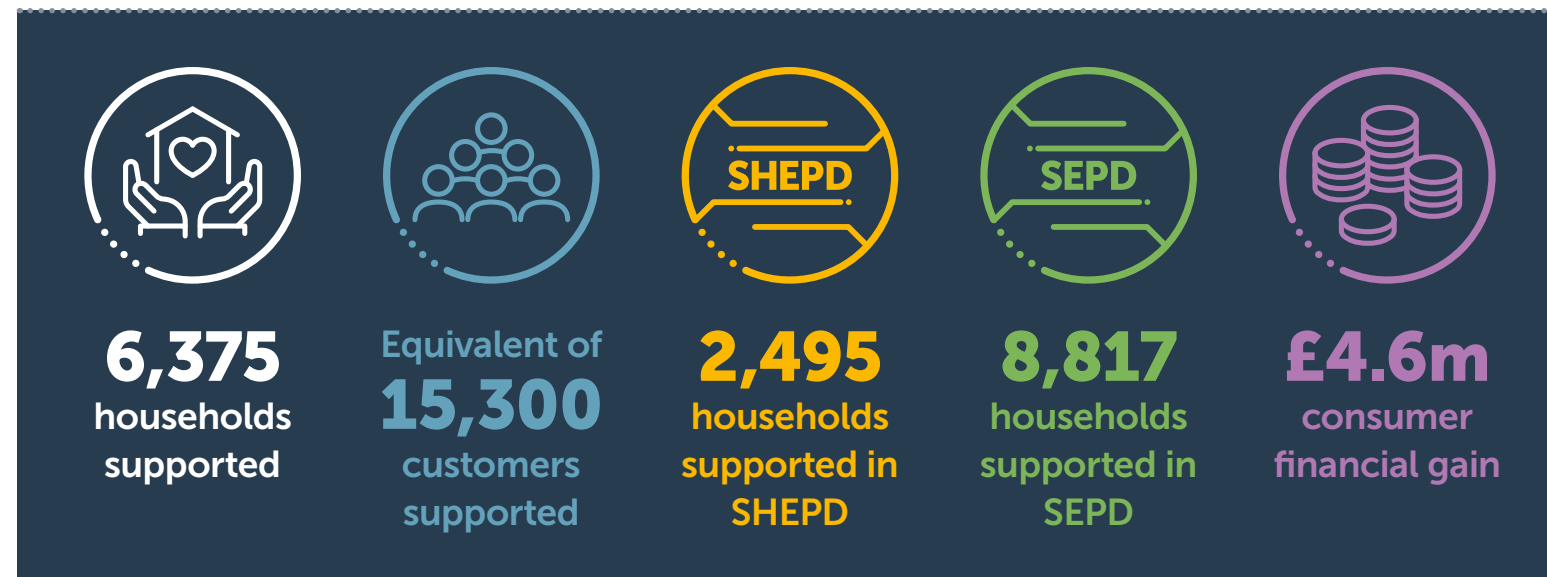


FUEL POVERTY SUPPORT

Our commitment to our customers: By 2028 support 50,000 households (equivalent to 114,000 customers) with fuel poverty.

To ensure we meet our 2028 target, our focus in 2023-24 was to work with our partners to ensure they were able to provide help where it's most needed.

In 2023-24 we focused on 6,375 households through our partnership programme. This has resulted in a financial net gain of over £3.5m for some of our most vulnerable households.



Operating across two very different network areas, we have to ensure all partnerships we have in place are providing an equal and accessible service.

We provide funding to national partnerships, which operate across both licence areas, and local partnerships, which operate in one licence area. Working with different partners means we are able to provide tailored support to our customers.

Meeting with our partners on a regular basis, we review the performance of the partnership as well as customer case studies provided. We also meet with the advisors who provide the face-to-face support our customers need, hearing first hand the challenges they and our customers face.

YOU SAID:

We received feedback from Citizens Advice Scotland on the current partnership programme and the difficulties they face. All our partnerships were run on a year-by-year basis, however this posed a challenge for those programmes who employ employee advisors on our behalf. Concerns around retention of advisors were raised, alongside possible lost time for recruitment and training, which would impact service availability for our customers.

WE DID:

We knew our approach to partnerships needed to change. Using Social Return on Investment (SROI) data and feedback from all our partners, we created a new 2-year partnership framework which would extend the contracts for those in partnership-funded roles.

The new framework also meant partners were able to better plan for the 2 years, confident the funding would continue into 2026.

This new approach was ratified by our Inclusive Service Panel.



"Our partnerships with charities and organisations across our north and south licence areas ensure customers have access to trusted, third party experts who can support them with fuel poverty and energy efficiency services. They build relationships with customers signposting and collaborating with services that can match customers needs."

Susan Duncan | Partnerships and Vulnerability Engagement Manager, SSEN

CASE STUDIES

CITIZENS ADVICE SCOTLAND

A client contacted Citizens Advice (CA) as he and his partner were facing financial hardships due to sudden ill-health and full-time caring responsibilities.

The client had already completed a benefit check, Adult Disability Payment application and Carer's Allowance application but he was provided with further advice on travel reductions and making an application for Council Tax Reduction.

The client had to cancel a proposed energy advice appointment due to caring responsibilities.

The SSEN Energy Adviser was aware that the client may miss out on the Home Energy Support Fund which was closing that week and emailed the client providing information and offering to help client complete it if he struggled to do it himself. The Client contacted the adviser with only hours to spare and the adviser helped the client complete the form by telephone. The client was later awarded almost £1,000 which he advised would make a real difference to him and his partner; he had no idea such a fund was available and he might have missed out on it had it not been for the Citizens Advice adviser. He said that he had only seemed to receive bad news in recent months but this money had allowed them a chance to 'breathe a bit' and look forward to a warmer home without having to worry.

HOME AND WELL

The client is a single stay-at-home parent with two children. She had £670 debt with her energy supplier and had been told her monthly payment would need to increase from £83 to £165.

The client simply couldn't afford this and had begun to self-ration her energy usage. The SSEN Energy adviser worked with the client to make an application to the British Gas Energy Trust fund to help pay off the debt. They granted the client the full amount. Once this was completed the client's supplier reviewed her energy usage and without the debt on her account, reduced her monthly payments to £63 a month. The client was really pleased with the more manageable cost. Before calling into Citizens Advice and speaking to the SSEN Energy Adviser, the client had been extremely upset and anxious about this situation, as she felt the energy supplier had not been helpful when she explained she was struggling.

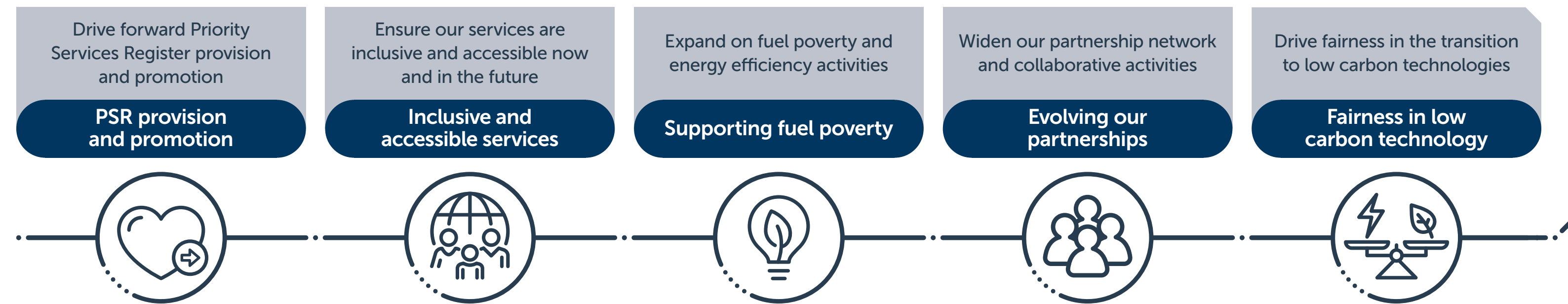
For more information on our partners please see page 17.



OUR APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are key to the successful delivery of our Vulnerability Strategy and ensuring we are providing support to those customers who need it most. Our embedded approach to consumer vulnerability is underpinned by our stakeholder-led consumer vulnerability promises and Partnership Framework.

OUR CONSUMER VULNERABILITY PROMISES



OUR PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK

Our partnership framework is based on the belief that partnerships can deliver better outcomes than if we acted alone and is underpinned by the following principles:



We continue to strengthen and enhance our existing partnerships whilst striving to forge new ones, sharing best practice and knowledge, and identifying fresh innovative ways to support those who need it most.

Using data provided by Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) along with our own customer information, we conduct analysis to identify where we need to focus partnership support. Using metrics such as Social Return on Investment (SROI) and PSR reach, we work with our existing partners to maximise support and onboard new partnerships to ensure we fund initiatives where they will have the

biggest impact on our customers, in the communities where the need is greatest. Our ambition is to deliver £23m in consumer benefits as a direct result of the targeted investments we will make.

In Autumn 2023, we reviewed the impact of our existing partnerships to ensure they were providing the support needed to customers. Using SROI, alongside the number of households supported, we determined which partnerships we would continue into 2024-25. Whilst this meant would not continue with some partners, we were able to agree more funding for existing partners under our new 2 year partnership model.

MEDIGOLD WEBINARS

Acknowledging the impact of the Cost-of-Living Crisis, we have ensured that free Medigold Webinars continue to be made available to our partner organisations and their colleagues.

A series of mental health webinars led by experts from Medigold Health have been delivered to our partner organisations who support vulnerable individuals, in our license areas, on our behalf. Popular themes for Webinar topics were identified by invitees, which included:

- Life Balance
- Managing Fatigue
- Optimising Sleep
- Nutrition and Healthy Eating

WARM SPACES SLOUGH

For a second year running we have sponsored Warm Spaces Slough in collaboration with Slough Borough Council, Slough Council for Voluntary Services, and community groups, charities and organisations across the Borough.

In addition to contributing to the running costs of these valuable hubs which provide people with warm, welcoming, and safe places to socialise, we have also provided free starter packs of tea, coffee, sugar and biscuits to all groups that have signed up to Warm Spaces Slough.



OUR PARTNERS

CITIZENS ADVICE SCOTLAND (CAS)

Programme Name: SSEN Energy Advice Project
Number of households helped: 428
Client Financial Gain: £273,669

Spotlighting:

- 5 specialist SSEN Energy Advisers based in local Citizens Advice Bureaus across the North of Scotland helped 428 households.
- The most common issues addressed as part of the holistic service were energy-related, however topics such as benefits and financial advice were accessed, reflecting the multifaceted nature of fuel poverty.

SROI: £2.54



"In the SSEN Project in rural Stirlingshire, we work with some of the most vulnerable clients in the community, such as those with disabilities and long-term health conditions, the digitally and socially excluded and those on low incomes. The information, advice and support provided can range from immediate crisis support, income maximisation, through to grant funding applications and benefit signposting, billing inquiries and complaints against energy providers to support those in fuel poverty. Central to this is providing clients with the knowledge needed to empower themselves. We work with a wide variety of local and national partners to ensure clients are provided with the best advice possible and made aware of their eligibility for the PSR."

Peter Higgins | SSEN Vulnerable Persons Fuel Poverty Outreach Worker (Stirling District Citizens' Advice Bureau Ltd)

ARUN & CHICHESTER CITIZENS ADVICE

Programme Name: Tackling Fuel Poverty Together (TFPT)
Number of households helped: 254

Spotlighting:

- A dedicated energy advice team have provided households with information including in-depth energy advice, PSR information, income maximization and benefits support, and CO Awareness advice.

Collaborating with SGN, UKPN, & Southern Water to provide Warm Space Hubs:

- A survey carried out by CA Arun & Chichester found that free, safe, social, and warm environments are some of the drivers for people to attend warm spaces. The same survey found that 54% of people would have been at home, with the heating turned off, if they were not able to attend a warm space.
- Through engagement with 122 unique venues which host warm spaces, CA and partners were able to raise awareness of the services available, empowering individuals to act, and connect with support.

SROI: £0.59



"We have been delighted by SSEN's genuine interest in our work and the outcomes it brings for clients, as well as our on-the-ground insight into the issues our clients are facing. This allows us to have confidence that this project not only changes the lives of the clients we help but also helps to shape a future where those in vulnerable situations are given the support they need by an organisation that cares."

Luca Badioli | Chief Executive Officer, Arun & Chichester Citizens Advice

MAGGIE'S

Programme Name: Cost of Staying Alive
Number of households helped: 1,851
Client Financial Gain: £2,908,029

Spotlighting: Maggie's professional advisors helped 1,851 households across Aberdeen, Dundee, Southampton, and Oxford with energy efficiency and income maximisation support. Striving to alleviate the additional financial pressures felt by those living with cancer – which have been exacerbated by the Cost-of-Living Crisis – our support has included advice and signposting around benefits, maximising income, grants and household bills. 101 people with cancer have been signed up to the PSR.

SROI: £3.38

NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION

Programme Name: Empowered by Energy
Number of households helped: 63

Spotlighting: Working with partner agencies, NEA's 'Empowered by Energy' provides interactive energy awareness workshops, delivered via three sessions in small group settings. Covering a range of basic energy awareness topics, the programme aims to empower refugees to understand the UK's energy systems and save money, thereby developing the knowledge needed to take control of their energy use, ultimately supporting communities in achieving warm and safe homes for their families.

SROI: £0.88

CITIZENS ADVICE HAMPSHIRE

Programme Name: Home and Well
Number of households helped: 955
Client Financial Gain: £755,247

Spotlighting:

- With over 900 households assisted with debt advice and energy related tools including the Winter Fuel Payment, 80% of clients have said they now feel more able to cope at home.
- Building upon the collaborative momentum, Home & Well was represented at the Hampshire and IOW Social Prescribing Celebration Events in Winchester in March 2024. Discussions are taking place to get all Home & Well Advisors present in hospitals and meetings are ongoing with Discharge Teams to support on site.

SROI: £3.26

CSE – CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

Programme Name: Cosier Homes Energy Advice Line and Enabling Works Fund
Number of households helped: 688 through Cosier Homes Energy Advice Line and 36 through Enabling Works Fund
Client Financial Gain: £315,875 via Advice Service and a further £364,114 lifetime savings after Enabling Works Fund

Spotlighting:

- Fuel vouchers or grants including the Household Support Grant have proven to be the highest combined financial impact for energy advice, amounting to £158,392.
- The implementation of CSE's 'Warm and Safe Wiltshire' advice line has introduced a new service to the area, and has proven to be valuable, with 77% of clients supported living in the Wiltshire and Swindon.

SROI: £0.62



"Our Cosier Homes Advice Service provides substantial, in-depth and tailored energy advice within SSEN's southern region. It's enabled us to increase the reach of vulnerable households we support, particularly in areas with limited existing energy advice services. Our support includes heating control advice, energy supplier issues, fuel vouchers, and insulation referrals, saving households an average of £190 a year. In addition, thanks to SSEN, our Enabling Works Fund supports households to overcome barriers to installing energy efficiency measures in their home, through covering the cost of associated works, such as loft clearance."

Cora Paine | Senior Project Manager, Centre for Sustainable Energy

KIDNEY CARE UK

Programme Name: Cost of Staying Alive
Number of households helped: 221
Client Financial Gain: £88,965.16

Spotlighting: Kidney Care UK's patient services team and advocacy officers (PS&AOs) have been supporting kidney patients throughout the UK with income maximisation, welfare claims and debt advice. Advice given to those living with kidney disease includes practical, emotional, and financial support, and the addition of Personal Resilience Plans (see pages 22-23) has supplemented efforts to ensure kidney patients feel confident in managing home dialysis during a power cut.

SROI: £3.75

YES ENERGY SOLUTIONS

Programme Name: Energy Advice Service
Number of households helped: 256
Client Financial Gain: £739,088.78

Spotlighting: The Energy Advice Service aims to alleviate fuel poverty through the provision of a holistic, wrap-around energy advice service. A two-tier approach is used, which begins with an initial assessment of the customer's needs and the provision of general energy efficiency advice and energy-saving tips. In addition, an energy saving pack is provided, including handy items such as window insulation, thermometer, and a meter reading torch and magnifier. In-depth support is then offered, which is tailored to the householder's individual circumstances, energy use and specific property characteristics.

SROI: £2.40

"YES is delighted to be working with SSEN to deliver a holistic, wrap-around advice service for customers across its operating regions who are struggling to afford to heat their homes. At YES, our tailored support programme helps householders to reduce their energy use, boost their household income, understand the benefits of low carbon technologies and crucially, assess their eligibility for free energy efficiency schemes to permanently improve the warmth and comfort of their homes. Overall our partnership is helping customers to save between £400 and £600 every year from their energy bills, delivering live-changing impacts for people's financial security as well as their wider health and wellbeing."

Alex Wilkes | Commercial Director, YES Energy Solutions

ACTION HAMPSHIRE

Programme Name: Warmth Matters
Number of households helped: 110

Spotlighting: Action Hampshire have been working with Open Sight, a charity supporting people who are blind or are visually impaired. With groups operating across the county, Action Hampshire has facilitated meaningful conversations on income maximisation and energy saving advice, tailored to the individual circumstances of the members of Open Sight Working Age Groups.

"The group really enjoyed the Warmth Matters session and took away some useful tips that they were not aware of, including the talking smart meters."

Open Sight Leader Service User

FOOTPRINT TRUST

Programme Name: Energy Crisis Action Plan
Number of households helped: 800

Spotlighting:

- Footprint Trust have been tackling fuel poverty and reducing home energy and water use by providing tailored guidance via a team of qualified Energy Guides. Each household received a personalised Energy Action Plan.
- Working with partner agencies and targeting outreach to areas which have lower income families, holistic support has been provided to more vulnerable homes, leading to identified annual energy savings of over £750,000.



"The need for fuel poverty help has never been greater as the cost of living crisis bites. With funds from SSEN through our Energy Crisis Action Plan project, the Footprint Trust have been able to help over 1000 people on the Isle of Wight reduce their energy bills and stay warm and well in their homes. Our expert energy team work face to face with the most vulnerable people at outreach events such as Foodbank and Community Pantries."

Laura Stichbury | Project Lead, Footprint Trust



TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Our commitment to our customers: Train 30 employees to the City & Guilds energy efficiency qualification and introduce 200 Vulnerability Champions across the business from the start of ED2.

Raising the profile of vulnerability internally has been an area of focus in 2023-2024.

The implementation and uptake of the training programme 'Vulnerability Champions (renamed as 'Vulnerability Allies' following consultation with our Inclusive Service Panel) highlights the momentum to bring vulnerability to centre stage. We've also committed to train 30 of our customer-facing colleagues to a level 3 City and Guilds in Energy Awareness.

FIELD TOOLKIT

This year we have piloted a Field Toolkit which is designed to be used by engineers, arborists and line workers, which provides key information on Priority Services.

This has been formatted in a style operational staff are accustomed with, and includes:

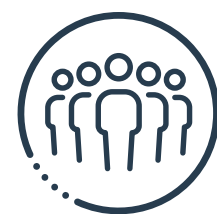
- Guidance on available support for customers based on the most common requests.
- Information on how to register for Priority Services by QR code or by phone.
- Signposting to resources, including assistance for those customers who speak English as a second language, are hearing-impaired, or require a British Sign Language translator.
- Information on requests for translation of customer leaflets, letters, and alternative formats like large print and Braille.
- Signposting to Power Track and the Resilience Portal.

If successful, this will be rolled out across all our regions.

VULNERABILITY ALLIES

Raise the profile of Consumer Vulnerability across SSEN, promote initiatives, and help us steer the right track through this price control, so our behaviour and actions are accessible and considerate of all our customer's needs.

Through training workshops and call-listening opportunities, staff will develop their understanding of the scope of vulnerability and the ways in which we provide extra help to customers. They will be the Consumer Vulnerability contact within their business area, signposting others to relevant resources and training materials.



42 members of staff (against a target of 20) signed up to become Vulnerability Allies



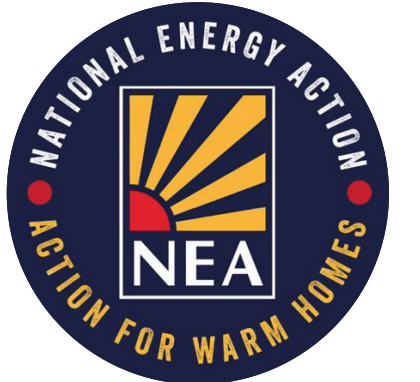
"I am hoping being an Ally will make me challenge our work practices, ensuring that we don't inadvertently hinder other teams seeking assistance in supporting vulnerable customers. Additionally, I hope it will facilitate to align our own priorities with the customer service directorate fostering a more cohesive approach toward our shared objectives."

Hopefully being more aware of vulnerable customers and the services that not just SSEN, but all companies should be providing will change my everyday perspective."

Rabia Ikram | Solicitor (SSEN)

LEVEL 3 CITY AND GUILDS IN ENERGY AWARENESS

This fantastic development opportunity provides a formal qualification which enables staff to deliver a great service to all our customers.



The course aims to provide delegates with the knowledge and understanding required to deliver energy advice to householders, including:

- The efficiency and appropriate use of heating, hot water appliances, systems and the functions of the controls.
- Domestic fuel cost data using the domestic heat cost (Sutherland) tables.
- How to record gas and electricity consumption and calculate costs.
- Payment options for gas and electricity.
- Insulation methods for improving the energy efficiency of a range of building types.
- Government assistance to help householders improve the energy efficiency of their homes.
- Condensation dampness, preventative measures and remedial actions.

Further information on the qualification can be found at: [Energy Awareness 6281-01 \(Level 3\) – National Energy Action \(NEA\)](#).



"Working within customer services it's really important for me personally that I understand how I can help customers fully, so taking this level of training on energy efficiency will give me skills and confidence to support vulnerable customers. Many of our customers are living in fuel poverty and cold or damp homes or are worried about this happening to them. This course will help me give qualified advice to those that really need our help, over the phone without having to refer them to a partner. It makes me really proud."

Jessica Manns | General Enquiries Advisor (SSEN)



PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SUPPORT PACKS



Our commitment to our customers: By 2028, deliver 5,000 energy efficiency packs to fuel-poor households, and 5,000 power cut resilience packs to PSR customers, tailored to their needs.

We have committed to start the rollout of our social and support packs in 2025/2026. This ensures we are not only providing the right items for customers needs, but that the items we provide are as sustainable as possible. Furthermore, this aids the transition to net zero for vulnerable communities and people.


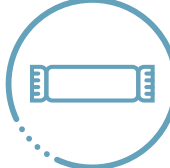

We have engaged with suppliers to look at content options for both packs, removing any possible single-use items and minimising the amount of single-use plastics.

Items in the packs may include:

POWER CUT PACKS

-  Portable mobile charging banks
-  Rechargeable torches
-  Warmth items including blankets

ENERGY EFFICIENCY PACKS

-  Radiator heat deflectors
-  Draft Excluders
-  LED light bulbs

Following the engagement with suppliers to shortlist the right products, we examined the options for delivery, factoring in packaging size, customer experience, sustainability and cost, to ensure we can get these into customers hands and homes.

Energy efficiency packs – After an in-depth conversation about their home and energy use, our partner YES Energy Solutions currently provide an energy efficiency pack by post to referred customers. We will be working with YES Energy Solutions to enhance their current energy efficiency packs. This work will start in 2025/26 and will mean we are adding more value to a targeted group of customers who want to make a difference to their energy consumption and efficiency.

Power cut packs – our network of regional Customer & Community Advisors are in an ideal position to have face-to-face conversations with our customers who are impacted by a power cut, and also work within community groups that support some of our more hard-to-reach customers. This network will be empowered to distribute the power outage packs to those PSR customers affected by power cuts, but just as importantly will have the opportunity to talk to those customers and ensure they are safe and prepared at home. This work will also start in 2025/26.



“We’re developing thorough plans to ensure we have the right suppliers and distribution network in place, guaranteeing us a sustainable and enduring solution which aligns with our commitment to net zero and supporting our customers living in vulnerable circumstances.”

Olivia Worthington | Vulnerability Strategy and Welfare Implementation Manager



SHAREHOLDER FUND

Our commitment to our customers: Introduce a shareholder-financed £500,000 annual 'Powering Communities to Net Zero' fund to support LCT accessibility initiatives for those in vulnerable situations, and community-led environmental and resilience schemes.

Following the success of our Resilient Communities Fund, we have widened the scope of the fund to include community initiatives focusing on Low Carbon Technologies (LCT).

Using the feedback gathered during the creation of our business plan, we have created a scope for the fund, which will be launched in July 2024. An online consultation will also be held ahead of the fund going live.

The outcomes of this consultation will be ratified by our Inclusive Service Panel, DSO Advisory Board, and Power Communities to Net Zero Group before going live in the summer.

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES FUND

Running since 2015, our Resilient Communities Fund has provided around £5 million to over 700 not-for-profit community groups and charities.

In 2023, we ran the current iteration of the Resilient Communities Fund for the final time ahead of launching the Powering Communities to Net Zero Fund.

We awarded over £400,000 to 55 schemes across our two licence areas:



Successful applicants included:

KINTAIL MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

Kintail Mountain Rescue in the Highlands received £10,893 in funding to outfit an off-road incident control ambulance vehicle.

ELGIN COMMUNITY RESILIENCE GROUP

The Elgin Community Resilience Group in Moray received £7,705 to provide a trailer and equipment to enable them to provide up-to-date information to their communities in an emergency.

FOVANT PARISH COUNCIL

The Fovant Emergency Contact Hub in Wiltshire received £10,000 in funding to purchase and install a generator to help power the hub for the village's 700 residents. The installation of the generator means the hub can be up and running at short notice to provide a central and safe space for residents.



"It's heartening to see so many groups awarded in this most recent and last round of SSEN's Resilient Communities Fund. Their successful applications have secured vital funding for their local communities and the vulnerable residents within them."

No matter how large or small the award, each and every one of these groups has carefully looked at what will benefit their communities most.

I'm delighted to see the variety, scope and individuality of their awards, and how SSEN is helping bring those projects to life; empowering communities and supporting them to become more resilient now and for many years to come."

Eliane Algaard | Director of Customer Operations SEPD



The Fovant Emergency Contact Hub in Wiltshire



CUSTOMER VULNERABILITY PROPOSITION

Our commitment to our customers: Proactively provide PSR customers with Personal Resilience Plans (communicated to customers as 'Your Power Cut Plan') containing specific advice tailored to a customer's individual needs, helping them know what to do during a power cut.

TO DELIVER ON CUSTOMER NEEDS, THE CUSTOMER VULNERABILITY PROPOSITION WAS CREATED WHICH INVOLVES:

1. Provision and instalment of 20,000 battery packs to our medically dependent customers (PSR1+) during ED2 price control.
2. Provision of 'Your Power Cut Plan' to our PSR customers, which we have begun. This is tailored to customer circumstances and provides advice and guidance on how to prepare and stay safe during a power cut.

CUSTOMER BENEFITS FROM BOTH INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- Access to tailored plans provides peace of mind to customers navigating vulnerable situations and carers in the network.
- Improvement of personal resilience of customers in the event of a power cut by providing advice that is tailored to their needs and has been robustly reviewed by both internal and external experts.
- Cost-saving benefits for customers who may require the battery.
- Provision of battery back-ups will minimise the period without power for medically dependent customers.

HERE'S HOW OUR CUSTOMERS HAVE ASKED US TO DELIVER THEIR NEEDS:

- Provide additional information, personalised to customers' situation.
- Provide additional support to customers with the most significant needs, where a continuous supply of electricity is vital.
- Offer practical and proactive measures to help customers be more resilient.

PROGRESS MADE ON BOTH INITIATIVES THIS YEAR



1. BATTERY PACKS

To ensure fair allocation of batteries we work with our Technology Data and Delivery (TDND) team to devise customer eligibility criteria. It contains data sets from Energy Saving Trust and our own data (such as fault history) to inform who may benefit from a battery pack.

Whilst we work with experts to ensure the batteries are fit for purpose, we identified 20 PSR1+ customers who were greatly impacted by recent storms or planned supply interruptions to be approached within the initial rollout of the battery. This will enable us to test resilience over up to a 6-month period, which – combined with key feedback and learning from customers – provides valuable learnings for creating future, wider battery solutions.



2. YOUR POWER CUT PLANS:

We have tested and embedded our Power Cut Plans process, working with experts to ensure advice is tailored to the needs of our customers. We started offering these plans to PSR1+ customers with medical equipment, informing them that battery backup for essential appliances would soon be available.

The initial rollout was done with a small customer number, with home kidney dialysis machines to allow us to provide more in-depth support during this initial testing. This will provide us with invaluable feedback on further improvements that can be made to our Power Cut Plans, as we progress with further rollouts throughout second year of ED2.



"It's to know what to do in case of an emergency with my medical equipment because I didn't have a clue before hand on what to do."

PSR Customer | SEPD

BATTERY PACKS REPLACING SMALL DIESEL GENERATORS

Our operational teams have worked with Future Networks to trial two different battery packs which can be used to help vulnerable customers during planned and unplanned power cuts.

Stornoway depot in the Western Isles trialed the batteries to assist customers facing different issues. The team were impressed with the agile and efficient nature of the packs for customers relying on electricity for medical needs. Subsequently, four battery packs have been purchased and placed strategically around the Western Isles, which has been met with positive feedback from customers and engineers.



"Trialling different batteries with our operational colleagues has been essential in helping us understand how customers behave when using the batteries at home. This includes being able to test the portability of the batteries and what appliances customers will need to charge. Overall, these trials have been received positively by our customers."

Emma Merritt | Customer Vulnerability and Community Lead



CUSTOMER VULNERABILITY PROPOSITION CONTINUED

As we deliver on both initiatives within the Customer Vulnerability Proposition, we ensure robust representation and involvement from our customers, internal stakeholders and external partners.

CUSTOMERS



We engage with external charity partners who advocate for their customers and provide invaluable feedback.



Key decisions are made with the involvement of colleagues who represent our customers' best interests.



The process and approach to the Power Cut Plans and battery rollout is shaped by both feedback from internal stakeholders and invaluable customer feedback.

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS



An internal project team was created comprising representatives from across the business, responsible for overseeing and supporting delivery of the CVP batteries.



Direction given by the team allows the CVP project to move into business as usual (BAU) activities, following ED2.



By establishing robust project governance – including the creation of the Personal Resilience Plan CVP project board – progress is monitored, and key decisions are made in support of the project team to deliver on our ED2 commitments.



"It is a real privilege to be working with amazing colleagues on a project which has such a direct and positive impact on our customers wellbeing. I am really excited about what the upcoming months have in store for this project and can't wait to tell you more about it in our next report!"

Angelika Gorczynska
Customer Vulnerability Manager (SSEN)



"Being part of the project team was something I was passionate about. My team and I support customers every day, so we wanted to have our voice and our customers voice represented in the project to drive forward the best deliverables for our vulnerable customers."

Louise Jones
Social Obligation Manager (SSEN)

EXTERNAL PARTNERS



The expertise of SSEN Partner Kidney Care UK has been instrumental in gaining customer insight to ensure that appropriate and valuable advice is included within our Power Cut Plans. We will continue to work with our partners, including Maggie's, as we create further Power Cut Plans advice tailored to the specific needs of our customers.



Power Cut Plans were shared with our Inclusion Service Panel (ISP) (see page 28) where valuable insight was shared from representatives from BAE Systems, MCIPD, Hindy Council, Alzheimer Scotland and PAMIS.



We have worked with SIA Partners to help inform our Social Return of Investment (SROI) for the delivery of the project.



"We are enormously grateful to SSEN, in particular Susan Duncan, for their commitment and understanding of the challenges facing kidney patients in their distribution network."

Working in partnership with SSEN has enabled Kidney Care UK (KCUK) to ensure that more vulnerable patients in our target areas across Scotland and the South are aware of the support available and can access it immediately. This helps to keep them warm in their homes by raising awareness of the Priority Services Register (PSR), energy efficiency activities and taking action to support fuel poverty. We are excited to have worked with SSEN on their launch of Power Cut Plans and the difference it will make to PSR customers advising them what to do during power cuts."

Laurie Cuthbert
Director of Fundraising,
Marketing & Communications, KCUK



SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

PREPARING FOR WINTER

Resilience is a core priority of our customers, Communities and SSEN. Each year, we test our processes to ensure they are fit for purpose, this can include participating in exercises with third parties.

Working with our Resilience Partners ensures we can respond quickly and safely to emergency Situations and provide our customers with the support we need.

In August 2023, we carried out two desk-top exercises (Winter Preparedness Walkthroughs) to test our storm plans to ensure we they remained fit for purpose coming into the winter months. The two exercises, one covering SHEPD and one covering SEPD, were attended by representatives from across the business including operational and office based colleagues who support customers during storms as well as those who work with resilience groups in emergency events. These exercises enabled our teams to review possible gaps in processes and implement changes ahead of the winter period. Information on changes implemented following these exercises can be found on page 27.

Following the storms across winter 2023-24, a series of de-briefs and lessons learned were run to identify further improvements which were implemented.

WORKING WITH LOCAL RESILIENCE PARTNERS

Working with Resilience Partners and Forums throughout the summer, we ensured that our plans were ready and tested ahead of the winter period.

This included taking part in desktop exercises focusing on the potential impact of different weather events on our networks including high wind, flooding, extreme heat and solar storms.

In October 2023, we took part in our biggest flooding exercise to date which included several Local Resilience Forums across the south of England. The exercise was a in a LIVEEX format where partners we co-located at two locations (Eastleigh & the Isle Of Wight).

A number of scenarios were then introduced during the day to test partners preparedness and understand how the LRF responded in relation to the flooding plan.

Given the flooding we then responded to (including coastal flooding) this was a very worthwhile exercise which we were immediately able to put into practice.



“SSEN are a key partner of Aberdeenshire Council and have supported the development of our Community Resilience Framework over the last three years. The Framework seeks to place increased emphasis, support and training to allow the development of Individual, Household, Family and Community Resilience through the adoption of simple practical steps that we can all take. During responses to storms and other live incidents SSEN are a supportive partner and actively share information relating to vulnerable people in our communities, which assists us in the targeting of help and support to them.”

After each event SSEN have where appropriate refined processes to better align with Local Authorities which has been very helpful. They support the development of policy in this area and are a member of the Grampian Local Resilience Partnership Subgroup that is implementing a Persons at Risk Distribution (PARD) system across our area. They are a key partner in this area and their participation is welcome and valued.”

Neil Cameron | Emergency Planning Officer, Aberdeenshire Council

NATIONAL POWER OUTAGES

Following the focus on potential rota load disconnections in Winter 2022-23, we increased our engagement with resilience partners on throughout Spring and Summer 2023. Taking part in multi-agency weather related and national power outage exercises, allowed us to test our response plans whilst support our resilience partners in creating and updating their processes.



“With increasing severe weather events and ever evolving incidents over the last few years, we, as Wiltshire and Swindon Prepared, have come to appreciate the importance of a much-enhanced relationship with utility partners. Together with SSEN, we have worked on multi-agency exercises and community events to emphasise the need for stronger resilience, whilst encouraging sign-ups to the Priority Service Register.

In addition to this, we have worked collaboratively in incidents around how we can better share information and high-level issues to ensure a more complete and effective response. Wiltshire and Swindon Prepared have taken a deep dive in National Power Outage planning and SSEN have been a key partner in this by proactively taking part in all elements, looking to further enhance our local planning by involving us in all key discussions.”

Camella Town | National Power Outage Project Officer, Wiltshire & Swindon Prepared (LRF)

RESILIENCE PARTNER MAPPING PORTAL

In November 2023, we launched our Resilience Partner Mapping Portal, designed to provide Resilience Partners with insight into what would happen in the event of emergency power cuts. Developed with insight from our Resilience Partners, the tool allows users to:

- View live faults
- Create Rota Load Disconnection Scenarios
- View rota load disconnection blocks
- Upload and share content between SSEN and Resilience Partners, including critical sites and locations of welfare facilities

A further rollout with enhanced features is planned for winter 2024.

WINTER CAMPAIGN

Our Winter Campaign, 'Powering on together this winter', ran between the 23rd of October 2023 until w/c 26 February 2024. Through an integrated channel mix we promoted the single emergency number, 105, the Priority Services Register, and:

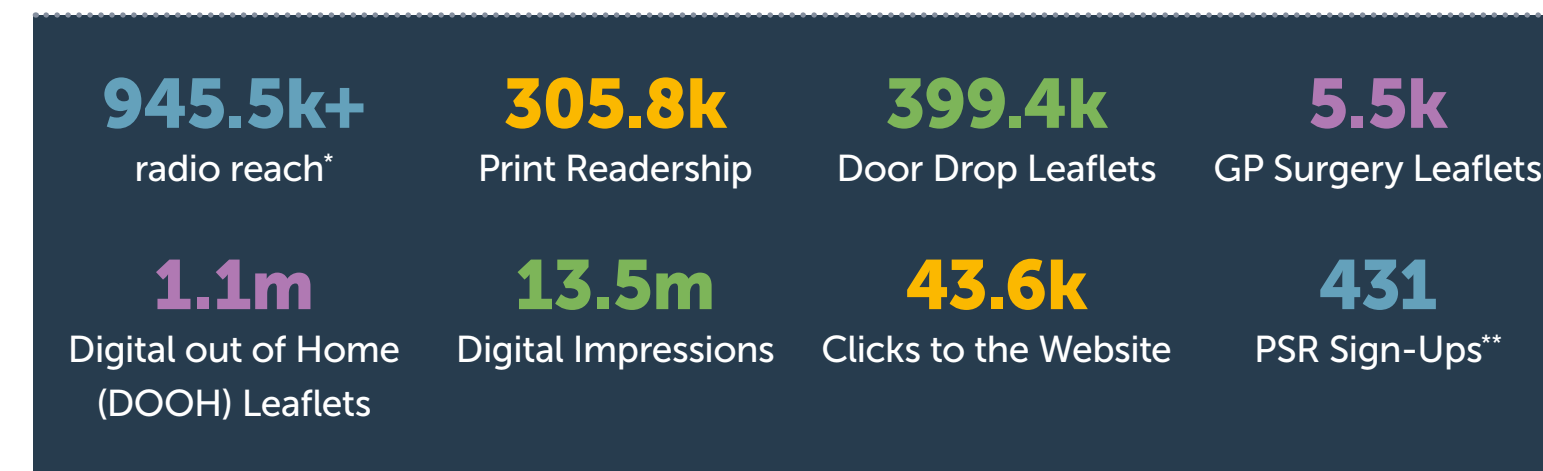
- Highlighted the PowerTrack app which supports resilience and helps manage contact centre volumes during a weather event.
- Provided information on Yes Energy Referrals and smarterenergygb.org.uk through targeted door drop, and trialled provision of GP surgery leaflets, to prime PSR Gap locations using the Customer Mapping Tool. This resulted in the distribution of 400 leaflets in the North, and 5,050 leaflets in the South.



AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH

Winter campaign imagery reflected the diverse make-up of customers we serve across both North and South regions, as well as PSR vulnerabilities. Ethnic Online Network ran campaigns across a range of relevant websites, to reach speakers of Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, Hindi and Polish.

SUMMARY OF PAID MEDIA RESULTS:



* Does not include SIBC, Isles FM, Oban FM, Argyll FM, Radio Skye, Asian Star, RNIB Connect Radio.

** Attributed to the campaign through Meta advertising.

Digital activity: Online promotion included use of Invibes (3d Cube Advertising), YouTube (6 second bumper ad), and Facebook and Instagram (single ads and carousel ads).

- 13,115,376 impressions and 43,660 clicks to the website.
- On Meta, we tracked 431 PSR sign ups following exposure to our ads (245 in the North and 186 in the South).
- Responses to ads were most prevalent with the over 60's audience.
- GA4 results show clicks on the Power Track banner on the website jumped from 1,836 (between 15th June – 22nd October) to 54,404 whilst the winter campaign was live (an increase of 2,863%)

Reactive Google PPC (Pay Per Click) activity was added at the end of January: this delivered a particularly high CTR of 44.6% versus a benchmark of 4%. This proved to be a cost-effective way to drive traffic to the website, with an average Cost Per Click of £0.28.

Radio: Radio ads were played across a range of local radio stations, with a combined reach of 945.5k+.

Digital out-of-home advertising: Out-of-home advertising, including digital display screens, had a reach of 914,308 in South England and 197,615 in North Scotland.

Press and Leaflet Door Drops: Ads were included in a range of local newspapers and print, including 'Enable Magazine' (Nov/Dec edition). Print activity totalled a combined readership of 305.6k across both licence areas.

Leaflet Door Drops: Extra information on the PSR and how to prepare for a power cut was provided in the door drop. A total of 399,411 leaflets were dropped at customers' doors.

GP Surgeries: Trialling leaflets in GP surgeries in both license areas and testing reactive media for extreme weather warnings allowed targeting by geographic postcode and the use of digital out of home media for this channel.

AWARENESS

YouGov online panel: From July and October 2023 and 29 – 30 January 2024.

Sample: 1,500 adults aged 60+ in Southern postcodes (260 adults aged 60+ in Scottish postcodes).

Awareness of PSR: From 51% to 60% in northern Scotland and in southern England from 33% to 38% post campaign. This is an increase on the previous period in both areas.

Awareness of Power Track: For reporting power cuts or damage to power lines has increased to 36% in North Scotland, and 16% in Southern England. This suggests there is more work to do in the south to raise crucial awareness.

Awareness of 105 helpline: The survey indicates that 47% of respondents in Northern Scotland are now aware of the 105 helpline, compared to just 21% in Southern England.

STORM RESPONSE

In a year that has witnessed challenging weather conditions, our 24-hour helpline has been vital for all customers, including those navigating challenging circumstances.

Our teams work throughout the year to help support customers, ensuring they are ready for any weather events which can impact our network.

Between August 23 – March 24, we experienced 9 storms during which we sent out 1,133,782 'pre-warn' messages to PSR customers. We received 427 PSR escalations, of which 57 required home visits and 370 were resolved by our customer contact centre.

- Ensuring we additional operational resource available across the areas expected to be impacted
- Increasing the number of telephony advisors
- Providing updates to Local Resilience Partners and Forums
- Issuing warn and inform messages to our Priority Service Customers to help them prepare
- Setting up welfare provisions, including catering vehicles, if needed.

MEDICAL & EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM HIGHLAND (MERT)

MERT Highland provided medical support across all three SHEPD regions during the winter storms. By carrying out welfare checks/door-knocks, MERT's consistent and reliable volunteers were able to help our customers living in rural communities.

"As a voluntary organisation, Medical & Emergency Response Team (MERT) was set up to provide support to communities when they are at their most vulnerable. MERT has worked with SSEN across northern Scotland providing welfare checks for customers on the Priority Services Register. Whilst some checks are routine, others require our volunteers to deliver welfare provision including hot food arranged by SSEN, or additional support from other agencies. The trust developed between our organisations allows prompt delivery of solutions for customers facing extreme events. Our efficient partnership is based on the mutual aim to be there for communities when they need extra support."

"We enjoy a good relationship with SSEN and are proud of what we achieve together and the relationship we have built with them."

Alan Smith | MERT

In 2023-24, our network was impacted by:

Storm Antoni

5 August 2023

Storm Agnes

27-28 September 2023

Storm Babet

18-21 October 2023

Storm Ciaran

1-2 November 2023

Storm Gerritt

27-28 December 2023

Storm Henk

2 January 2024

Storms Isha and Jocelyn

21-24 January 2024

Storm Nelson

28 March 2024

STANDING UP FOR A STORM

Our Network Control Centres monitor for any adverse weather, providing alerts for any potential impact to our networks.

Once a weather report has been issued, colleagues across the business start preparing for the weather. This includes:

CASE STUDY

STORM BABET – BRECHIN

In October 2023, our SHEPD licence area was hit by Storm Babet when a red weather warning for rain was issued.

This severe weather posed considerable challenges, but by working closely with our resilience partners, we were able to provide support to some of our most vulnerable communities.

Brechin, in Angus, was one of the worst-hit communities with 150 properties remaining off supply after the storm, due to the extent of flooding in the area. In the weeks following the storm, we remained on site, providing hot food to those affected, speaking to residents and supporting our resilience partners.

Our Customer Relationship Manager, Mark Westwood, and Regional Engagement Officer, Ashton Cartney were on site in Brechin during the flooding and remained in the community after the floods subsided to provide in-person support. With many homes previously under 6 feet of water, the residents were returning to complete devastation. We offered to go back and forth to the welfare van to provide hot food and drinks, which brought some small comfort during a very difficult time.



"We met people whose homes had been flooded at the town's community hub. This became a place of refuge for all affected residents of Brechin, and it'll be used in the same way again if the community encounters any future weather events. Colleagues in our Contact Centre heard the stories of hardship, and in response they raised a fantastic amount of money to contribute to this centre, which our company has agreed to match."

Mark Westwood | Customer Relationship Manager

STORM BABET



37,000
supplies restored



450
network faults repairs



2,000
hot meals provided

IMPROVING OUR STORM RESPONSE

Each weather event impacting our network brings new challenges and new opportunities to learn from, and improve our processes.

Following Storm Arwen in 2021 and Storm Eunice in 2022, we made significant changes to our processes to ensure we were providing the right level of communication to our customers. In August 2023, we carried out two winter preparedness exercises to test our response ahead of the winter, updating our processes as needed. This approach continued following each storm, ensuring any lessons learned were implemented swiftly and safely.

These reviews included testing our welfare response to ever-changing scenarios, ensuring we were able to respond to customers needs throughout the duration of the storm.

From these walkthroughs, we identified three areas of improvement needed ahead of the winter period:

- Restructuring our welfare teams
- Engagement during emergency events
- Replacing our current food delivery service (e-vouchers)

RESTRUCTURING OUR STORM WELFARE TEAMS

In the summer of 2023, we set about restructuring our storm welfare teams and aligning processes to ensure customers in both licence areas receive the right level of support.

Holding workshops with regional Customer Relationship Managers and members of our Customer Contact Centre, we identified best practice and created a new process which was tested ahead of the winter period. This included separating PSR escalations from welfare deployment and setting up new internal communications processes to ensure any areas of concern were highlighted swiftly.

The improvements made include:

- Streamlined process for handling PSR escalation which enabled our teams to identify which customers required home visits.
- Training more people to support with welfare, including deploying welfare facilities, liaising with local resilience partners, and supporting operational teams with home visits to customers.
- Establishing a communication process for moving and setting up new welfare sites.
- Creation of a triage process for identifying welfare locations.
- Standardizing the use of our customer mapping tool during a storm.

ENGAGEMENT DURING EMERGENCY EVENTS

During the Winter Preparedness Walkthroughs ran in August 2023, we identified the need for additional support for our Customer Relationship Managers during storm events. During an emergency event, the Customer Relationship Managers are the point of contact for our Local Resilience Forums and Groups. In a storm, several groups may be stood up at once. To ensure we have sufficient support, we identified and trained colleagues across the business to be able to represent SSEN on these groups, providing key updates and asking for support if required.

E-VOUCHERS

We work with catering companies to provide mobile catering units to worst affected areas, but we knew we could do more to support customers, and not just during storms.

In previous years, we have used an online food delivery service to provide additional support to customers however, this provided limited coverage in some areas. Using customer insight we identified an alternative provider, E-Vouchers to provide this service.

By introducing E-Vouchers, we can help customers affected by a power cut for periods over 12 hours. In most cases, customers buy and claim back food and drink to the value of £30 per person, but some of our customers may not be able to afford to do this. For these customers, E-Vouchers are sent to them within minutes of their call and can be used at takeaways, restaurants, cafes, supermarkets, and smaller convenience stores in both our regions. E-Vouchers can be used across a wide range of venues, but for some of our remote and rural customers these stores don't exist. In these instances, E-Vouchers can be exchanged for cash in post offices and local PayPoints.





A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

Collaborating on our projects and activities to support customers in vulnerable situations extends beyond the work we do with our partners. To ensure we meet our commitments, we work with stakeholders, other Network Operators, vulnerability experts and our expert panels to deliver for our communities.

We have three specialised groups, consisting of experts in their fields, to provide guidance, challenge and insight to decisions and approaches. These panels are:

- Powering Customers to Net Zero Group
- DSO Advisory Board
- Inclusive Service Panel

INCLUSIVE SERVICE PANEL

Established in 2017, our Inclusive Service Panel is now in its seventh year. Tasked with questioning and scrutinising our service and approach, each member brings their lived experience and the perspective of the communities in which they work to the discussions. In January 2024, Carolyn Delehanty took over the role of independent Chair of the Panel and immediately began implementing changes to enhance its impact.



Carolyn Delehanty

Keen to engage with the Panel, business leaders tasked with overseeing pivotal aspects of our vulnerability strategy provided progress updates to them in February 2024. This exchange fostered a dynamic environment where the Panel's insightful inquiries served as catalysts for constructive dialogue and innovation. Grateful for the rigorous scrutiny, the leaders departed with a wealth of new perspectives and ideas, amplifying the impact of their initiatives through the invaluable challenges posed by the Panel.

Moving forward, alongside monitoring the progress of our Consumer Vulnerability Strategy, the Panel will support SSEN in expanding its collaborative efforts as part of its ongoing commitment to fostering collaboration and driving collective progress. They will look for opportunities to proactively share successful practices and insights with relevant stakeholders. This proactive sharing approach will not only enrich our collective knowledge but will cultivate a culture of transparency, cooperation, and mutual support. This ultimately advances our shared objectives of protecting our vulnerable consumers.

COLLABORATION WITH ELECTRICITY NORTH WEST

In 2022, we set up a collaboration agreement with Electricity North West (ENW) to share best practice and support in customer improvements, including supporting customers in vulnerable situations. In February 2024, ENW visited our customer contact centre in Perth to share best practice focusing on two topics – complaint resolution, and fuel poverty and LCT programmes.

During this session we shared how we manage complaints which have been raised during field operations, including ensuring how complaints raised to, and resolved by, our front-line operational teams are logged.

Electricity North West shared their approach to providing support to customers in fuel poverty and those looking to uptake LCTs who are at risk of being left behind in the transition to net zero. Taking the learning from this session we have started to review our programmes and have identified the following areas of improvements:

- **Fuel Poverty Support** – Many customers who access our fuel and LCT support do not know who we are, or the part we play in providing the service. We are working with our partners to increase awareness.
- **Marketing** – To increase PSR sign ups, we need to change our marketing messages to our customers. In March, we started a market research project to better understand what messaging works for our customers.

A MEASURED APPROACH

When working with our partners at the start of ED2, we identified each had different ways of working, especially around reporting on the outcomes of the service they provide to our customers.

Whilst all partners provide a high level of service, we recognised not all provide the same service type, and so some differences in reporting are to be expected. We needed to assess the value our partners provided before deciding which partnerships to take forward into 2024-25, as well as reporting on their performance during 2023-24.

Working with SIA Partners, we undertook a review of the reporting requirements for ED2 and how partners currently report on the support they provide. Using the Social Return on Investment (SROI) metric, alongside metrics included in the Consumer Vulnerability Incentive, we were able to assess which partners were having the most positive impact on our customers.

During the review, SIA Partners modelled 8 programmes to ensure alignment and produce a benefits map which shows the likely outcome and benefit across ED2. Using this data, we decided which of our partners to take forward into 2024-25 and have set up 2-year partnership agreements with those partners. We also took the decision to end some partnerships in March 2024.

This approach was instrumental in steering the direction of new partnerships for 2024-2025.



SMART, FAIR, NOW

Our transition to net zero is underway and we are taking the lead in ensuring that customers and communities in vulnerable situations are not being left behind. In March 2023, we launched our distribution focused Just Transition Strategy “A Fair Energy Future” which set out our commitment to tackling existing inequalities in the move to decarbonisation.

VULNERABILITY FUTURE ENERGY SCENARIOS DELIVERED

In March 2024, we successfully delivered Vulnerability Future Energy Scenarios (VFES), an innovation project which accurately predicts where communities are less resilient, less affluent, and more seriously affected by prolonged or frequent power cuts.

VFES provides data and analysis to help us identify customers in vulnerable situations, forecast how their needs may change, and where additional network investment will be required should there be changes in LCT grants or support. This allows for fairer strategic investment decision-making.

In the successful delivery of this project, we became the first Distribution Network Operator to enshrine care for customers in vulnerable situations in future network planning.



“In this groundbreaking project, we’ve used predictions, data, and expert analysis to learn so much more about how, where and when our customers might find themselves in more vulnerable situations.”

This level of understanding is already being put in place to plan our network investment strategies, not just in regions which will see a high uptake in low carbon technologies, but also communities where customers rely on energy more than most; and who may need more support with using low-carbon solutions.”

Simon O’Loughlin | Innovation Project Manager

EQUAL LCT IN PROGRESS

In January 2024, we launched a new innovation project focused on enabling access to Low Carbon Technologies (LCT) and energy efficiency for customers who would otherwise be left behind in the transition to net zero.

Equal LCT has mobilised a consortium of stakeholders (green finance, energy suppliers, consumer representatives) to identify communities and customers with the least support, and develop viable commercial models for LCT access.

We currently have two innovation projects in progress which aim to improve how we support customers to adopt and effectively use LCTs.

VULNERABILITY IDENTIFICATION VIA INFORMATIVE DATA (VIVID) IN PROGRESS

In April 2023, we launched Project VIVID to develop new techniques to use smart meter and public data sets to identify which consumers would most benefit from timely, relevant offers of practical and financial support from their local authority, reputable charities, and responsible energy companies.

Working with CGI, Quarriers and Aberdeen City Council, the project involves:

- Combining data from the energy industry, Local Authorities, Charities and Smart meters for the first time.
- Using data to gain insight on customer vulnerability at scale, testing the process from end to end, from data acquisition through to customer engagement and assistance.
- Developing new marketing and outreach activities for Priority Services Register (PSR) promotion and fuel poverty initiatives.
- Finding new ways to support ‘missing’ consumers who are likely to be left behind in the transition to net zero.
- Spotting trends in vulnerability more quickly and accurately allowing quicker targeted response.

The project progressed to the Alpha Stage of the Strategic Innovation Fund, with new partners including E.ON, Smart DCC and UK Power Networks. This stage was successfully delivered, proving that the VIVID process works.

We are now awaiting a funding decision for the Beta Stage which would allow us to start a wider rollout of VIVID, ultimately becoming a GB wide resource.

Our 2024 Smart, Fair, Now report can be found on our website: www.ssen.co.uk/dso.





A DATA DRIVEN APPROACH

VULNERABILITY VISUALISATION TOOL

Using customer mapping to visualise where we should be targeting support has been vital to our planning for customers where we should be focusing PSR promotion to increase awareness.

There are currently several systems for capturing and measuring vulnerability for an area, with most stakeholders or partners having a bespoke set-up. The Vulnerability Visualisation Project, led by Northern Gas Networks and supported by SSEN, Cadent, and Northern Powergrid, was set up in 2023 to build a single point of reference for all parties. Through this project we will be able to unlock knowledge held internally, assist other projects involved in improving and identifying vulnerable customers and areas, and ensure that stakeholders who work across geographic boundaries are able to take a more holistic view of their practices.

This project will focus on the following key areas:

- Increasing partnerships
- Integrating additional data types
- Using machine learning to aid bespoke predictive modelling
- Embedding the tool in businesses' everyday processes

Some users we given access to start using the tool in 2023-24, a full rollout is expected to start in 2024.

CUSTOMER INDEX

To help support the rollout of the Personal Resilience Plan commitment, we worked with data scientists to create an index which would help us prioritise which customers would be eligible for battery packs.

Whilst creating this tool, we identified other applications for its use. Using data from multiple sources, including the energy savings trust and our own fault data, we are able to identify customers who could be eligible for support to enable the uptake of LCTs. The first version of the tool was released in March 2024 and will be undergoing further development into 2024, ready for use alongside the battery rollout.

CUSTOMER PERSONAS

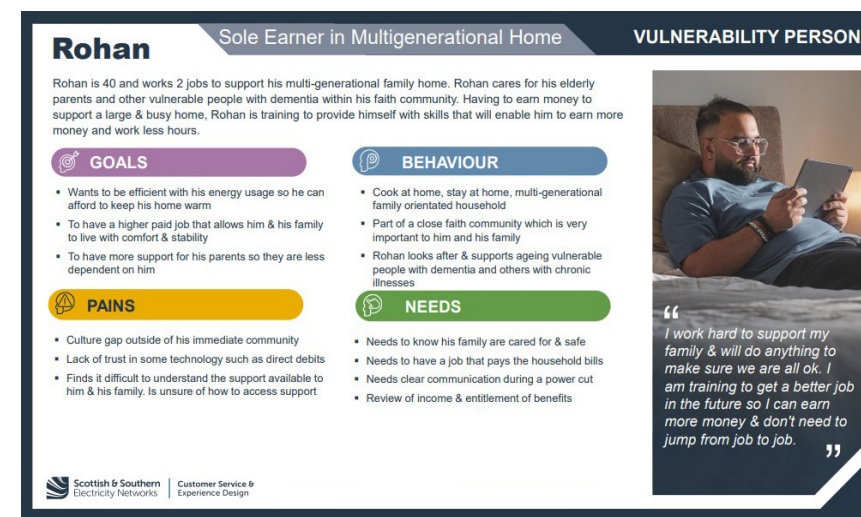
With the introduction of our Service Design Authority and our new approach to improving customer experience, we wanted to create a tool which can help our colleagues make decisions which benefit our customers.

Working with Experience Lab, a customer insight and service design agency, we created a suite of Customer Personas focusing on different customer needs in each customer journey. Personas which have been created specifically for customers in vulnerable situations can be used for any customer journey.

Each persona is comprised of 5 sections:

Introduction to the persona:

This provides an overview of the customer, their background and a summary of their situation. This can include details about their family or their employment as well as why they could be considered as being in a vulnerable situation, such as accessibility needs or financial concerns.



Goals: Customer goals cover their overall aims, not just relating to the services we provide.

Behaviour: Behaviours can include their homelife and areas of interest, including community work and hobbies.

Pains: What causes frustrations with customers? What concerns do they have? Customer pains from not having alternative sources of heat during a power cut to lack of trust with technology are included in our Customer Personas.

Needs: Each customer will have different, and sometimes, complex needs. The most common needs are included in our Customer Personas.

By including the above sections, we can build and review each customer journey to ensure we are providing a service that our customers need.

INTRODUCING OUR VULNERABILITY PERSONAS

Within our suite of Customer Personas, we have 5 vulnerability specific personas which can be used for with each customer journey. These personas are:

Tammy is 45 years-old and uses a wheelchair. Tammy claims disability benefits and relies on power & WiFi to communicate in a way that suits their needs and stay in contact with friends & family.

Jordan is 26 and works full time in a hybrid role (home/office). He has recently bought his own home in a suburban area with a constrained public transport network and plans to future proof his new home with small DIY projects around the house. Jordan has a close relationship with his relatives although they no longer live close to him.

Charlotte is 35 and her daughter has very complex communications and physical needs that require medical equipment and constant supply of power. She lives with her partner and Daughter and wants to feel her house is a safe place for her family.

Rohan is 40 and works 2 jobs to support his multi-generational family home. Rohan cares for his elderly parents and other vulnerable people with dementia within his faith community. Having to earn money to support a large & busy home, Rohan is training to provide himself with skills that will enable him to earn more money and work less hours.

Charles lives in a village with his wife who is also retired. Being on a budget, Charles and his wife enjoy cooking at home and keep their freezers full. They have stayed in the area for a long time and have a close relationship with their neighbours.

Whilst these personas do not cover all situations where a customer made be vulnerable, they were built using customer insight and reviewed by our Inclusive Service Panel.

Since their introduction in late 2023, they have been used to implement changed in our Planned Supply Interruptions process, help tailor our storm welfare approach and support PSR promotion.

As well as being used across the business and with our Inclusive Service Board, these personas have also been shared with our Powering Customers to Net Zero Group and DSO Advisory Board to aid with the decision making.



THE YEAR AHEAD

In 2024-25, we will be expanding on the work completed in 2023-24 to ensure we meet our ED2 Commitments and are providing a service which our customers need. We have included some highlights of our 2024-25 plan in our look ahead to next year.

QUARTER 1 (APRIL – JUNE 2024)

PSR Market Research:

- Continuing the market research commissioned In March 2024, implementing any lessons learned into our marketing and promotion of the PSR. This will include the winter campaign.

PSR Marketing Campaign:

- Trialling a new PSR marketing campaign, factoring in lessons learned from the PSR Market Research. This will include using social media influencers to promote the service.

Enhancing our Data:

- Working with CSE to enhance the data we hold on PSR gaps across our licence areas to help us better target PSR promotion.

QUARTER 2 (JULY – SEPTEMBER 2024)

Shareholder fund:

- Launch of Powering Communities to Net Zero Fund with applications to be assessed in quarter 3.

Personal Resilience Plan CVP:

- Initial batteries to be rolled out to 20 PSR 1+ customers recently impacted by faults or during the storms across winter 2023-24. Full suite of advice to be created with partners/experts.

Partnerships:

- One new partnership to be rolled out focusing on warm/safe spaces across our network areas.

Winter Preparedness:

- Testing of winter plans, making adjustments where needed.

QUARTER 3 (OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2024)

Strategy:

- Engagement on Consumer Vulnerability Strategy, refresh and publication.

Personal Resilience Plan CVP:

- Full battery and Power Cut Plan rollout to start.

Partnerships:

- One new partnership launched, focusing on carers.

Fuel Poverty:

- Review of partners performance so far to ensure the right support is in place for the winter.

QUARTER 4 (JANUARY – MARCH 2025)

Personal Resilience Plan CVP:

- Battery and Power Cut Plan rollout embedded in the business.

Personal and Social Support Packs:

- Scoping of personal and social support packs to be completed, ready for rollout in 2025-26.

Winter Preparedness:

- Ongoing review of performance over the winter period.



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Media enquiries should call SSE's Press Office:
+44 (0)345 0760 530



Investor enquiries should be emailed:
ir@sse.com

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