

Electricity users in vulnerable circumstances strategy

How Electricity North West will engage as a distributor of electricity to the North West and support people allowing them to access information and services to meet needs.

About Electricity North West

Electricity North West Limited is one of 14 electricity distribution network operators (DNOs) in Great Britain. We are responsible for maintaining and upgrading 56,000km of network and nearly 500 major substations across the region. We supply the electricity to the diverse communities in the North West of England which extends from Macclesfield all the way up to Carlisle.

We are regulated by the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) who provide DNOs with the license to operate and decide what's fair for us to charge our customers for each price control period.

Our current price control began in 2015 and runs to 2023. It's referred to as RIIO-ED1. In full, that stands for Revenue = Incentives + Innovation + Outputs, Electricity Distribution 1. Under this framework, the price we can charge our customers is fixed until the next price control, RIIO-ED2, which will run from 2023 until 2028.

Work is already underway to set the framework for RIIO-2 that applies to all energy network companies (i.e. gas and electricity distribution). The framework will determine what RIIO ED2, which begins on 1st April 2023, looks like.

The period of time which the RIIO-2 price control covers will see significant change in the way electricity is generated, consumed and stored, driving innovation across the whole energy system both now and into the future.

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1. Welcome

As part of our ongoing commitment to support our customers in the North West there is a clear recognition that circumstances, including the loss of electricity, can make anyone vulnerable. We are committed to supporting those who need our help. The priority services register is a vehicle for information that allows Electricity North West to provide support during an interruption of electricity supply and enables a network of trusted partners to aid customers in other aspects of their life by accessing a wide range of support. We recognise that we are in a good position to build on the support we already provide and add significant value by coordinating resources with even more strategic partners.

Welcome to our electricity users in vulnerable circumstances strategy which sets out the challenges that electricity users can face, our approach to supporting the North West region to address these challenges, and the principles and themes that guide our thinking and the development of our services and commitment.

Continually developing the services that support the 5.4 million electricity users across the North West and ensuring that they are included within the journey through the energy transition to a zero-carbon future is an essential part of our commitment. As part of this strategy it is vital that we remove barriers preventing customers from accessing the services and support available, not just from Electricity North West, but also the wider support network already in place for the region.

The rapid move towards net zero highlights individuals' increasing reliance on electricity. Changes may impact daily electricity usage and therefore drive a need to recognise and intervene with those users in need of support. This support must inform and protect them so that they know how to be ready for the changes, so as not to leave them behind.

Our developing strategy outlines our approach to engagement with stakeholders in helping us with ideas and the delivery of our plans. This consultation – based on significant engagement already undertaken – provides an overview of the information and steps we propose to take and the final outcomes that will be developed, with your feedback and engagement, to align our focus with the needs of the region we serve.



Stephanie Trubshaw, Customer Director

What is 'vulnerability' for Electricity North West?

Vulnerability can mean many things; our current definition in Electricity North West is:

‘

a customer or community which feels it may be left vulnerable by real or perceived barriers to the service Electricity North West and their trusted partners provide during a loss of electricity now or in the future.’

Within our organisation we have key drivers that shape our thinking including customers on our Priority Services Register (PSR); those who tell us they need a lot more support; circumstances that can make anyone vulnerable such as fuel poverty; bad weather, loss of electricity; and community needs affected by wider social impacts – such as we have seen through 2020 highlighted by the COVID pandemic.

Vulnerability can be both transient and permanent due to an individual's circumstances; the changing world of the electricity network; or economic and social developments of climate and education.

The disruption caused by loss of electricity can create concern or distress for anyone, but for someone who is already vulnerable due to other circumstances in their lives it can be overwhelming. We want to provide the right support to minimise these situations and build resilience in our communities in the short and long term.

The electricity service is provided to 5.4 million users across the North West, this service needs to be accessible, reliable and developed with the future in mind. At present 13% (250,000) of the homes in the North West are classified as fuel poor, which means that these households have higher costs to keep their homes warm and powered resulting in choices to be made impacting standards of living.

Many of the wider factors that create vulnerability are addressed by a range of organisations, and we believe that Electricity North West has a role to play in ensuring different organisations and sectors work together to simplify the access to support that will benefit end users and minimise the impact on their daily lives.

As a distribution network the development of our services and provision of electricity need to be sustainable for everyone and not leave people behind through lack of knowledge, lack of tailored support, lack of engagement or assumed knowledge.

A stakeholder-led approach

An important driver for us is to understand and respond to the needs of our customers and wider stakeholders. Working together is the core to our company purpose – engaging with our stakeholders and electricity users on vulnerability, research, collaboration, sharing best practice and insights to continually develop our understanding and proposition is the foundation to our success.

We have developed the strategy with stakeholders through robust and detailed ongoing engagement, working alongside our Strategic Consumer Vulnerability Panel to understand customers' needs and future plans to support the North West. There were five clear priorities that emerged that were common to the region, Electricity North West and Ofgem that we are proposing for RII0-ED2.

We have tested these priorities with wider groups including customers, employees, and our deliberative panel of 40 customers who have worked alongside us for six months to review all aspects of our business plan proposals.

We hope this document will help you understand our developing plans for the future to support electricity users in vulnerable circumstances. We appreciate you taking the time to participate in this consultation and value your opinion and any comments or feedback you may have.

2. Tell us what you think

This strategy is a work in progress. We have considered and incorporated the customer and stakeholder feedback we have received to date, but there are still areas where we need your input.

This strategy includes a series of questions, your responses to which will help inform our future approach. Please refer to the content in each relevant section before responding to the questions- we have repeated the questions throughout the document for ease. In addition to the questions listed below, we would welcome your feedback on any aspects of this document.

- Do you think the principles cover the correct areas?
- Are there any that are missing or should be removed?
- The strategy is titled 'Electricity Users' following feedback that Consumers is not a word engaging to the public and not all household members see themselves as customers of the company. Do you have preference or view on the terminology that should be used to be inclusive to all for this strategy?
- Within the measures are there any areas you support and prioritise over any others, and are there any you feel need removing?
- Is the understanding and focus on innovation and engagement tackling the challenge of not leaving anyone behind?
- Should we invest to support people more broadly, rather than just in response to power cuts, to prevent future vulnerabilities regarding the energy transition to net zero?
- What area if any are the pillars not capturing within their intent and purpose?
- If you could add or remove a pillar, what would it be and why?
- Is there a clear link to the benefits that Electricity North West can deliver to electricity users in fuel poverty and the impact of preventing anyone being left behind?
- Do you agree that focusing on provision of service to financially benefit people's lives, preventing an deterioration in their current situation and offsetting the cost of network development is a strategy Electricity North West should deliver?
- Does the community Intelligence approach of adapting a data led focus to incorporate behavioural and situational information create more inclusivity into the development of future campaigns and services from Electricity North West?
- Would your organisation agree to driving a single data share for the region?
- Should Electricity North West intervene proactively in hard to reach communities as a priority, to increase their electricity reliability?
- Do the measures in place represent a positive outcome against the challenges presented?
- What do you believe is the most important measure?

3. Executive summary

Electricity North West provide an electrical supply to 2.4 million properties across the North West region achieving a 99.9% reliability performance. The network is continually affected by weather, aging components and changing customer requirements necessitating a continual need for maintenance, development and improvement.

Within the footprint of Electricity North West there are currently 13% (250,000) households that are classified as living in fuel poverty, currently there are 2.2 million people who could be accessing support services available through the Electricity North West Priority Services Register (PSR). At this time 49.5% of this population are registered leaving a short fall of over 50% of electricity users who are not receiving the benefits of this services or support on offer.

The consultation document outlines the improvements Electricity North West are considering to deliver in RIIO-ED2 for electricity users in vulnerable circumstances.

Incorporated within document are the key challenges being faced and the measures of success proposed to be monitored through the period.

The strategy is built on a foundation of principles and 4 pillars providing direction and clarity on the areas Electricity North West will continue to develop for success. The principles were co-created with stakeholders from our Consumer Vulnerable Advisory Panel and are:

- Inclusion
- Accessibility
- Awareness
- Innovation
- Transience
- Feedback loops, learning through insight
- Education internally and externally
- Designing everything with vulnerability in mind
- Working together internally and externally

Strategy

‘Providing an inclusive and supportive service for all users of electricity in a rapidly changing world - recognising need and maximising reach of services provided through collaborative, innovative working with a community of trusted partners across our region.’

Incorporating the feedback, we have received to date, and to guarantee the strategy meets the needs of our stakeholders, customers, Ofgem and Electricity North West community, we have detailed four pillars to support the strategy:

Inclusive
innovation

Community
intelligence

Collaborative
network

Service to electricity
users

Continue to look for accessible ways that the electricity network can support consumers in vulnerable circumstances, developing engagement to ensure awareness of opportunities and ensure inclusion	Utilisation of demographics, segmentation and feedback supported though additional data services to recognise needs increasing understanding to continually improve for individual electricity users and the communities of the North West	Continue to work with trusted experts, experienced partners, building and developing the network to maximise reach and support delivered to ensure no one is left behind in the rapidly changing world	Build strong communications channels that are accessible and raise awareness to create relationships with the electricity users of the North West. Focus on delivering a reliable electricity supply to all to ensure that impact on those in vulnerable circumstances is minimised
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The Priority Services Register is database shared by all energy suppliers and distribution networks. The register has 28 different codes to capture a situation or health condition that could leave someone in a vulnerable circumstance should their electricity supply fail.

Electricity North West is committed to simplifying the registration process for everyone, increasing accessibility and minimising the effort required by the electricity user. We can achieve this by increasing our network of trusted partners who, with consent, can share the data to provide services to those on the register.

There is also a clear role for Electricity North West to continually develop and refresh their network increasing their understanding of vulnerabilities within the region and, where possible, design out or minimise the risk of creating barriers to services or the future energy system transition.

The risk of communities being left behind is a significant concern for Electricity North West as the implications are multi-faceted. Developing a whole energy system to supply the region, addressing the transformation to achieve Net Zero and maintain high performance standards in a world more reliant on electricity will be incredibly challenging.

As the network develops to meet the decarbonisation challenges, such as potential spikes in electricity demand at peak times, the risks presented are likely to lead to increased costs. This could have a substantial impact on those who are not able to access the opportunities of future technology.

Electricity North West will work with partners to help electricity users create capacity; driving engagement opportunities to be ready for the future, not being left behind whilst successfully taking advantage of keeping their bills low.

Activity	Targeted performance
Supporting those in fuel poverty to access the support they need to improve their situation	25,000 electricity users per annum access support
	£7 million customer direct benefit
	25,000 electricity users per annum aware of support
	Smart Street delivered to a further 100,000 homes
	Implementing developments from industry and sector trials to create new minimum requirements. With outcomes to increase % uptake of referrals to all available service through the partnerships
	Increase the % referral process uptake
Maximising the One Contact customer benefit of investment – <i>excluding the Fuel Poverty support</i>	Increase the Social Return on Investment (SROI) of benefit delivered across the partnership network to an average benefit to £125 per customer supported
One Contact support service	A single portal for registering and accessing data for all third sector and utilities for the North West region
Open Data	Create community led information that represents the needs and demographics of the population available through open sources
Electricity North West colleagues trained in recognising and supporting vulnerable circumstances	100% of colleagues trained through a tiered level approach of education and awareness aligned to their roles and responsibilities to recognise and reduce vulnerabilities
	100% of colleagues trained with all new and emerging mental wellbeing linking the impacts of changing circumstances i.e. power failures
Removing the barriers and joining the journey	Introduction of a £250k fund to drive engagement and learning by third sectors and ENW New customer engaged panels to shape the future Creating a single process for the North West to register vulnerabilities
Customers accessing the supportive services of the Priority Services Register	60% of 2.2m eligible people registered
	600,000 direct ENW contacts with PSR registered customers explaining the services we provide regarding a loss of supply
	75,000 electricity users accessing referral networks
Maximising the reach of support received and made available to customers	Contacting every registered customer on a 2-year cycle
	30% update or positive confirmations
	Customer satisfaction 91% for the benefits of being on the register with or without a power cut
	Increase the number of first call answer from 86% through increased resource and train all the contact centre to the higher standard of welfare support
Continually develop a service to recognise and meet the need of the North West community	CSAT for PSR + targeted growth of partnerships
	Increasing the current network utilising the current platform for data sharing to wider services across the North West

We welcome your views and feedback to continue to shape our future strategy and thank you for taking the time to participate in this consultation.

3. Principles and Strategy

The strategy creation is underpinned by stakeholder and customer engagement that highlighted the need to drive continuous improvement while also being responsive to change, whether from external markets or customer needs.

Creating a flow of information to help us learn and develop is vital for continuous improvement of our service. Working with a network of experts on vulnerability we will create, develop and implement innovation to ensure we do not leave anyone behind.

The engagement carried out across all our strategies for RII0-ED2 has formed part of the journey to reach this point and led to the outcome of our primary strategy statement.

The strategy is built on a foundation of principles that have been derived from the feedback from customers and stakeholders and co-created with our Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel. These principles will be embedded throughout the organisation.

They are:

- Inclusion
- Accessibility
- Awareness
- Innovation
- Transience
- Feedback loops, learning through insight
- Education internally and externally
- Designing everything with vulnerability in mind
- Working together internally and externally

The strategy and principles are aimed to bring the sector and their end users into a relationship where there is knowledge and consciousness of the need and changes that affect everyone's lives in relation to the provision of electricity.

Strategy

'Providing an inclusive and supportive service for all users of electricity in a rapidly changing world - recognising need and maximising reach of services provided through collaborative, innovative working with a community of trusted partners across our region.'

4. The four pillars of our strategy

Supporting the strategy to provide direction and clarity on the areas Electricity North West will continue to develop are the Pillars for Success. The pillars are four areas that contain detailed action plans to ensure the continual improvement to achieve the overarching goal, reviewed through an ongoing internal and external process.

Incorporating the feedback, we have received to date, and to guarantee the strategy meets the needs of our stakeholders, customers, Ofgem and Electricity North West community, we have detailed four pillars to support the strategy:

Inclusive innovation	Community intelligence	Collaborative network	Service to electricity users
Continue to look for accessible ways that the electricity network can support consumers in vulnerable circumstances, developing engagement to ensure awareness of opportunities and ensure inclusion	Utilisation of demographics, segmentation and feedback supported through additional data services to recognise needs increasing understanding to continually improve for individual electricity users and the communities of the North West	Continue to work with trusted experts, experienced partners, building and developing the network to maximise reach and support delivered to ensure no one is left behind in the rapidly changing world	Build strong communications channels that are accessible and raise awareness to create relationships with the electricity users of the North West. Focus on delivering a reliable electricity supply to all to ensure that impact on those in vulnerable circumstances is minimised

Questions:

- What area if any are the pillars not capturing within their intent and purpose?
- If you could add or remove a pillar, what would it be and why?

4.1 Inclusive innovation

Continue to look for accessible ways that the electricity network can support electricity users in vulnerable circumstances, developing engagement to ensure awareness of opportunities and ensure inclusion.

The risk of communities being left behind is a significant concern for Electricity North West as the implications are multi-faceted. Developing a whole energy system to supply the region, addressing the transformation to achieve Net Zero and maintain high performance standards in a world more reliant on electricity will be incredibly challenging. The range of impacts for both electricity users and for electricity network companies are extensive.

As the network develops to meet the decarbonisation challenges, such as potential spikes in electricity demand at peak times, the risks presented are likely to lead to increased costs. This could have a substantial impact on those who are not able to access the opportunities of future technology. Electricity North West want to ensure all customers are treated fairly and equally, averting any risks of compounding financial hardship in a community created by barriers preventing their ability to adapt and change. By investing in schemes that financially aid the electricity user any impact on their bill from investments to deliver new energy infrastructure may be offset by new benefits.

Electricity users may be able to help the energy network operate more efficiently in the future by engaging in processes that utilise any flexibility they may have in their electricity use. Where use of this flexibility is more cost effective than investing in expensive additional network capacity, providing this flexibility may be rewarded. As electricity users engage in this process, possibly using technology to manage their engagement with the electricity system, users who are not able to participate may pay higher costs than those who could engage. This disadvantage may compound issues associated with fuel poverty and other vulnerabilities.

It is therefore important for Electricity North West to support electricity users through trusted partners, ensuring they can access the support provided through the welfare system, energy efficiency support and other means to keep their lives on track. Electricity North West will work with partners to help users create capacity to engage and be ready for the future not being left behind successfully taking advantage of keeping their bills low.

There is also a clear role for Electricity North West to develop their network using an awareness of the vulnerabilities within the region and, where possible, design out or minimise the risk of creating barriers.

Ongoing research that Electricity North West is carrying out with 'One Manchester' to increase engagement in communities that are hard to reach, including communities where there are high levels of fuel poverty, has shown that such disengaged groups are at significant risk of being left behind. Electricity users may have other priorities in their life due to financial, situational or emotional difficulties. If these issues mean that they are focused on the 'here and now', managing their daily priorities, they are described as being in a 'survival mode'. In such a situation, these electricity users are not looking to engage on areas such as the transition to Net Zero or to take advantage of long-term financial changes that do not deliver an immediate benefit.

This research is extremely important in supporting the development of our strategy for ED2 that tackles the challenge of 'not leaving anyone behind'. It shows that these hard to reach communities are at real risk of seeing change as a risk they are not willing to take. Removing these barriers and increasing our understanding of how to empower these communities through knowledge transfer and education is fundamental to many other strategies across the business including Energy System Transition and Net Zero.

Electricity user and stakeholder feedback shows substantial support for DNOs to lead changes that require little interaction from the user such as smart street, where customers can financially benefit from network change rather than their individual behaviour change. The strategy recognises that to achieve a successful and fairer transition to Net Zero all positive interventions are required, those requiring network change and those requiring behavioural change. Therefore, engagement is fundamental to achieve long term behavioural change in both electricity users and the electricity industry.

Potential new obligations associated to this pillar are detailed below

Understand new forms of vulnerability, by identifying blockers to participating in a smart flexible energy system

- *Have an extensive network of partnerships with a range of organisation types, including from beyond the energy sector.*
- *Make effective use of referral channels and signposting support to customers. This will primarily be done through customer service teams, but we expect DNOs to seek opportunities to maximise consumer touchpoints.*
- *Be involved in two-way flow partnerships supporting vulnerable customers, in line with the companies understanding of social issues in their region. This should include the network company having direct involvement in the end to end process of delivering support, providing expertise and co-creating schemes. Where appropriate, we would expect to see example schemes where the DNO is taking a leading role.*
- *Have a clear process for identifying which partnerships are likely to be most effective at delivering benefits through co-operative working. This should be clearly linked to the priority areas of focus of the strategy, addressing fuel poverty and supporting those at risk of being left by the energy system transition.*

The key challenges to overcome in delivering the strategy

1. Barriers that affect community's ability to participate have and can be seen as outside Electricity North West's direct remit of intervention. Electricity North West do not always have the means or scope to rectify some situations on our own. However, there is a need for us to be part of the solution to these challenges as a socially responsible organisation, to meet demands placed on our electricity network, to maintain an efficient organisation using our customer money wisely, to develop to meet the future needs of the region and as members of the community.

How do we propose to tackle this?

By working with a collaborative network of partners that can provide services and support which increase the opportunity for people to make positive changes in their lives that are sustainable and enhancing. This will create capacity for people to engage on a wider range of topics and reduce the risk these electricity users are not left behind.

Electricity North West can be part of the solution by utilising funding opportunities to support these partners organisations. Increasing their accessibility and awareness creates a positive outcome and relationship with the electricity user that opens the door to engagement and education opportunities.

The emotional drive for us as humans to improve and protect our families and homes is fundamental in behavioural change. For some in our communities the future is something that can only be addressed once the present is not a risk. Addressing immediate challenges in the lives of electricity users will allow us to work with communities and households, helping them participate in the journey of Energy System Transition and Net Zero changes and look forward to prospects that will benefit them and their children.

2. Ensure all barriers in the direct control of Electricity North West are removed through the design of services and continually developed as we implement changes that address current and

emerging vulnerabilities. Understanding the issues and links between these issues that are a risk to the successful implementation of change. Increasing knowledge to better assess the level of impact prevents unintentional costs and consequences to electricity users from the services we provide.

How do we propose to tackle this?

Increasing our community intelligence by engaging with stakeholders and communities, working through a multi-level approach covering the region, local business needs and electricity users lives allows us to assess current electricity needs and prioritise our support and strategies to fit dynamically with the knowledge we attain.

Having a culture that undertakes vulnerability risk assessments as we implement plans or change approaches to address financial or emotional impact.

Create funding opportunities for Electricity North West to lead or participate in developments that support those experiencing vulnerability and remove barriers following engagement, research, learning and feedback.

- 3. Delivering a value service that makes a difference to the lives of those living with vulnerabilities.

How will do we propose to tackle this?

Creating standard business processes that demonstrate the financial benefit to the electricity user in vulnerable circumstances exceeds any costs to deliver the overall services we provide now and in the future.

Continually develop a measure through the Social Return of Investment measure (SROI) that provides the ability to understand the benefit factor as a multiplier to assess the value of service delivery and is the investment meeting the criteria of a minimum benefit and the impact on the bill.

What is SROI

The monetary value associated with positive outcomes received, and costs avoided by society because of a given initiative.

Measuring the outcomes

Activity	Current performance	Targeted performance	Stretch performance	Information
Supporting those in fuel poverty to access the support they need to improve their situation	4000 per annum access support £1million customer direct benefit	25,000 per annum access support £7 million customer direct benefit	30,000 per annum access support £10.5 million customer direct benefit	The customer benefit is derived from the social return on investment mechanism and is the financial benefit direct

				to the recipient.
	10,000 made aware of support	25,000 per annum aware of support	30,000 per annum aware of support	
	Smart Street Delivered to 64,000 homes	Delivering to a further 100,000 homes	Deliver to 250,000 homes	
	Best practice working across the partnership network	Implementing developments from industry and sector trials to create new minimum requirements. With outcomes to increase % uptake of referrals to all available service through the partnerships	Fund learning of new ways to remove barriers and address new vulnerabilities our business develops. I.e issuing funding mechanisms that look to how we engage with the future generations of electricity users	
	Current % referral process uptake	Increase the %	Increase the % further	
Maximising the one contact customer benefit of investment – <i>excluding the Fuel Poverty support</i>	SROI currently provides £89 benefit minimum across the partnership network	Increase the average benefit to £125	Increase the average benefit to £175	Through the collaboration network, share best practices and bring support networks together for those in need.

Questions:

- Is there a clear link to the benefits that Electricity North West can deliver to electricity users in fuel poverty and the impact of preventing anyone being left behind?
- Do you agree that focusing on provision of service to financially benefit people's lives, preventing an deterioration in their current situation and offsetting the cost of network development is a strategy Electricity North West should deliver?

4.2 Community intelligence

Utilisation of demographics, segmentation and feedback supported though additional data services to recognise needs increasing understanding to continually improve for individual electricity users and the communities of the North West

Across the region there are multiple causes of vulnerability and Electricity North West has developed a social data mapping tool to create a graphic representation of customers on the Priority Services Register and community levels of vulnerability causes. There are 28 data sets that are combined to create a heat map by postcode. The data is then used to inform the decision making within Electricity North West, supported by the Strategic Advisory Panel. This highlights where focus is required to strengthen the approach in areas such as:

- Supporting those in fuel poverty
- Raising awareness of the Priority Services Register to increase the recruitment
- Electricity reliability issues affecting communities with high levels of vulnerability
- Locations or sectors to grow our partnership network to enhance the service offering

Within the footprint of Electricity North West there are currently 13% (250,000) households that are classified as living in fuel poverty, currently there are 2.2 million people who could join the Priority Services Register. Currently 49.5% of this population are registered leaving a short fall of over 50% of electricity users who are not accessing this service.

Areas such as Blackpool, Blackburn, Salford and Eden are areas that show high levels of various social demographic index that when combined with the Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel's key causes of vulnerability index highlights the need for support from Electricity North West and their trusted partners.

Combining this information with additional research is critical to enhance understanding of vulnerability, accessibility and behaviours of electricity users. During 2020 two key research programmes have been initiated by Electricity North West with support and guidance from their Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel to understand the impact of the COVID pandemic and lockdown and how engagement can be increased in hard to reach communities.

From the COVID report there are clear messages showing the exacerbated situation of people living in vulnerable circumstances such as domestic abuse, new unemployment and wider impacts on areas which have been heightened or rapidly changed are emerging. Blackpool has been severely impacted by the pandemic with the lack of tourism having a significant economic impact on the area. The report shows that there is increase pressure on the 3rd sector in trying to support a wider group of affected people. This demonstrates that affected people are not always accessing the support they need, creating a higher risk of vulnerability.

Using the data from the Priority Services Register and the additional services through collaborative networks provides us with the opportunity to access data showing where communities are not engaging with current and future changes across the region. We will focus the strategy on these communities. By removing barriers to engagement and increasing support with the energy system transition we can reduce the risk of people being left behind. The strategy will also seek to ensure that any potential increase in the costs of the electricity network will not disproportionately disadvantage electricity users made vulnerable by the circumstances they are experiencing.

Working with our stakeholders we have come to recognise that vulnerability data on its own is a narrow perspective through which we can understand the circumstances that causes vulnerability and how they become a barrier to participation in the energy system transition. Through our engagement the raw data needs to be interlinked with wider information such as behavioural

understanding, how to remove barriers, social links within a community, deeper knowledge about electricity users and their lives.

This engagement has helped us identify the pillar we have called Community Intelligence, which builds upon the current focus on vulnerability data within our existing strategy.

The development embraces a wider range of information that can be utilised in a multi-dimensional approach to understand the challenges being faced by electricity users. Specifically, it widens the scope of our understanding to be situational, for example understanding the interface between transient vulnerability and a long-term mobility condition, and this understanding assists us in removing barriers to engagement.

Potential new obligations associated to this pillar are detailed below

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

- *Utilise social indicator or vulnerability mapping to inform their service development and partnership strategy. This approach may form part of the PSR management, but the identification of vulnerability should not be limited to PSR registrations.*
- *Maintain a good understanding of the social issues associated with the scope of the DNOs role, the prevalence of these within their consumer base and how they are evolving*

The key challenges to overcome in delivering the strategy

1. Data protection and availability of data being used to drive decisions.

How do we propose to tackle this?

Work with the industry and other sectors to be open and transparent with data sources, creating an accessible database of information that represents the communities we serve. Use innovation with other energy sector participants to develop common approaches for external data sharing to simplify the accessibility of data and work together to drive benefits for the UK and our region.

2. Disseminated information from customers and their need to share information is a blocker to many services.

How do we propose to tackle this?

Working cross industry and through our partnership network to create a one contact strategy for registering individual's needs and providing them with the support they need. Building a platform that supports the region ensuring everyone can monitor new and emerging trends as a collaborative approach and is transparent to all.

3. Discovering new and emerging vulnerabilities that affect our region so that we can continually develop our services and avoid barriers to accessibility or support. Many vulnerabilities and social issues are not produced by the DNO but can be blockers or barriers to the success of the DNO if not addressed. Understanding the issues and links between these issues addresses risks to the successful implementation of change by the business. Increasing knowledge to assess the level of impact prevents unintentional costs and consequences to electricity users arising as a result of the way services are provided.

How do we propose to tackle this?

Increasing our data insights through community information and collaborative networks. We will use stakeholder and customer engagement to help us learn, develop and design with inclusivity at the core of our research and service implementation. To achieve this, we need to expand our engagement activities and broaden our networks to increase collaboration directly with the electricity users and referral networks of specialists. We will target the appropriate specialists by using a segmentation of needs and demographic information, continually developing our social indicator tools.

4. Showing the benefit of partnerships to address future electricity demand requirements and avoid the need for investment in new electricity infrastructure.

How do we propose to tackle this?

Utilising data from multiple sources, including smart meters and geographic demand patterns, we can monitor the effect of targeted interventions on energy efficiency, social support and system capability.

Measuring success in balancing the electricity demands from low carbon technologies with flexible solutions and the involvement of targeted communities in those flexible solutions will demonstrate that we have removed barriers to engagement.

Measuring the outcomes

Activity	Current performance	Targeted performance	Stretch performance	Information
One contact support service	Shared data registering with energy suppliers, water and gas industry within the North West and current partnerships	A single portal of registering and accessing data for all third sector and utilities for the North West Region	Driving and Implementing a single Priority Services Register across the UK	
Open Data	Social data mapping includes 28 data sources externally and ENWL PSR volumes and is shared with Trusted Partners	Create community led information that represents the needs and demographics of the population available through open sources	Single UK social data mapping across the industry – Open Data	

Questions:

- Does the community Intelligence approach of adapting a data led focus to incorporate behavioural and situational information create more inclusivity into the development of future campaigns and services from Electricity North West?
- Would your organisation agree to driving a single data share for the region?

4.3 Collaborative network

Continue to work with trusted experts and experienced partners, building and developing the network to maximise reach and support delivered. Ensure no one is left behind in the rapidly changing world

Electricity North West provide an electrical supply to 2.4 million properties across the North West region achieving a 99.9% reliability performance. The network is continually affected by weather, aging components and changing customer requirements necessitating a continual need for maintenance, development and improvement.

To deliver a truly inclusive approach for the electricity users, all colleagues within the company need to recognise causes of vulnerability and design network and support services that the company delivers with this information in mind. Our consultation to date has shown that we need to take the risk of being left behind into account when designing improvements.

Our innovation strategy embraces this culture and through RIIO-ED1 there have been some great examples of improvements where electricity users can benefit without needing to consciously change or adapt their behaviour. This approach removes the risk of some communities being left behind. A key example of this innovation implementation is the Smart Street technology roll-out.

It is therefore essential that the culture of the organisation seeks to remove the risk of exclusion where possible through design.

Understanding of the risks and the changing landscape that can create vulnerability can be strengthened through additional engagement directly with those being affected as mentioned in section 3. To learn and understand the impacts through horizon scanning, we will continue to work through Collaborative Networks and stakeholder panels.

Wider engagement with current and future generations of electricity users will deliver opportunities for Electricity North West to increase knowledge of what can make users vulnerable and the changes we can make to respond to this.

Potential new obligations associated with this pillar

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

- *Have processes in place for embedding a commitment to protecting the interests of vulnerable customers. This should include a well justified approach to ensuring all staff have received an appropriate form of vulnerability training to maximise the potential from all customer touchpoints. Companies should make use of external advice and support to set*

strategic direction, such as a vulnerability advisory or research panel. DNOs should appoint a vulnerability champion at senior management or board level.

- *Seek opportunities to protect vulnerable customers throughout their capabilities.*

The key challenges to overcome in delivering the strategy

1. Continually keeping all colleagues of Electricity North West aware and informed on current and new vulnerabilities that emerge so that we are proactive in our approach.

How do we propose to tackle this?

The culture of Electricity North West embraces diversity and inclusion, enabling our colleagues to have a great understanding of these areas and where vulnerability creates additional considerations in the work we do. This can be enhanced through an amplified training structure that provides insights and awareness for colleagues to incorporate within their daily roles, supporting electricity users. A regular training programme will be developed for all roles. This will be refreshed through the Community Information programme and through working with our stakeholders and partners.

Continuing to build our internal commitment to our mental wellbeing strategy that focuses on three key areas is essential to support the ongoing culture transition to understanding vulnerable circumstances that affect everyone. The programme supports everyone recognising impacts on their lives, increasing their awareness and ability to recognise concerns and challenges through engagement with colleagues and electricity users.

Reduce stigma & tackle discrimination

Empower colleagues to maintain and improve their wellbeing

For our people to intervene if they see signs of mental ill health and take steps to support and rehabilitate

2. Safeguarding those that cannot protect themselves.

How do we propose to tackle this?

Continually training our colleagues who work directly with members of the public, especially electricity users in vulnerable circumstances, to ensure that we can intervene with support from our partners and understand the risks where certain vulnerabilities are exacerbated by a loss of electricity. Building increased network reliability in areas where high concentrations of vulnerability are indicated by our social data mapping.

Some people choose not to join a Priority Services Register, so utilising data to identify hard to reach communities that are affected by higher levels of vulnerability, we can intervene, remove the risk of loss of supply and reduce anxiety or make it easier for electricity users to sustain their management of their circumstance.

Activity	Current performance	Targeted performance	Stretch performance	Information
Electricity North West colleagues	All colleagues who work in customers premises or provide	100% of colleagues trained through a tiered level	Include the training of awareness of the energy impacts	

trained in recognising and supporting vulnerable circumstances	telephony support are trained in the services and recognising vulnerability.	approach of education and awareness aligned to their roles and responsibilities to recognise and reduce vulnerabilities	through our trusted partners to maximise reach with every touch point	
	All colleague training commitment to Mental wellbeing every 12 months	100% of colleagues trained with all new and emerging mental wellbeing linking the impacts of changing circumstances i.e. power failures	Sharing the training and engagement with our network of partners for best practice and developing integration of the effects of their vulnerability being compounded with Mental Wellbeing	
Removing the barriers and joining the journey		Introduction of a £250k fund to drive engagement and learning through third sectors and ENW. New customer engaged panels to shape the future Creating a single process for the North West to register vulnerabilities	Driving and implementing a single Priority Services Register across the UK and across utility providers.	

Question:

- Should Electricity North West intervene proactively in hard to reach communities as a priority, to increase their electricity reliability?

4.4 Service to electricity users

Build strong communications channels that are accessible and raise awareness to create relationships with the electricity users of the North West. Focus on delivering a reliable electricity supply to all to ensure that impact on those in vulnerable circumstances is minimised

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is a database shared by all energy suppliers and distribution networks. The register has 28 different codes to capture a situation or health condition that could leave someone in a vulnerable circumstance should their electricity supply fail. These codes are very diverse covering circumstances such as children under the age of 5, kidney dialysis machine, language requirements and mental health conditions. (For the full list and further details, go to www.enwl.co.uk/priority.)

Within the North West there are currently over 900,000 people on the register out of a current possible 2.2 million people who are eligible under Ofgem's criteria. This results in a risk that over 1 million people do not receive the appropriate proactive service from Electricity North West when they are affected by a power cut. The service also provides referrals to other organisations across the region who can assist people with additional support such as accessing financial, wellbeing and local community support.

Electricity North West is committed to simplifying the registration process for everyone, increasing accessibility and minimising the effort required by the electricity user. We can achieve this by increasing our network of trusted partners who, with consent, can share the data to provide services to those on the register. This includes current data sharing agreements with suppliers of gas and electricity, United Utilities and gas transporters.

Potential new obligations associated with this pillar

- ***Effectively support consumers in vulnerable situations, particularly those most vulnerable to a loss of supply, through a sophisticated approach to the management, promotion and maintenance of a PSR register.***
 - *Undertake proactive and targeted advertising of the PSR and the services offered to vulnerable consumer groups. By targeted, we mean towards specific areas of highest need or where data analysis suggests there are gaps in PSR reach.*
 - *Have an effective data and information strategy in place specific to meeting the needs of vulnerable consumers. This should include effective PSR database maintenance with customer data checks at least every 24 months. Data analysis should be used to inform the development and delivery of service offerings. DNOs should also align the approach to data sharing with suppliers and other utilities to get customers onto the PSR to the requirements of Data Best Practice.*
 - *Provide information for PSR customers in formats suited to a range of additional communication needs. For accessibility services, companies should meet a minimum standard of Accessibility AA. Translation services should be available for at least the top 10 Languages in a DNO area.*
 - *Have dedicated lines, and or prioritisation, available for customers registered on PSR when they need to contact the DNO.*
 - *Deliver a wide range of support during, or in relation to, a supply interruption that reflects different customer needs and is, at a minimum, in line with existing provision. There should be a clear link between the information held about PSR customers and how this is used to target, or prioritise, support. We consider a wide range of support could include, but is not limited to, crisis packs, hot meals and drinks, mobile generation, alternative accommodation or on-site welfare units. We would expect there to be multi-channel information provision during supply interruptions. Companies can deliver this support directly or through/in conjunction with partner agencies.*

The key challenges to overcome in delivering the strategy

1. Having the register and maintaining contact details is essential to ensuring a successful contact every time to not delay the information and welfare provision, this removes anxiety and fear for many electricity users on a 24/7/365 basis. We operate the most reliable network in the country outside London. This can lead to electricity users feeling secure in this service and result in a view that it is not essential for PSR records to be updated.

Current engagement shows that only 1 in 5 people provide regular confirmation or updates on their contact details, leaving a risk that Electricity North West cannot contact someone who may need our help. As part of our future strategy we need to strengthen the relationship with electricity users to reduce this risk and utilise information from other sectors and parts of the utility industry to capture current contact details on a regular basis.

How do we propose to tackle this?

Working with other sectors to create a regional and, potentially, a national service with a single point of contact for electricity users where information can be distributed to all relevant parties simplifying the process for customers and avoiding the cost of having multiple systems holding similar information.

Creating an ongoing relationship reflecting all the services that customers can benefit from and utilise whilst being part of the Priority Services Register outside the need of help during a power cut.

2. Removing the barriers to ensure everyone who is eligible to register on this free service is the foundation to then helping them make choices as we share information that will increase their understanding of opportunities they can take as the industry changes and our lives become more reliant on electricity.

How do we propose to tackle this?

Increase our accessibility and improve our relationship with customers to encourage a greater uptake of our services and better record maintenance. This will be achieved through targeted, focused campaigns alongside our trusted partnering network creating a community of information and support.

3. Ensuring the support, we provide reaches those who have the greatest need and makes a difference to their circumstances, reducing the impact on them.

How do we propose to tackle this?

Creating an engaged relationship between the DNO and the electricity users that increases the flow of information and learnings through detailed analysis and research of needs. This will ensure the people who need the service contribute to shaping the outcome they will receive.

4. Supporting electricity users to minimise anxiety and fear when they experience a loss of electricity.

How do we propose to tackle this?

Using a diverse and inclusive multi-channel approach for customers to access the information, removing barriers to engagement. Recognising that accurate information and an empathetic service is crucial to this outcome. Electricity North West will therefore increase their number of available Customer Agents trained in welfare and vulnerability support to provide the opportunity for human engagement and not create barriers through a reliance of digital services.

All the pillars and principles support each area of the strategy, nevertheless the prioritisation of the pillar below focuses within this area.

Measuring the outcomes

To deliver on the strategy it is crucial to have clear measures that Electricity North West can utilise to understand the success of the activities and the impact we are having, it ensures that our stakeholders have visibility of performance to hold us to account or challenge our progression as required.

Activity	Current performance	Targeted performance	Stretch performance	Information
Customers accessing the supportive services of the Priority Services Register	49% registered of 2.2 million eligible people	60% registered	80% registered	The % is used as the base number of 2.2 million is a reference at a point in time and will move
	495,000 direct ENW contacts with PSR registered customers regarding the services we provide regarding a loss of supply	600,000 direct ENW contacts with PSR registered customers regarding the services we provide regarding a loss of supply	700,000 direct ENW contacts with PSR registered customers regarding the services we provide regarding a loss of supply	This includes all proactive communications during a loss of supply and proactive contacts to stay close excluding any social media.
	54,520 electricity users have accessed the referral networks this year	75,000 electricity users accessing referral networks	95,000 electricity users accessing referral networks	This measure will reflect how many people access the supportive services from all trusted partners without the need of a power cut made available through ENWL
Maximising the reach of support received and made available to customers	Maintaining contact details, all medically dependant customers every 12 months and all others once every three years	Contacting every registered customer on a 2-year cycle	Contact all medically dependant every 12 months and everyone else no greater than every 2 years	Increasing telephone contact, media outreach and local services to be part of customers regular engagement activities
	16% of customers update their details following contact	30% update or positive confirmations	40% and over	
	Customer satisfaction with the support	Customer satisfaction 91% for the benefits	Customer satisfaction over 93% for the	This would introduce a new mechanism to understand the

	received 91% during a power cut	of being on the register with or without a power cut	benefits of being on the register with or without a power cut	benefits for customers who are not experiencing power cuts and introduce new engagement channels through customer support needed to feed into the service improvements
	<p>The telephony system recognises all customers on the PSR and prioritises their call to an agent, current average 76% answer rate to direct to an agent.</p> <p>8 dedicated experienced welfare agents for escalated concerns</p> <p>Hold AA accessibility standard</p>	Increase the number of first call answer from 86% through increased resource and train all the contact centre to the higher standard of welfare support	<p>Increase the first call answer to over 95%</p> <p>Have dedicated resource on site to support PSR customers where interruptions exceed 8 hours</p> <p>Utilise more local amenities as community support venues</p> <p>Increase accessibility standard to AAA</p>	<p>All current welfare support remains in place, such as meals, accommodation, generation, crisis packs and welfare units and proactive contacts for planned supply interruptions.</p> <p>Continuation of language services for telephony and website support.</p>
Continually develop a service to recognise and meet the need of the North West community	Welfare provisions are aligned to customer feedback, number of partnerships across the north west	CSAT for PSR + targeted growth of partnerships	Create specific feedback groups?	
	Current data shares with energy suppliers and utilities and current partnerships	Increasing the current network utilising the current platform of data sharing to wider services across the North West	Deliver on a national system of registration and promotion	Using the community intelligence to grow the ENW network of partners through targeted analytics of hard to reach communities

Questions:

- Do the measures in place represent a positive outcome against the challenges presented?
- What do you believe is the most important measure?

Please click this link to provide your feedback: stakeholderengagement@enwl.co.uk