

Customers in vulnerable situations

PSR and Data Sharing
Workshop



22nd November 2022

together
we are
the **network**

Thank you

Thank you again to those of you who joined us for our Priority Services Register (PSR) and Data Sharing Workshop Awareness Workshop on Tuesday 22nd November.

Myself, Jill, Steve, Laura, Jenny, and Kirsten thoroughly enjoyed seeing you all again. A special thank-you to our guest presenter Helen Patterson from Northumbrian Water. Helen provided an overview of the Support For All PSR data sharing project, including an update on current progress and future plans for this work.

Eileen Brown

Customer Experience Director

Purpose of the workshop

- Feedback on PSR from the Annual Strategic workshop March 2022; and key actions from Winter readiness and CO awareness workshop September 2022
- Vulnerability Team and Business updates
- Overview of PSR Annual Research
- Current performance - PSR registration and customer satisfaction
- Partner spotlight from Northumbrian Water Ltd.
- NGN PSR Customer Journey – overview
- Innovation projects – supporting Customers in Vulnerable Situations (CIVS)
- Breakout 1 – NGN PSR Customer Journey
 - Are there any gaps in communication to support CIVS?
 - Are there any gaps in practical service provision to support CIVS?

Feedback on PSR from the Annual Strategic workshop March 2022; and key actions from Winter readiness and CO awareness workshop September 2022

The feedback you gave us during this workshop is helping to shape the way we work both now and in the future.

You Said	We did
Awareness of PSR is around 20% in the energy sector and only around 3% in the water sector therefore we need to level up for this challenge. The question was asked; could there be a centralised PSR?	<p>NGN are one of several partners in the energy and water sector taking part in the Support For All project pilot, initiated by Northumbrian Water, which seeks to take steps towards having one shared Priority Services Register.</p> <p>NGN also have a Make Every Contact Count (MECC) process which enables water PSR referrals through NGN’s First Call Operatives when attending customers’ homes and during gas emergencies.</p>
Can NGN increase their PSR targets?	NGN has made a commitment to exceed 5,000 PSR sign ups (Business Plan commitment) annually, during years 2 –5 of our regulatory period, which runs up to 31st March 2026. We are currently already on target to reach around 6,000 for this regulatory reporting year (2022/23).

Key actions from Winter readiness and CO awareness workshop September 2022

You Said	We did
Could NGN’s winter campaign be extended to target warm spaces / warm places venues to target those people attending the venue?	<p>NGN already works with a trusted partner in Northumberland in the delivery of established Warm Hubs and this model continues to grow.</p> <p>We are working with Northern Powergrid and local authorities to share literature/resources to support warm spaces in our area.</p> <p>Alongside Northumbrian Water, we have also supported Gateshead Energy Roadshows, which were held by Gateshead Council. Our input supported awareness of PSR, CO and energy efficiency. We are now looking to extend the delivery of this across other areas within our network.</p>
<p>NGN should actively look to engage younger people to spread awareness messages around CO – target younger people and use real life case studies</p> <p>Work in partnerships with universities to get messaging out there to students – use social media</p>	<p>NGN works with multiple partners to help young people and provide information on the dangers of CO through a number of channels, as well as leading a collaborative project with other gas networks to support the development of an Augmented Reality tool which will use specifically designed technology to target university students around CO awareness in the home.</p> <p>We partner with Kate Urwin, Yorkshire Energy Doctor, who works with young people moving into their first homes to deliver CO safety awareness information.</p> <p>We have also worked with Leeds Beckett University, raising awareness by providing CO information during fresher’s week.</p>

Vulnerability Team and Business updates

Business updates

Vulnerability Team

In October NGN were asked to be part of an energy cohort to work towards a new International Standard/kitemark in consumer vulnerability (ISO 22451), which was previously a British Standard (BS18477) looking at inclusive service provision. We were thrilled to have been given verbal confirmation that we have passed and await the official confirmation of our achievement whilst sharing our experiences to support other energy and water colleagues yet to go through this process.

NGN asked for the views of our customer engagement groups, the Young Innovators Council and the Citizen's Panel, to understand how we should prioritise spending of our available allowances for VCMA and Customer Support Fund. The views/priorities of each engagement group differed, with Young Innovators (non-bill payers) favouring long term support above short term/crisis support, and the Citizen's Panel (bill payers) prioritising these in the opposite order. Both groups listed medium term support as the lowest priority. A key point noted is to ensure that we link up with onward support, not just addressing the immediate/short term customer need.

NGN have recently launched our £50,000 Community Partnering Fund and we are working specifically with Tyne and Wear Community Foundation in the North East to address gaps in provision. Closing date for applications to this fund is 11th December. Further details can be found on the Community Foundation website at <https://www.communityfoundation.org.uk/new-fund-supports-vulnerable-people-experiencing-fuel-poverty/>.

Laura Ratcliffe joined the team in October and will be working with Jill initially before eventually taking over in the role of Social Strategy Programme Manager. Laura previously worked at Citizens Advice and has a wealth of knowledge in fuel poverty and customer vulnerability.

Future of energy:

HyDeploy - For the last 3 years we have worked alongside Cadent to trial hydrogen blending with methane into customers' homes. The Winlaton based trial involved around 300 customers in their homes and this project has now concluded. Winlaton results were presented at the House Of Lords in November, delivering a message to decision-makers that we are ready to blend. Up to 20% hydrogen can be successfully blended and supplied through a public gas distribution network. Customers can successfully use a blend of hydrogen without making any changes to their homes or noticing any differences in their gas supply. We are expecting a policy decision on hydrogen blending into the natural gas network during 2023.

H21 – This project has been ongoing for around 5 years, to prove the safety case for Testing at the H21 South Bank site in Middlesborough. The H21 project was set up to investigate the safety aspects of transporting gas through the existing distribution network. We are excited to be publishing the results of this work early next year, which will demonstrate that hydrogen is as safe, if not safer, than transporting methane.

Hydrogen Town - This links to our Redcar Hydrogen Community which is a live project looking to put 100% Hydrogen into 2000 homes. We have received an official invitation from BEIS to submit our approach for conversion of a town to hydrogen. This village trial will be scaled up to 10,000 homes if taken forward, which reinforces the message that the industry wants to move at a faster pace to find workable solutions in terms of the future of energy.

Winter readiness/resilience:

Electricity outages – We are working with BEIS/Ofgem on communication about the impact on gas supplies, should any planned electricity outages happen this winter. There is no certainty as yet if this will happen but we are planning towards the worst case scenario and the customer impact.

Storm Arwen – We have implemented all the recommendations from the BEIS and Ofgem reports, and continue to work closely with NPg to make sure we consider overall energy resilience (rather than gas and electricity in isolation).

Questions raised:

Question

Bill/cost impact for customers if Hydrogen use is approved?

Answer

Alongside the work to prove the case for Hydrogen we are working with the supply side to understand the bill impact and the mechanism for billing. We are hoping that bill impact will be minimal but we would be happy to follow up with further information on this as we know more.



We have been awarded a new international kitemark in consumer vulnerability

Overview of PSR Annual Research

Research commissioned by NGN in August 2022. This is annual research whereby qualitative and quantitative questions are asked.

Overall findings show that significantly more customers in 2022 claimed to be on the PSR. Not surprisingly, older customers and the unemployed are more likely to be on the register. The increase in the proportion on PSR can be seen across all demographic and regions. Cumbria and East Riding recorded higher levels of customers on PSR than other regions.

The findings suggest that messaging around PSR awareness seems to be working. We are able to consider this data alongside our Social Indicator Mapping to identify where the gaps may be.

PSR registrations targets, as discussed earlier, are set to be around 6,000 for 22/23. We are committed to increasing this target each year, using the previous year's numbers as a baseline.

Current Performance – PSR registration and customer

9.3

We survey all our customers to measure customer satisfaction for all our operational activities. We split this feedback between PSR and non-PSR customers. For year 1, we could see that for the PSR customers our average score was 9.3 and for all customers the score was 9.19. We can also look at the feedback in greater detail to understand better where we might improve.

Questions raised:

Question

Ian Bartlett (Stockton CAB)– for regional data can this be broken down into local authority areas? This would be very useful for those partners who work on a local authority level. (Seconded by Jozi Brown).

Answer

NGN will look at if this is possible, and feedback to stakeholders.

Partner Spotlight from Helen Patterson, Northumbrian Water Ltd. - Support For All

Helen delivered a presentation about a project involving NGN and other partners which is looking to create a centralised PSR.

Currently utility companies hold details of customer vulnerability separately in order to understand and respond to additional customer needs. This data is not shared between utilities. There are a number of problems and inconsistencies with this data being held separately to the detriment of customers. Notably, awareness of PSR for water is significantly lower than for energy. It has therefore been acknowledged that a collaborative response could help to improve the customer experience and ensure that their needs are not overlooked.

Lots of work has been undertaken so far to look take the concept of a shared PSR forward. This has included:

- Alignment of industry needs codes for vulnerability - We now use a common set of industry needs codes.
- Changes to consent - The Information Commissioner confirmed in 2021 that Substantial Public Interest (SPI) is sufficient justification for data sharing.

- Stakeholder collaboration through workshops and sprints - Resulting in a design to create a data hub, acting as a cross utility PSR and a one stop shop for customers.
- Funding secured through the Ofwat Water Breakthrough Challenge in Summer 2022 for a regional pilot, to work through remaining challenges and build and test a data hub, that will store all PSR data, which utilities can share between each other.

There are now several partners involved in the project including technology partners as well as utility partners. We hope that this pilot will prove the value of a shared PSR compared the current set up of separate registers and that it can ultimately be scaled up to a national register.

Potential customer benefits include:

- Increase in volume of customers identified and able to receive PSR support through the hub, compared to the single PSR registers which exist currently
- Improve customer experience: no effort required from customers to provide details of PSR 'need' to multiple utilities

- Reduce communication required by utilities and effort from customers to update circumstances
- Reduce the likelihood of customers not receiving much needed support in times of supply incidents, where data was previously absent
- Help identify low PSR penetration areas, enabling cross-sector joint PSR awareness campaigns.
- Include capability for future addition of data from other sources (support agencies). Our proven solution will act as a blueprint capable of roll out in regions across England and Wales

Helen provided a timeline for this project including the live data sharing pilot between Apr-Sep 2023 and a final report and blueprint in October 2023.

Helen asked if participants would like to be included in the circulation of future Support For All Newsletters and/ or involvement in future sprints. Please contact Helen.Patterson1@nwl.co.uk to express interest.

Business updates

Questions raised:

Question

Could we clarify where data sharing is currently in place?

Answer

HP – There is a national group which looks at PSR data sharing and SFA feeds into this with information. There has been a recent call for information from the national group. We have also been in touch with a number of counterparts where we know sharing is already in place to be able to build on the good work that is already being done elsewhere.

The difference with this project is that it is something that could be rolled out nationally and it also covers historic registration as opposed to only new registrations (as others do).

Questions raised:

Question

Have you considered people who may want to be on one PSR but not another (eg. Water but not energy)?

Answer

HP – Although we can change the legitimate use for sharing data, we need to communicate this clearly to our customers and give them the option to opt out if they so wish. There has been a mechanism built into the hub which allows data to be taken out where necessary.

General feedback for SFA was very positive and enthusiastic, with participants agreeing that this is very valuable concept.

Additional PSR question raised after break:

Question

How do you reach HMOs or people who are not the direct bill payers with information?

Answer

Answer NGN – Within campaigns we try to reach different groups of people who may not know about PSR, benefits etc. We are always open to further suggestions of how we can reach people in this way.

Answer Denise Bedford (NWL) – We write to all customers to let them know their rights under guaranteed standards of service so that they are aware of how we can provide extra support, this has helped to create more registrations. We also register the person not the property so that the registration moves with the person rather than staying at the address.

NGN PSR Customer Journey

– overview from Kirsten Wood

Kirsten Wood from our Customer Care team provided insight into the typical customer journey for PSR customers who are affected by planned works.

For planned gas replacement schemes we would plan in advance by running the PSR report and identifying who would be applicable in the affected area – this information is available to the engineering teams and we would also be looking for any further signs of vulnerability on site whilst the gas supply is temporarily isolated.

The next stage would be to notify all customers who may have a planned interruption to supply or have engineers doing work in the area – this would be by letter 10 days before the works commence to allow time for customers to get in touch with us if they need to which allows us to identify any additional support that may be needed. We would also have Customer Care Officers door knocking to check for any additional considerations. Additional PSR registrations can be identified at this stage.

On site we would have face to face contact with PSR customers. Focussing on access, communication, noise disturbances and appropriate support available during the gas interruption.

When gas is shut off – most vulnerable point. PSR customers will be provided with electric heaters, alternative cooking facilities, winter warmer packs and heat the person items. Links made with family members or carers to ensure additional support.

At the point of reconnection – PSR customers prioritised and we would have a conversation with these customers about any additional support they may require at this stage, such as a need for fuel vouchers, CO awareness information, energy efficiency advice/referrals made via CIC app that engineers have access to.

Reinstatement of the property – PSR customers prioritised and there is a guaranteed standard payment for customers who have not had reinstatement works within 3 days. This is picked up by our systems so that the payment is automatically made to the customer.

General communication support – literature available in other languages and braille, Recite Me tool on our website for comprehension function, we also offer vulnerability training related to specific needs including hearing loss, dementia, mental health and other safeguarding issues.

Feedback using Customer satisfaction scores suggests that our PSR customers are generally very satisfied with our support.

Innovation projects

– supporting Customers in Vulnerable Situations (CIVS)

Update on innovation projects that run alongside our day to day work that we are currently implementing:

Project Doorstep – a collaborative project with Cadent, NPG and UKPN which is focused on tackling doorstep fraud and allows an easy way for customers to check the identity of our engineers on site. This is in the process of implementation.

Street Score 2 – another collaborative project with Cadent, WWU, SGN, NPG and SSE which is about providing safety and accessibility around our operational sites (eg. access, signing, lighting, etc.) taking into account the needs of our vulnerable customers when setting our sites up operationally.

Supporting vulnerable customers to keep boiler operational during a power outage – in collaboration with NPG this project has just been approved and is looking at potential battery solutions to keep the heating on if there is a power cut.

Breakout 1

– NGN PSR Customer Journey

Two questions were posed for discussion, relating to the NGN PSR customer journey, as detailed below:

Questions

- Are there any gaps in communication to support CIVS?
- Are there any gaps in practical service provision to support CIVS?

Group 1 - Communication support discussion

Overall stakeholder feedback, in relation to the questions posed, was as follows:

Group 1 - Communication support discussion

- Communication needs to focus not just on the customer but also on advocates and partners working on NGN's behalf. Eg Green Doctors have multiple contacts with customers on behalf of NGN so being able to access information easily to share with customers and give them information about and more detail about what to expect in an emergency situation would be good.
- Communication with 3rd parties of vulnerable customers is key, especially those with dementia and mental health struggles as its often relatives who will be responsible for progressing PSR and paperwork rather than the vulnerable customer themselves
- What can NGN do to make sure the care network is made aware of PSR?
- While the customer journey has good comms in the early touchpoints, people's situations can change quite quickly (increasingly so now adays). Many people, let alone vulnerable customers, may not be organised enough to keep letters and contact numbers etc. It's important that at every single stage, customers are given a reminder about the PSR and an opportunity to access support and help if needed.
- The video on the website is great it's a really simple video and really useful - you should share that more, especially through social media and partners can share it through their comms channels and newsletters .
- All of the partners need to support NGN in promoting the PSR through their communications on a regular basis, not just a one of article or update as it will continue to be a need for customers as their situations change
- The PSR information needs to be front and centre on your website as that is where customers will go when they want to find anything out, they shouldn't have to search at all to find out about PSR.
- You also need to be mindful of customers with no internet or without the digital capability to access information online. You need ot target communications and awareness with the care network and not just rely on direct comms to the customers.
- Partnering with local care networks and adult social work teams and trying to get PSR identification added to their assessment for new and existing clients would be great. Social workers already have a list of support needs that they run through so you could ask them to check as part of their assessment check list and then they can pass on information to relatives as part of the care needs they identify.
- The environment agency have a flood alert text message service which directs people who have registered to a site where they can find out more information about risks and support available. A PSR site or app that did something similar could be helpful

Group 2 - Practical support discussion

- **Consider gaps in current journey**

- **Ideas to enhance the journey**

- **Is the current journey ok / does it require further work?**

- Clarified the GDNs role re PSR and also the fact reinstatement means ground, rather than reinstatement of supply
- Denise Bedford (Northumbrian Water Ltd.) – their site managers walk the site and see things from the customer's (different) perspective. Key part of communication
 - E.g. blind customer's dog could get past over-hanging branches
 - Autistic customer - was provided with ear defenders to cope with noise
- Denise also advised bottled water is part of the offering if registered on water PSR
- Nicola Duffy (CA) – what happens if supply reconnection is delayed? Jill advised we can establish any friends / family support, depending on duration can offer hot food facilities, overnight accommodation
- Carole Pitkeathley (NGN CEG) – PSR follow up process with DNOs
 - Is there anything in place? Setting expectations with customer of closing the loop
 - What will be their customer experience if they don't ever receive a 'closing the loop' call?
 - What does the customer 'get'?
 - NGN need to satisfy themselves that the customer is left knowing what happens next, if they've registered via NGN
- Nicola Duffy (CA) – Making Every Contact Count (MECC)
 - Who has conversations with customers on site? Jill confirmed engineers, site managers and Customer Care Officers
 - What do they leave? Jill advised MECC leaflets
 - Are there local arrangements they need to be aware of? MECC leaflets are tailored to geographical patch referral organizations
- Melanie Laws (NGN CEG) – should we be linking up more with LAs / Adult Social Care?

Feedback on general customer journey

A number of general points were raised in relation to the customer journey overall:

- Appears to be robust
- Key thing is speed and making sure vulnerable customers get a prompt response, making sure they are aware of both the support available and the process to get it and that it happens quickly. IT wasn't clear from the presentation how this differs from an emergency situation but from a planned works perspective this customer journey looks sensible and thorough
- Its arguably more important to identify vulnerability in an emergency situation
- During doorstep knocking it is really important that NGN engineers are easily identifiable and wear all the correct branded uniform and are trained, this becomes increasingly important if NGN is using contracts and make sure they adhere to the same standards and ensure vulnerable customer are safeguards and can trust NGN staff.

Event Evaluation and Future Engagement – 4 feedback responses (MS Forms) / 20 attendees

Summary:	Customers in Vulnerable Situations PSR and data sharing Workshop	Tuesday 22nd November 2022
Event Evaluation		
Q1	Choose 2 words from this list below to describe this event	Interesting, Insightful, Useful
Q2	Overall, how satisfied were you with the event?	8
Q3	How would you rate the discussions?	7.8
Q4	How would you rate the event contact and speakers? (Out of 5)	4.5
Q5	Did you find it useful to have a subject matter expert presenting in the session?	Yes – 4 No - 0
Q6	Is there anything you think could be improved / changes for future workshops?	In the breakout it would have been useful to have access to the slide that was presented on the PSR journey as it was a lot to remember. This could maybe also be sent in advance so people can look through and start to think about what they might want to discuss. Very useful session though.
Q7	Is there anything else you would like to tell us?	Presentations and general updates on programmes are extremely useful. No first workshop. Interesting to be involved and understand what happens at Northern Gas Networks
Q8	Thinking of yourself as a stakeholder of NGN, how satisfied are you with the relationship that you have with NGN	No Very interesting conversation Not just now N/A Thanks. Networking is never easy online, and I have not had a good hybrid meeting; at least 1 face to face meeting would be very useful
Q8	Thinking of yourself as a stakeholder of NGN, how satisfied are you with the relationship that you have with NGN	8.3

Q9	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?		
	NGN keeps me up to date on their business plans	Strongly agree	0
		Agree	3
		Somewhat agree	0
		Neither agree nor disagree	1
		Somewhat disagree	0
		Disagree	0
		Strongly disagree	0
	NGN provided me with clear information about their business performance	Strongly agree	1
		Agree	2
		Somewhat agree	0
		Neither agree nor disagree	1
		Disagree	0
		Strongly disagree	0
	NGN provided me with opportunities to give feedback on the topics that interest me	Strongly agree	1
		Agree	2
		Somewhat agree	0
		Neither agree nor disagree	1
		Somewhat disagree	0
		Disagree	0
		Strongly disagree	0
	NGN allows me to give feedback through my preferred method	Strongly agree	1
		Agree	2
		Somewhat agree	0
		Neither agree nor disagree	1
		Disagree	0
		Strongly disagree	0
	NGN makes it clear how they have used feedback to change	Strongly agree	2
		Agree	1
		Somewhat agree	0
		Neither agree nor disagree	1
		Somewhat disagree	0
		Disagree	0
		Strongly disagree	0

Future Engagement

Q10	How else would you like to engage with NGN in future?	Very useful to understand how Northern Gas Network operates
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Date of next workshops and other engagement

Date	Workshop topic
7th February 2023	CIVS Hot Topic workshop online – Financial Hardship – 10am to 12pm
25th April 2023	CIVS Annual Strategic workshop – venue TBC – 10:00 - 13:00

Tell us what you think

Thank you for reading this report. We welcome any further feedback, thoughts or ideas you have. Please drop us a line on at stakeholder@northerngas.co.uk

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