

## Citizen Panel

Wave 2 report: Autumn 2025

Customer insight on the Customer Support Fund and Artificial Intelligence approach



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## Background

Northern Gas Networks' Citizen Panel is a long-standing engagement mechanism for the business, which allows its thinking to be challenged and tested by a broadly representative group of consumers.

In 2025, Blue Marble was appointed to refresh the approach and membership, and support NGN with its delivery.

Three waves of engagement will be held each year, comprising:

- Full-day workshop with a refreshed Workshop Panel;
- Depth interviews with a newly convened Inclusive Panel.

The initial focus will be customer engagement on the GD3 Business Plan delivery from 2026, then moving into developing new areas and service improvements.



## Wave 2: Research Objectives

To gain customer insight to:

### 1. Shape the future of the NGN Customer Support Fund (CSF)

- Build understanding of the CSF
- Explore how best to support NGN customers in the future, in terms of the types of support
- To understand how customers believe NGN should be investing the CSF

### 2. Support the sustainable and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence at NGN

- To understand awareness, use and sentiment around AI
- Build knowledge of the use of AI in personal and business use
- To gain views on NGN's approach to adopting AI, including feedback on its governance, assurance and ethics
- Customer review of NGN's draft AI impact assessment tool





- **20 retained original panel members:** bringing informed views
- **11 new panel members:** bringing fresh perspective
- **1 Young Innovators Council (YIC) transitioner:** bridging the gap between NGN's engagement panels

**New members who for a variety of reasons cannot attend an in-person workshop, ensuring inclusivity and diversity**



For sample details, see appendix

*Workshop Panel Quote*

*Inclusive Panel Quote*





# Key findings



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**1** **Members question the role of NGN in supporting customers in this way, viewing suppliers and government as responsible.** That said, they are grateful to see NGN stepping up where they perceive others are not.

**2** **Members recognise the benefits of both sustainable and immediate support, however views have evolved since previous customer research, where support for immediate financial relief dominated.**

- **The Workshop Panel tends to prefer long-term support**, seeing it as addressing the structural roots of fuel poverty and as more meaningful than “sticking-plaster” fixes for what is now seen as an endemic issue.
- **The Inclusive Panel meanwhile recognise the benefits of short-term support more strongly than the Workshop Panel**, acknowledging that while long-term support is preferable in principle, the current financial pressure means many households require quick-fix boosts to cope.

**3** **However, other factors such as who is helped and what the scheme involves, are as important to members.**

- Members want schemes to target support for the “right people” – namely those with health vulnerabilities or in severe financial hardship.
- They want to know that schemes are cost effective and help a significant amount of people.

**4** **For these reasons, Health Through Warmth is the most popular long-term scheme**, exemplifying the type of scheme members see as fitting to the CSF’s purpose, with targeted support to those most in need and for its wider social reach.

- Enhanced GSOP payments are seen as unnecessary/unfitting to the CSF, representing an overly high-cost vs benefit, and being untargeted. Heat the Person is preferred for interruption support.



1

**Members are initially hesitant about AI, feeling that it cannot be fully trusted.** Many feel unsure and uneasy about what impact AI might have, adding to existing concern over the future.

- Members nonetheless recognise that AI has its uses (e.g. for optimising efficiency in the workplace, or saving time on everyday tasks, e.g. meal planning), with about half of members using it in their daily lives.
- Members recognise that AI will be used across society, and feel NGN is right to be exploring how best to use it. It fits with how they see NGN - as an industry leader who likes to set standards.

2

**In this context, members appreciate NGN's cautious approach to AI.**

- Their high trust in NGN as an organisation plays an important role in reassuring members, who feel confident that NGN's approach will align to their values.
- While members are generally positive about NGN's strategy, more detailed discussion about the AIIA tool raises concerns about NGN's ability to govern AI usage and how it would work in practice.

3

**Job loss is their key concern**, which they view as inevitable with AI use. While they like NGN's idea of AI leading to job change rather than loss, they are concerned about staff ability to adjust to these job changes.

- **Governance concerns centre on oversight and accountability, fearing NGN losing control**, due to infeasibility of close human monitoring;
- They also worry that NGN will **lose its people-focused approach** (seen as a strong value of NGN).

4

Generally, **members see the AIIA tool as comprehensive** and a strong foundation to work from.

- They would nonetheless like more detail on data security, ethics, environmental impact and accessibility, and emphasis on the need for thorough consideration of why AI should be used and for which specific purposes.





# Consumer context



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Despite the mild Autumn, a majority of members have been using their heating for several weeks.



- Most members have been using their heating in recent weeks, however, due to milder weather, many are using it less frequently than they typically would at this time of year.
- Having the heating on at this time of a year is seen as a necessity for elderly members, and those with health conditions. A few described household disputes about when to turn the heating on, with some having it on 'against their will'.
- Some are anxious about using the heating and were holding off until they felt financially ready for winter bills.
- A minority of members haven't turned their heating on at all, instead choosing to layer up or wear warmer clothing.
- These members are seeking alternatives to using their heating due to ongoing concerns about the cost of energy and seeing it as unnecessary to use the heating yet, with some describing embracing a 'frugal' mindset.

### **Inclusive Panel perspective:**

- Care responsibilities and health conditions make the heating more essential for inclusive members at this time of year.
- For a majority, the heating is a 'non negotiable' necessity for their lives, and not something they can use in a discretionary manner.
- Some use coping mechanisms to 'trade off' the increased cost of using the heating, e.g. by using air fryers and heated blankets.

*"Every time I put the heating on it feels like you can just see the pound notes going down even though you need it on."*



- Cost is seen as the largest challenge for energy customers, with **many struggling to understand why prices are still high** and continue to fluctuate.
- Members are frustrated with the **lack of clarity around what impacts the cost of their bills**, beyond global factors e.g. War in Ukraine.
- High energy costs are also part of **the broader increased cost of living for members**, with many emphasising that 'everything is more expensive', not just their energy bills.



- **There is anxiety that smart meters may drive negative behaviours among vulnerable people**, such as the elderly and those with mental health conditions.
- A few members have become **overly fixated on the data**, whereas others avoid looking at their smart meter because of the stress it causes.
- A small number mention **practical barriers** with getting their smart meters installed and working properly.

*"The profit margins make me sick, why are the profit margins so big? [...] It just doesn't seem fair."*

*"I'm getting to the point where I'm quite wary of how many cups of tea I have because it goes from green to amber."*



- Members also raised concerns about **low carbon technology** and **energy efficient measures**, and were unsure about **how achieving net zero would work in practice**.
- **A minority oppose the government's net zero ambitions**, due to concerns about measures creating additional costs for customers. They want to see a greater focus on bringing costs down instead.

The Inclusive Panel is broadly aligned with the Workshop Panel in terms of their current concerns about the energy sector.



The inclusive panel is a group of 10 customers, who participate via online depth interviews. Members have one or more vulnerabilities within their household which prevent them from participating in the workshop.\*

## Panel context

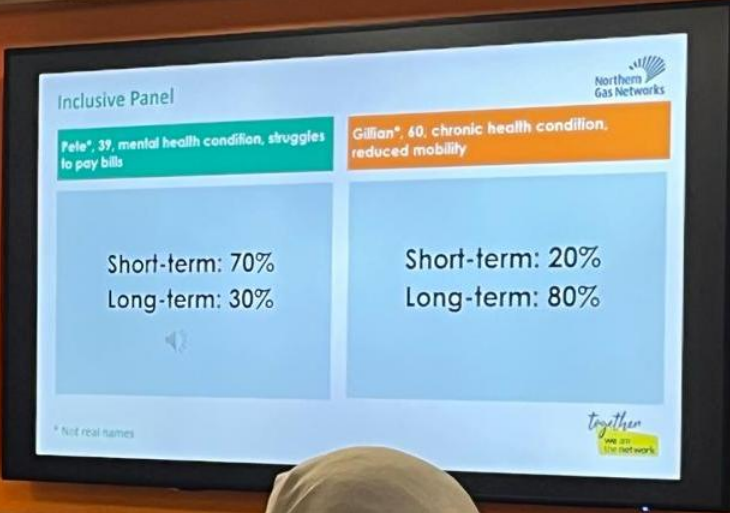
- Recently, some have experienced income instability through temporary unemployment, partial returns to work after illness, whilst others are balancing volunteering / low-income work.
- Since July, a few members are now navigating major life changes, including pregnancy, raising children and bereavements.
- Health vulnerabilities and caregiving have exacerbated members' energy needs. Additionally, poorly insulated homes, or inefficient boilers have amplified energy costs.

## Key challenges

- As with workshop members, the Inclusive Panel is primarily concerned about the cost of energy and bill affordability. They are anxious about their bills spiking in the winter months, and the impact this will have on their finances.
- Most feel that the number of customers needing support has increased dramatically, as people are “choosing between heating and eating”. There is currently not enough information about the support available to customers.
- Some are frustrated with the energy market, and feel the system is delivering poor value for money.

*“I’m struggling with work more, because I’m struggling with new symptoms that are occurring every single day and trying out different medications.”*

*“When everything was privatised, did privatisation do what it was meant to do? I’m not saying that before privatisation everything was hunky dory, but I don’t necessarily believe that privatisation has delivered the best value for the people of this country.”*



# Customer Support Fund (CSF)



BLUE MARBLE

Members welcome the creation of additional support, even if they don't see this as NGN's responsibility.

## Perception of the current support landscape is bleak

- Members recognise that in the current financial climate, many in society are struggling to afford essentials such as their energy bills.
- Outside of the utility sector, there is a strong sense that existing welfare and support systems are “broken” and underfunded.
- Concern about misuse or abuse of benefits is widespread, which sometimes colours perceptions of support schemes.

## Most believe that additional support is not NGN's (or other gas networks') role

- NGN is primarily associated with providing safety and fixing infrastructure, rather than financial support. This is especially because they don't have day-to-day contact with customers.
- Instead, members see the responsibility for providing support lying with the government and suppliers. A small number suggested charities and regulators could help alongside this.
- While they don't think this support should come from NGN, members praise them for stepping in where others aren't.

*“I have a problem with some people who get benefits. For instance, there's somebody I'm thinking about who gets about £2,000 a month for sitting on their backside.”*

*“They have a duty of care for the most vulnerable in society to ensure that they are well looked after and don't go into energy poverty.”*

*“It's not NGN's business to get involved in that business. We have a welfare state that should cope with the issues which you're talking about...”*



Members are glad to see the funding coming from shareholder contributions, rather than billpayers.

## Initial reactions to the Customer Support Fund

- Members like the idea of a sector-wide fund focused on customers struggling with energy bills.
- Many view the CSF as helpful, but due to the £150k budget, some perceive it as “nice but minor”.
- Members find the proportion of customers helped insignificant in comparison to the overall number who need support.
- Some suggest that the support might be better delivered if centralised, especially through government channels.
- Some feel the fund could act as a useful catalyst or model if other parties fail to step up.
- Uncertainty and/or concern emerge around:
  - Where the money comes from, especially in relation to shareholder dividends
  - Eligibility criteria and how NGN assesses which customers receive the support
  - Costs of administering the fund, in relation to the overall budget

## Inclusive Panel perspective:

- The Inclusive Panel agree this is a positive initiative although most feel that the onus for this should be on suppliers, rather than networks voluntarily doing it.
- The concept resonated with them, particularly due to the current financial climate. Several feel that measures that can prevent customers from hitting ‘rock bottom’ are a necessity.
- The CSF being entirely funded by shareholder contributions has strong appeal. This challenges the common view of shareholders, who ‘normally try to line their own pockets’.
- They suggest NGN makes more noise about schemes that use shareholder contributions in a positive way.

*It's a great start. But if I was challenging this, I'd question the figures and the budget."*



Preferences remain largely stable, with most members holding their initial short- vs. long-term leanings throughout the research process.

## **The Workshop Panel tends to prefer long-term support - though this varies by project - while still recognising the importance of short-term relief in the current climate.**

- Long-term schemes are seen as addressing the structural roots of fuel poverty and more meaningful than short-term “sticking-plaster” fixes - with several echoing this phrase from the Inclusive Panel case studies.
- The Health Through Warmth scheme is the most popular, valued for supporting people with health vulnerabilities and for its wider social benefit. Members see it as a fundamental service.
- The Workshop Panel still stresses the importance of immediate help for households in acute crisis, such as those on pre-payment meters.
- A handful reflected on short- and long-term support being complementary rather than competing.

## **When considering the needs of themselves and those close to them, the Inclusive Panel recognises the benefits of short-term support more strongly than the Workshop Panel.**

- Members acknowledge that while long-term support is preferable in principle, the current financial pressure means many households require quick-fix boosts to cope.
- One emphasised that due to the upcoming winter, and the current financial climate *“no one cares about the long term if they can't make it through the next two weeks”*.

## **Preferences remain stable throughout**

Members initial leanings towards short- or long-term support stay largely unchanged through the deliberations. Very few shift their view between first exposure to the CSF “pie chart” and their final vote.



# It is not simply a short-term versus long-term trade off when deciding which scheme to prioritise 16

Preferences are primarily shaped by **what** each scheme offers and **who it helps**. Members use these metrics to assess suitability – i.e. does it align with their desired purpose for the CSF, and will it meaningfully benefit those most in need?

## Commonly cited as important



**Who benefits:** Strong preference for schemes targeting health- and financially-vulnerable customers. Little enthusiasm for less targeted options (e.g. GSOP payments). They worry about eligibility and misuse, and want NGN to ensure support reaches those most in need.



**What is it:** Members value schemes that provide relief to the most vulnerable customers, either through structural help or immediate relief.



**Support theme:** Prefer infrastructure-based support over financial payments, partly due to concerns about misuse and partly because they see financial support as outside NGN's core role (other bodies should do this).



**Cost vs reach:** Striking the right balance between scheme cost against number of people helped is key (e.g. mixed views on Off-Gas Warmth).



**% of CSF allocation:** Very low-funded schemes sometimes viewed as tokenistic, or not worth the administrative effort.



**Social Return on Investment:** Initially unclear to most, but valued once explained. Members link it to wider societal pressures and limited resources, which reinforces its importance.



**Delivery and responsibility:** A minority remain sceptical about delivery through councils or external partners and want all spending publicly accounted for.



**Timing:** A few emphasise the importance of being able to deliver support quickly.



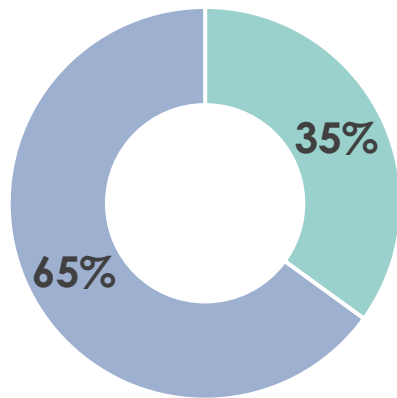


# Members were given 10 counters each to allocate funding across short- and long-term support 17

Overall, both panels indicate that a mix of the two approaches is essential, though strong support for Health Through Warmth leads to a slightly stronger long-term preference among the Workshop Panel.

## Workshop Panel

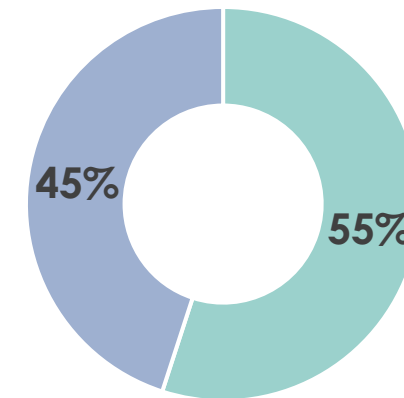
Proportion of counters assigned to scheme types  
(32 members)



Short term support  
Long term support

## Inclusive Panel

Proportion of counters assigned to scheme types  
(10 members)



Scheme type	% of all counters
Enhanced GSOP payments*	5%
Fuel vouchers*	14%
Heat the person	17%
Off gas warmth*	14%
Energy efficiency items	16%
Health through warmth*	35%

**x5 people** 70% to short-term vs. 30% to long-term  
**x2 people** 20% to short-term vs. 80% to long-term  
**x1 person** 50% to short-term vs. 50% to long-term  
**x2 people** Unsure (refused to vote)

N.B. the panels used different voting methods. The Workshop Panel voted on individual schemes, which were aggregated into short- vs. long-term proportions. The Inclusive Panel voted directly on short- vs. long-term options. Workshop participants viewed all six scheme examples, while Inclusive Panel participants saw two from a rotating set of four.

\*Viewed by Inclusive Panel

## Enhanced payment for gas supply interruptions (short-term support)

Many do not want NGN to invest the CSF in this scheme. They feel NGN should already be doing this as part of normal operations (especially as it goes to all customers), rather than something that should draw on CSF funding.



**5%**  
coins allocated  
(Workshop Panel)

### Investment decision:



This is the **least supported** of all the customer support schemes that were tested – with 3/5 workshop tables allocating 0 coins to this.

- **Reactions highlight what members perceive the purpose of the CSF to be, with who receives support seen as crucial** (i.e. prioritising people on benefits or with health vulnerabilities).
- Members commonly suggest the scheme **should be means-tested**, with higher support for more vulnerable customers. Some feel automatic payments to financially secure customers are unnecessary and wasteful.
- Impact is also **muted by the low payment amount** - £30 is widely seen as insufficient and not worth the investment, especially given the scheme's large share of the CSF budget (45%).
- The **timing of the payment** – provided after rather than during need – is viewed as limiting its usefulness, particularly when compared with more immediate forms of assistance (e.g. “Heat the Person”).

### Inclusive Panel perspective:

Some prefer the scheme to focus only on vulnerable customers, arguing support should target those most in need. For example, some favour direct help with energy costs (e.g. vouchers) instead of compensation for interruptions. Others feel the additional 4-hour trigger for payments was unnecessary and too soon.

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### Investment decision:



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*“You could have somebody earning a million pounds, they’ll still get it.”*

*“If you’re saying NGN is not supplying gas, you’re going to give us 30 pounds, that’s not support. That is their responsibility.”*

*“That shouldn’t come out of the fund. It should be a separate fund because that’s completely different, that’s taking money from vulnerable people.”*

### Inclusive Panel perspective:

*“I don’t think the immediate need for money in the customer support fund is necessarily someone who loses gas for 24 hours. I feel like a £30 prepaid voucher would actually, you know, help someone with power, rather than compensating people... It’s kind of a compensation and a goodwill thing for me, rather than an assistance.”*

## Fuel vouchers (short-term support)

Members recognise their role as an essential emergency lifeline in the current climate, with strong practical benefits. However, they worry about over-reliance, potential misuse, and one-off payments doing little to address ongoing need.



**14%**  
coins allocated  
(Workshop Panel)

### Investment decision:



This is the **second most supported short-term scheme**, though middle ranking schemes sit very close together. Its popularity varied a lot by table – ranging from 19 coins to 2.

- Workshop members often raise **concerns about misuse or abuse of the system**, reflecting broader underlying distrust around financial support schemes and whether help reaches those most in need.
- Some **question how effectively the scheme supports the right people**, noting the most vulnerable may still avoid using heating despite receiving these.
- They raise concerns about potential **dependency**, feeling the scheme could require repeated funding and that one-off payments alone do little to address ongoing need.
- For some members, the scheme is seen as an **essential**; viewing it as sitting alongside a longer-term, more strategic solution.
- While most viewed it as a ‘sticking plaster’ solution, some see the vouchers as an **important emergency lifeline** for those in immediate need.
- **Those who have previously received them see them as highly valuable**, calling them a “game changer” and noting clear, practical impact.

### Inclusive Panel perspective:

Seen as a necessary scheme in the current climate, but some want to see this go beyond being a basic ‘sticking plaster’ for a small number of households – with the low number of vouchers risking ongoing needs being unmet. A few are surprised to see only 245 households benefited, compared to the number likely to need them. One raised concerns about vulnerable people needing to self-advocate to receive this support.

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## Investment decision:



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## Inclusive Panel perspective:

*"It's just tiding people over. But especially with the way that the situation has been for the last couple of years, sometimes in the moment it's more important to get people through."*

*"It will be a lifeline to someone who's absolutely desperate. I think it will give them a lot of relief."*

*"It's like a sticking plaster really for three months."*

*"People may get reliant on it, if they get it three times, and then think 'I can't get another 49 quid, where do I get that money from?'"*

## Heat the person (short-term support)

Despite concerns about sustainability, members see value in this support for its immediate, tangible impact during an interruption. However, it's called out for being a plaster that addresses the symptom rather than the cause.



**16%**  
coins allocated  
(Workshop Panel)

### Investment decision:



The most favoured short-term solution at the overall workshop level, but this consensus diminishes upon closer examination (similarly to fuel vouchers). Preference varied significantly across tables, ranging from 2 to 20 counters, so lacked a more unanimous backing.

- Although not viewed as cost-effective, members feel this scheme is necessary and can be genuinely helpful.
- **Compared with the enhanced payment**, this is valued as support delivered at the point of need during an interruption, making it more timely in its utility.
- The project was **positively received for prioritising vulnerable customers**, with members recognising that the support was reaching the “right people.”
- Some feel the approach should “**heat the home, not the person**”, describing the handouts as a temporary fix or “sticking plaster.”
- There is **confusion about the scheme’s incident-specific nature**; those who did not realise it was only for interruptions questioned its sustainability.
- Some **perceive overlap with supplier support**, leading to uncertainty about whose responsibility it is to provide these items.
- Items such as electric blankets are believed by some to be **expensive to run**, especially where electricity was thought to cost more than gas.
- A few raised concerns about **misuse**, such as forgetting to switch devices off.

**Note:** This scheme was not shown to Inclusive Panel members.

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Despite concerns about sustainability, members see value in this CSF support for its immediate, tangible impact during an interruption. However, it's called out for being a plaster that addresses the symptom rather than the cause.



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### Investment decision:



The most favoured short-term solution at the overall workshop level, but this consensus diminishes upon closer examination (similarly to fuel vouchers). Preference varied significantly across tables, ranging from 2 to 20 counters, so lacked a more unanimous backing.

*"It's more direct, it's quick... You could prevent somebody getting seriously ill."*

*"There's a slight risk to vulnerable and elderly customers if they're not aware of how long to leave electric blankets on for."*

*"The disabled and the elderly are going to need a little bit more than a blanket."*

**Note:** This scheme was not shown to Inclusive Panel members.

## Off gas warmth (long-term support)

Members value the improvements that this scheme would bring to beneficiaries but are critical about the very low number of households that would benefit from this scheme.



**14%**  
coins allocated  
(Workshop Panel)

### Investment decision:



This is the least popular of the long-term measures, with only one table showing relatively decent support, while the other four indicated weaker favourability.

- The scheme is valued for **delivering long-term, enduring change**.
- A sizeable minority however are concerned about 25% of the fund supporting **only 7 households**, seeing a **minimal reach** and impact.
- Alongside this, the cost – £50k for 7 households – is seen as very high, though several members acknowledged the strong SROI.
- Some feel that even **eligible households might still avoid using the heating** if they cannot afford running costs, reflecting uncertainty about the relative cost of gas versus other fuels.
- There is notable **confusion about how the scheme operates**, including questions about eligibility, costs and practicalities (e.g., what happens if some neighbours are already connected, would it be cheaper etc).

### Inclusive Panel perspective:

Members appreciate the potential for lifelong impact on wellbeing, but many criticise that only seven households were helped, feeling the budget should have supported more people. Several want reassurance about how proactively the company identifies and assists those most in need.



Members value the improvements that this scheme would bring to beneficiaries but are critical about the very low number of households that would currently benefit from this scheme.



**14%**  
coins allocated  
(Workshop Panel)

## Investment decision:



This is the least popular of the long-term measures, with only one table showing relatively decent support, while the other four indicated weaker favourability.

*"There's older adults that I work with who can no longer manage their open fire, that would be a huge, huge help."*

*"Seven households is literally, wow. It's not even one per council."*

*"You've got new equipment but who's going to pay for it ... if I can't afford it, I'm not going to put it on."*

## Inclusive Panel perspective:

*"That's not a long time to wait to have a long-term impact on your life."*

*"It's a quick response, but it has long term benefits and potential long-term savings for the beneficiaries."*

## Energy efficiency small measures (long-term support)

Members see benefits to issuing the items, but see this scheme as having a limited impact on the most vulnerable customers.



**16%**  
coins allocated  
(Workshop Panel)

### Investment decision:



This was second most popular long-term support scheme. For the one table who were less convinced by Health through Warmth, this scheme was their most invested in long-term scheme.

- Members view this scheme as **efficient and effective over time**, offering modest but tangible long-lasting benefits at relatively low cost.
- Compared with other short-term handouts, some feel it's more worthwhile due to its **longevity and strong SROI** relative to price.
- Nonetheless, some **question whether this is NGN's responsibility**, and a few see elements of the scheme as tokenistic, and not addressing the root cause of support needs.
- Certain items are **dismissed as unserious** (e.g., LED bulbs) or **not useful unless heating is used** (e.g., radiator reflectors) which is the key problem, with some suggesting cheap alternatives like tin foil could work instead.
- Concerns arise around **cost per household being high** (from their own calculations) given the simplicity of the items.
- Some feel that **advice and education could have greater impact** than physical gadgets.
- Others believe this type of support works best alongside other schemes, such as fuel vouchers, as part of a **combined short- and long-term approach**.

**Note:** This scheme was not shown to Inclusive Panel members.

Members see benefits to issuing the items, but see this scheme as having a limited impact on the most vulnerable customers.



**16%**  
coins allocated  
(Workshop Panel)

## Investment decision:



This was second most popular long-term support scheme. For the one table who were less convinced by Health through Warmth, this scheme was their most invested in long-term scheme.

*"This seemed quite a good idea because A they were cheap, B effective and C long lasting."*

*"It increases your bill immensely because these things are not cheap to run."*

*"If you're thinking about all these things you're plugging in like heaters, heated blankets, radiators guards, you're not really looking at the gas bill anymore, you're just sort of diverting the cost. So NGN is saying, oh, we've helped you, but the customer's still struggling in some ways, cost wise, if not heat wise."*

**Note:** This scheme was not shown to Inclusive Panel members.

## Health through warmth (long-term support)

This scheme resonates most with members as fitting for the CSF. It is seen as fundamental to society, helping those they view as most vulnerable.



**35%**  
coins allocated  
(Workshop Panel)

### Investment decision:



The most popular support scheme in the CSF, and the top fund for 3/5 tables in the workshop. This scheme is seen as fundamental if the CSF is to improve the lives of the most vulnerable.

- This scheme is viewed as a **strong fit for the fund**, particularly for its health benefits and its focus on genuinely vulnerable customers.
- Members value the number of people supported, seeing it as having good reach, with some wanting an even **larger share of the fund allocated** to it given its positive impact.
- Suggested improvements centre on **speed of delivery** as implementation is seen as too slow, reducing the benefit for those with health vulnerabilities. There is a **desire for faster support** and broader reach.
- A minority question whether this is NGN's responsibility, reflecting some **uncertainty about remit**.
- There are occasional concerns about **trust and clarity over delivery partners**, with members wanting transparency on where the money goes and how responsibilities are shared.

### Inclusive Panel perspective:

This project is also popular with inclusive members, and many want to see the funding expanded for this project. It is seen as a worthwhile scheme, but most want more information and transparency on income thresholds and eligibility. A few questioned why it applies only to homeowners and what equivalent support could be offered to tenants, particularly given the high cost of heating systems.

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coins allocated  
(Workshop Panel)

### Investment decision:



The most popular support scheme in the CSF, and the top fund for 3/5 tables in the workshop. This scheme is seen as fundamental if the CSF is to improve the livelihoods of the most vulnerable.

*"It sounds like its changing people's lives."*

*"There's a lot of distrust of Local Authorities. NGN need to demonstrate that this money is actually reaching the people it needs to reach."*

*"One to two weeks is a bit too late, that's what our general concern is."*

### Inclusive Panel perspective:

*"If they don't get the help straight away that's going to affect their mental health as well."*

*"There's the winter fuel allowance, but there's a lot of people under 60 who might not qualify for the warm home discount, but might benefit from this. [...] Pensioners already get a lot of help."*

## Pete\*, 39, mental health condition, struggles to pay bills

Pete has mental health conditions and is returning to work after 6 months' medical leave. He lives in social housing with his partner and 2 kids.

Energy costs are a major concern for Pete, as he has fallen behind on his bill payments. While he believes that suppliers should carry the responsibility for support schemes, he is glad to see NGN providing extra support for customers.

Pete allocated **70% of his counters to short-term support**. He prefers short-term support because he finds that support can often be "very slow coming forward", and immediate help like a fuel voucher, can prevent financial problems or people's health conditions from spiralling.

Much of his rationale is focused on the greater reach that the short-term schemes provide. He is concerned that supporting small numbers of customers via long-term support feels insufficient and unfair when a much larger number need help in the current financial climate.

*"Short-term, as dramatic as this might sound, might save a life."*

## Gillian\*, 60, chronic health condition, reduced mobility

Gillian owns her home and is a home-maker. She lives with her husband in a rural location. Her chronic health condition reduces her mobility and she feels the cold more.

She does not describe herself as struggling financially. Gillian keeps her heating on regularly and isn't cutting back her energy usage.

Gillian is unsure about how eligible customers would know the support fund exists or how to access it – she questions NGN's role in providing the CSF.

Gillian allocated **80% of her counters to long-term support**. She strongly favours long-term inventions, over the short-term schemes, viewing short-term support as "too much of a short-term sticking plaster".

She feels that long term support offers more tangible benefits, such as bill reductions for the long term and improved wellbeing.

*"You're physically more likely to stay healthier and well for longer. So there's less impact on the health services, and financially you'd be slightly better off and that would be an ongoing saving and an ongoing reduction in fuel expenditure".*

Members want to NGN to deliver a balanced support portfolio of short- and long-term schemes, which can be delivered in unison and target the most vulnerable customers.

## **Deliver a balanced support portfolio**

Support shouldn't solely focus on either the short- or long-term, especially as there were mixed verdicts across the two panels. It is important for NGN to communicate how short- and long-term support work together rather than compete with each other's resources. Beyond the short- and long-term focus, factors such as the 'who' and the 'what' for the schemes are seen as very important.

## **Prioritise targeted benefits for the most vulnerable**

Members favour schemes that directly support health-vulnerable (and severely financially-vulnerable) households. NGN could consider maintaining or increasing investment in Health Through Warmth, as this is viewed as fundamental, high-impact and meaningful. The enhanced GSOP is seen as out of place, allocating valuable resources of the fund to 'better off' customers.

## **Clarify and strengthen the purpose and positioning of the CSF**

NGN should be transparent with how eligibility is assessed and how funds are allocated to reassure customers that support reaches those most in need. Emphasise that the fund fills urgent gaps where the wider system is failing customers, rather than replacing government or suppliers.

## **Improve transparency regarding funding sources and administration**

Members want reassurance that the schemes will be well advertised and communicated. There is concern about vulnerable people having to self-advocate for help, as members want to be confident that NGN will reach out more proactively to those who need the most support.





# Artificial Intelligence



BLUE MARBLE





While they do appreciate the practical benefits AI brings, they hold a more cautious attitude towards its future.

**About half of members say they currently use AI in their everyday lives, mentioning examples such as meal planning, seeking legal advice, or summarising emails. Usage varies widely: some have only tried it once or twice, while others use it far more frequently at work, particularly in IT, education, or healthcare settings.**

## **Betty: “A real love/hate relationship.”**

Betty\* is an occupational therapist who works for the NHS and describes having strongly mixed feelings towards AI.

On one hand, she is aware of the serious environmental impact of ChatGPT, and her 18-year-old daughter is firmly against it.

On the other hand, she finds AI very efficient for her high demanding job. She also uses it for meal planning and sees it as effective way to avoid food waste and save money.

*“...[I] personally selfishly find it really helpful and useful. I'm intrigued by where it could go, but I'm aware it's problematic for lots of reasons.”*

## **Alex: “Worried and cautious.”**

Despite his IT background, Alex\* feels mostly concerned about AI. He worries about the amount of energy and water required by AI to perform a single query. He is also wary of its ‘black box’ nature, meaning people cannot see how decisions are made and therefore should remain very cautious.

While he recognises that AI is “brilliant” for e.g. helping NHS with cancer research, he also mentions hearing news of AI advising teenagers the best place to commit suicide.

*“We don't know how it works. Even the people designing it don't know how it comes up with its decisions. So, I think we need to be cautious.”*

## **Dolly: “Sceptical and a little bit unsure.”**

Dolly\* is retired and feels she doesn't have as much interaction with AI as others might do. For her, AI represents many unknowns – but she is aware that people are becoming more reliant on these tools and has heard about AI exhibiting bias or being ‘racist’.

Dolly feels worried for the future of her grandchildren – whether it could affect their ability to get jobs and or reduce their abilities to think independently.

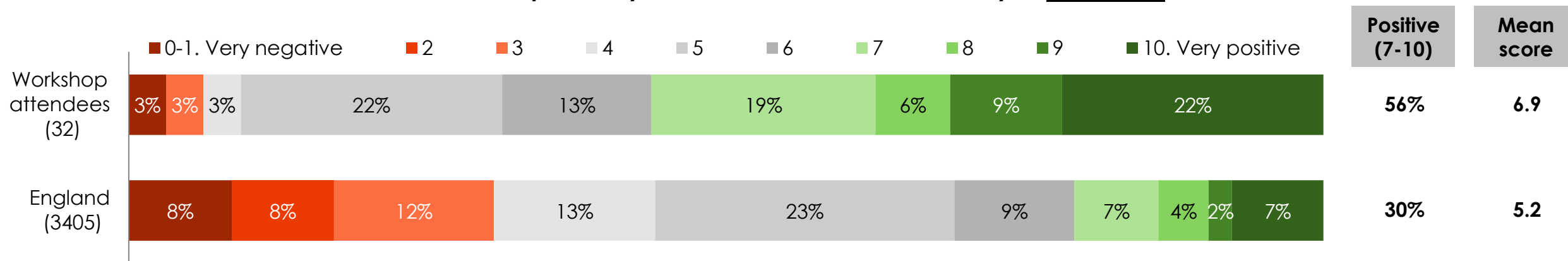
*“I'm still sort of worried for the future [...] of my grandchildren, how it could affect their ability to get jobs and how it maybe stops them from thinking for themselves. People just become lazier”*



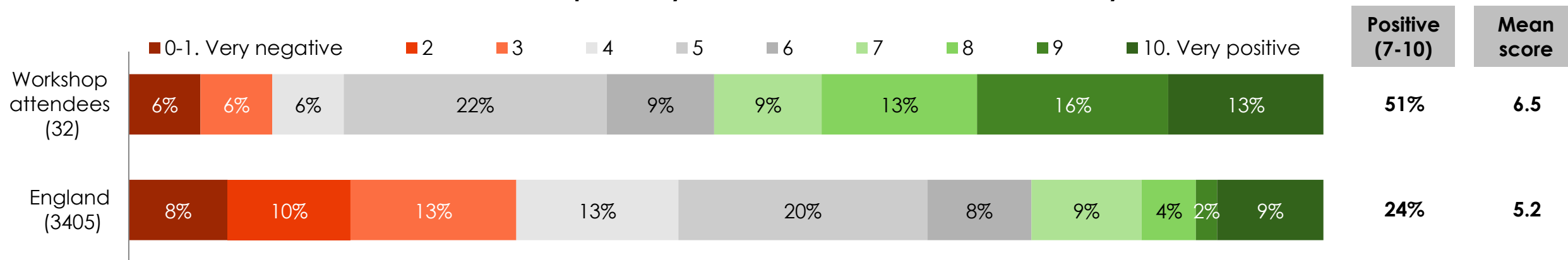
# In line with table discussions, survey results show mixed feelings towards the impact of AI

Compared with England-wide data members have a more positive outlook, with around half feeling AI would have a positive impact on themselves or on society.

## What impact do you think AI will have overall on you personally?



## What impact do you think AI will have overall on society?



We captured members' attitudes towards AI, using the same question included in the RTA Public attitudes to data and AI (PADAI) Tracker survey (Wave 4) to compare against attitudes of respondents from wider England. Please note workshop percentages are based on a small sample size (32) and should be treated with caution. Survey data was collected post-workshop which may have impacted member views.

For most, their views of NGN as a highly trustworthy and 'human' organisation means they have high trust in principle of their approach to AI.

## Members like NGN's 'sensibly cautious' approach.

- They appreciate that NGN seems aware and transparent about the infancy of AI, and its issues and limitations – taking it “*with a pinch of salt*” and not blindly trusting it.
- This resonates with how they themselves feel about AI, which is comforting to them.

## Members are less sure about NGN's governance.

- Members question whether NGN staff will be able to use it properly due to its complexity, and how it will be policed (members aren't sure how AI is policed generally, let alone how NGN could do it).
- Despite this, their high trust in NGN limits their concerns about governance issues.

*“I liked the fact that he said, ‘but I don't trust it’. I thought, like, at least we've got that admission rather than saying, ‘oh yeah, it's great, it's going to save gas leakages’ and things like that [...] He said, we're always going to have a human that makes the decision. As long as they stand by that.”*

## Data privacy has mixed pertinence for members.

- Some members aren't particularly concerned as they aren't sure how much customer data NGN has as a network.
- For others, it is a concern, especially if NGN would be using 3<sup>rd</sup> party software.
- Members do however appreciate NGN's honesty regarding the necessity to buy 3<sup>rd</sup> party software and use 'black box AI' and are positive about NGN's plans to build their own AI systems for important decisions if this gives them complete control over what the AI will be making recommendations based on.

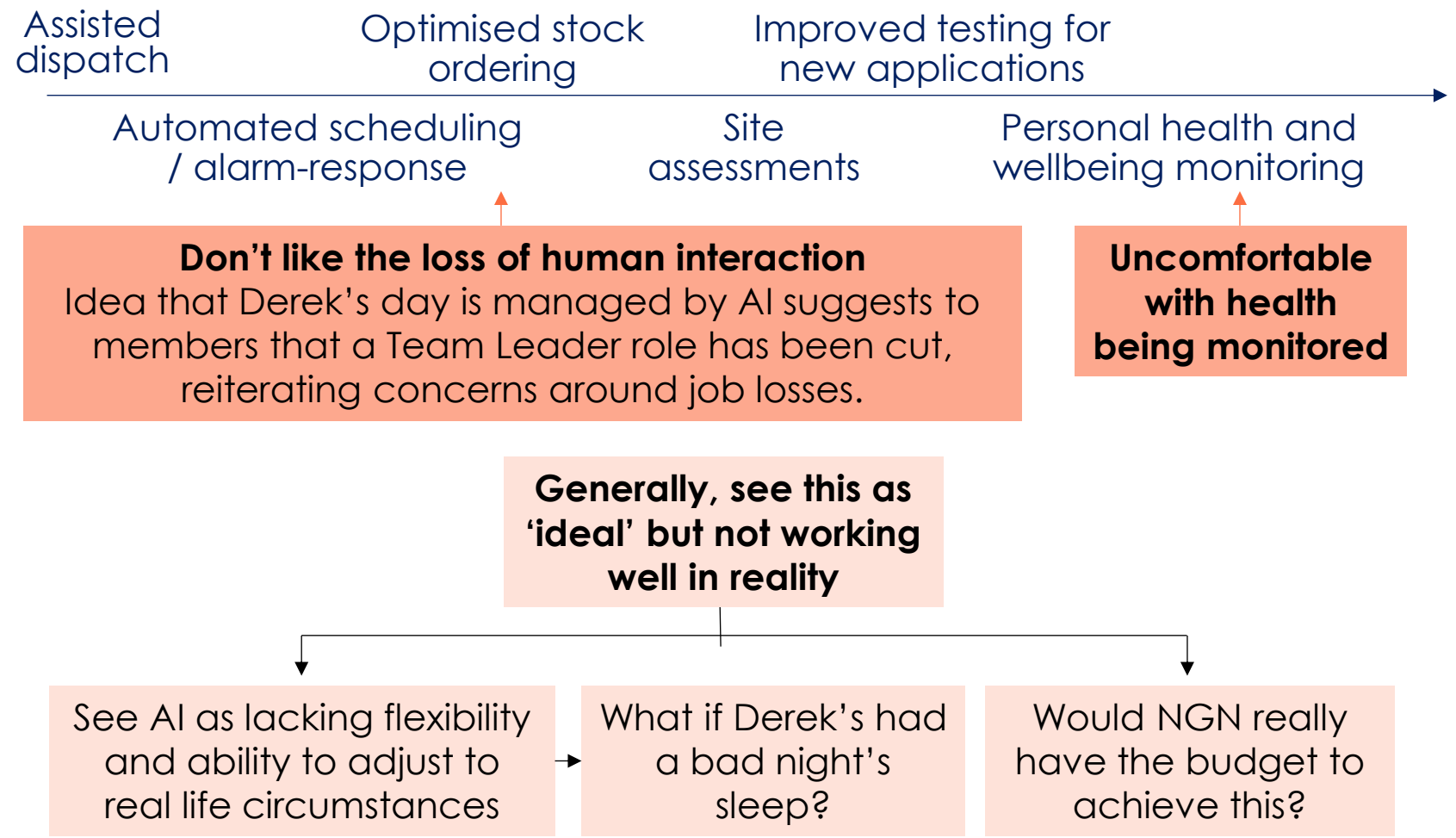


# While positive about optimising efficiency, members are concerned about aspects of the Derek<sub>37</sub> from Berwick vision

They specifically dislike the loss of human interaction and “big brother” style monitoring, and question the feasibility of this AI use in day-to-day work.



## Life of Derek (from Berwick)



# Members see the benefits of AI for select uses, such as analysing large datasets and optimising efficiency, especially if it leads to bill reductions

Their key concerns revolve around job losses and ability of staff to adjust to job role changes, as well as a reduction in human connection.

"It should be suggestions the AI are making, not decisions."

E.g. like that AI could help identify vulnerable customers – but wouldn't like AI to decide who is vulnerable.

✓ Members are positive about AI's potential use to...
Analyse numbers and datasets
Make suggestions
Identify vulnerable customers
Benefit customers – e.g. to lower bills
Lead to job changes only

✗ However, they don't think AI should ...
Analyse or write words
Make decisions
Reduce customer service quality (e.g. by introducing AI chatbot)
Be used in HR
Lead to job losses

← Apparent nuance of words vs numbers

Worry about loss of human connection, empathy and support in HR and customer service roles

### Job loss is a key concern.

While reassured that NGN's approach emphasises job changes rather than losses, not all members think this is realistic, and they are also concerned about ability of staff to adapt to job changes. 'Will everyone be able to keep up?'

While members are generally positive about NGN's strategy, more detailed discussion about the tool raises questions about NGN's ability to govern AI usage and how it would work in practice.

**The tool is generally well received**, with members having limited suggestions for missing elements, indicating that they see the list as fairly comprehensive.

- It should be noted however that members found it quite challenging to critique the tool, due to its format (as an internal document) and content (corporate use of AI which they have limited understanding of).

**Nonetheless, as members work through the tool, questions arise and views on where NGN should place increased focus become clear.** Members have lots of questions/comments about and want increased focus on:

**Data security** (including how and where it is stored, and which data is involved)

**How NGN can ensure they stay in control of AI** (including feasibility of human monitoring and regulation)

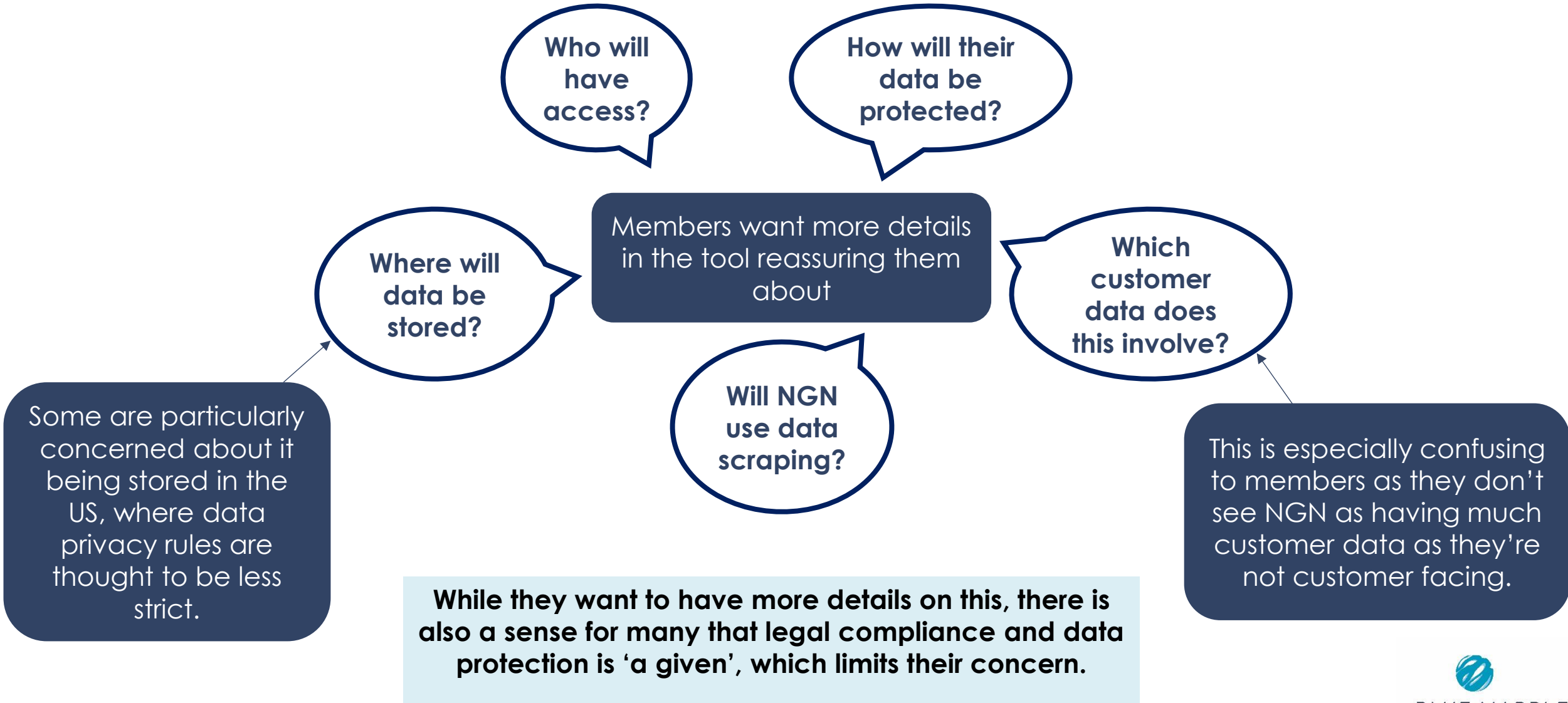
**'Why' NGN should use AI** (and how thoroughly they should consider alternatives and impact)

**Ethics and accessibility** (including how NGN can avoid AI-induced bias, decreased empathy and job losses)

**The environmental impact** (including how to justify this and how it merits its own distinct category)



They have lots of questions around how, where and what data will be stored and how NGN can protect it.





They emphasise the importance of asking 'why' every time they consider using AI.

**Why should AI be used?**  
Members want to make sure alternatives to using AI have been considered from the very start.

11 15 210  
Add: what are alternatives to AI, so they are considered

**Focus on the 'Why?'**

**Specifically, why should AI be used rather than a human?**

- Asking what are the benefits of using AI vs a human - could a human do this job?
- Are there any risks or detriment to humans through this choice?
- The importance of this is linked to their scepticism that the use of AI wouldn't lead to job losses.

Throughout any process, they want NGN to be persistent in asking these questions to ensure using AI for each particular purpose is truly necessary.

These regular checks to assess whether AI is the 'best fit for job' would be part of an ongoing wider risk assessment.  
This is seen as helpful for ensuring NGN is open minded and flexible in its use of AI – a value that is important to members.

*"We should be asking why lots of times, five or six times, why do we need this?"*

They want AI to be closely monitored by humans, but question whether NGN can achieve full oversight in practice.

Newspaper headlines about "AI getting out of control" heightens fear of AI – something we see in the members' initial reactions to AI. This, added to a general desire for control we see in today's uncertain climate, means that this is a key theme for NGN's use of AI: **How will NGN stay in control.**

## Members want reassurance that people will stay in control, overseeing AI, and always have the final say.

- They have concerns about how feasible it is for NGN to stay in control, questioning if it is realistic that a human could oversee the volume of work an AI was doing, for example complex analysis on large datasets.

## Members need more detail on how the close human monitoring (that is very important to them) can be achieved in practice.

- They believe the human checks and accountability need to be clearly built into plans upfront and monitored.

## They want to make sure people don't become reliant on AI.

- For members, there is a risk that once AI use becomes normalised, detailed monitoring will stop, while meanwhile human skillsets while have decreased.

## For members it is key to know that there is a contingency plan if things go wrong.

- They want NGN to be able and willing to pull the plug as necessary, as well as reassurance regarding what happens if there is a cyber attack.

AI leaders are saying it's too fast  
too scary

"I'd have less faith in NGN if I knew that ChatGPT was like keeping me safe."

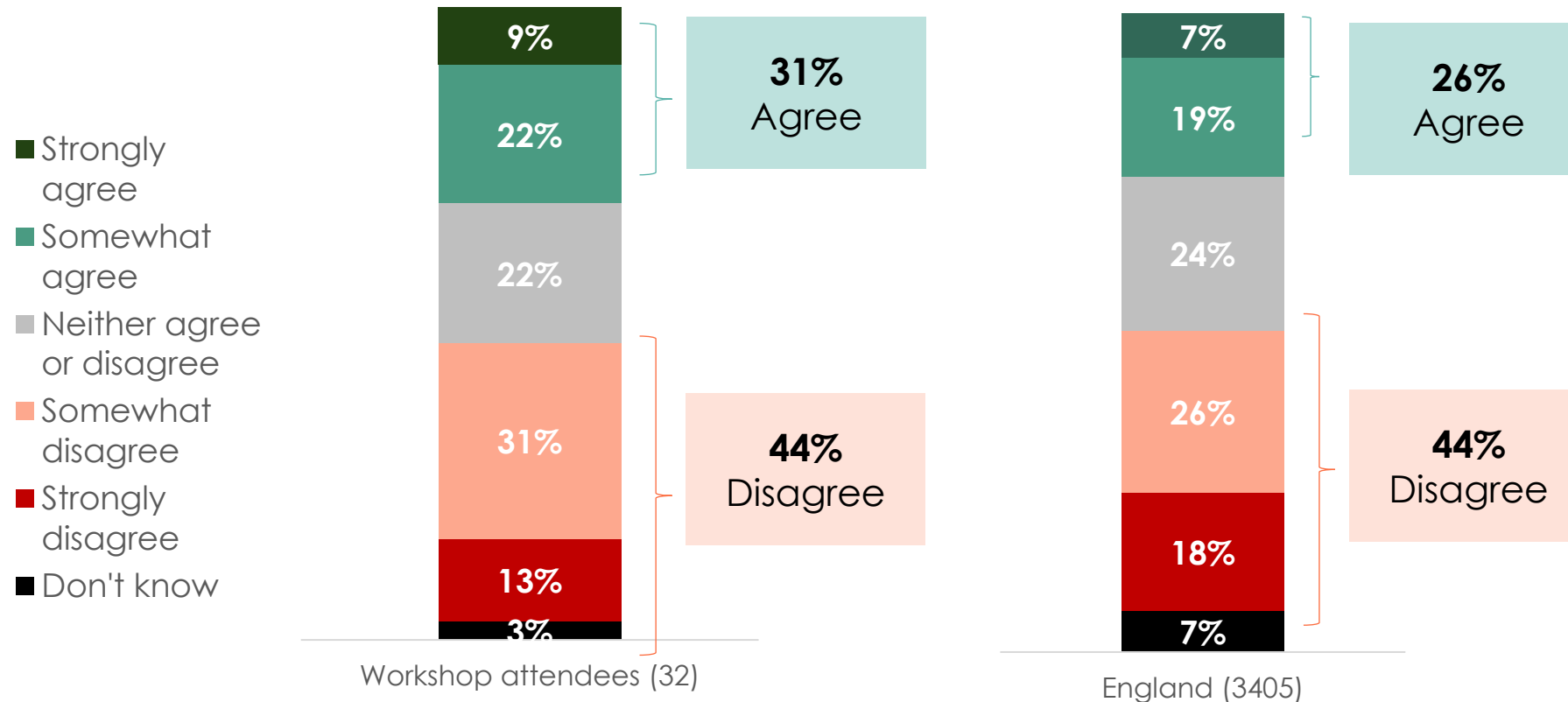
"Is there a backup plan like what happens if AI doesn't work? You know, you've got the system running up and running but what happens if one day you come to work and it's not working?"



# Fears about NGN's ability to regulate AI is reflected in member's post-workshop survey answers 43

In line with England-wide data, almost half of members disagree that AI is regulated enough to protect them.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
"Overall, I think that AI is regulated enough to protect my interests."



We captured members' attitudes towards AI, using the same question included in the RTA Public attitudes to data and AI (PADAI) Tracker survey (Wave 4) to compare against attitudes of respondents from wider England. Please note workshop percentages are based on a small sample size (32) and should be treated with caution. Survey data was collected post-workshop which may have impacted member views.

# When it comes to ethics, members question the risk of AI-induced bias, with continued concerns about job losses and accessibility

They are also unsure about the justification of the environmental impact of AI use, and believe the importance of sustainability should be demonstrated by 'Environment' being a distinct area in the tool, separate to ethics.

Is AI self-preserving?

Does AI have empathy?

The potential for AI-induced bias is one ethical concern for members, who question:

Is AI limited in some ways, which will lead to unintended consequences?

Does AI tell you what you want to hear?

Members believe checks are required to ensure any recommendations made by AI are fair (and take into account personal context).

**Accessibility** is also a key ethical concern. Members want AI to be user friendly, with simple language (considering those with lower-level English) and adequate staff training. They are worried about older staff who may not be able to adapt as readily.

The potential for **job losses** and NGN becoming **less people-focused** concerns members – **how is NGN going to stay loyal to its core values.**

**Members believe NGN should put more focus on the impact of AI on the environment and reflect on how to effectively assess sustainability.**

- They recommend this should be a separate category to ethics.

**Some question whether the extra water and energy the AI will use is justifiable.**

- They suggest looking into other sustainable cooling options.

**They are concerned that the sustainability metric may be subjective.**

- They question how it will really be measured and who will decide how it's calculated.

# Recommendations for NGN's approach to AI

Members recommend NGN use their AIIA tool as a solid foundation, with emphasis on ensuring human's stay in control with strong governance and only using AI for specific well-considered uses.

## Make sure humans are in control and have final say

NGN needs to reassure customers that humans will be overseeing AI, which will be used for making suggestions, not decisions. This must include details on the feasibility of human monitoring, which members currently question.

*"Be careful - check everything by human"*

## Stay people-focused

NGN should emphasise their aim to continue to be people-focused and clearly demonstrate how they will avoid job losses, and ensure staff are able to adapt to proposed job changes. They should reassure customers that people-facing departments e.g. HR and customer service, will remain people-led and capable of empathy.

*"Ensure there is no human cost to implementing AI."*

## Demonstrate strong governance

NGN should include strict rules on when and how AI is used – for example for data and numbers, rather than more nuanced tasks. They need to show strong governance, including some external regulation, and continue to demonstrate a cautious approach to AI to reassure customers.

*"NGN needs to use AI in data processing [...] and have strong set of guidelines and rules"*

## NGN can be reassured they are on the right track and progress with their AIIA tool as a strong foundation.

Recommended improvements include increased focus on data security, and a distinct section on environmental impact. Members also want NGN to continually ask themselves 'why' AI should be used for each task and consider the impact thoroughly.

*"Current policy described appeared to be a strong way forward. Make sure this is implemented and delivered as AI develops."*

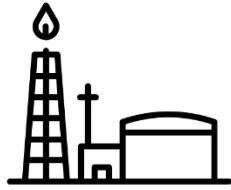




# Future Engagement



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## The future of gas networks

- Members want to hear NGN's plans for the long term, due to the prospects of natural gas being phased out in the future.
- They want to hear about how NGN is going to achieve net zero and how they are planning to move towards more sustainable energy, including whether they would consider hydrogen alternatives.



## Customer Support

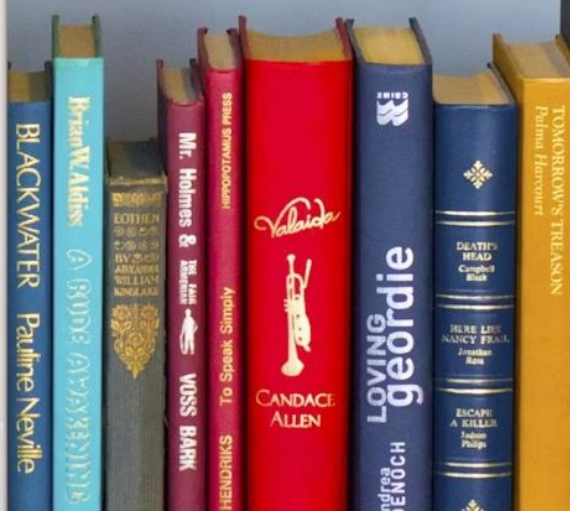
- They enjoyed being able to talk about customer support and want to be able to return to this topic again.
- They specifically want to discuss how to help vulnerable customers with the cost of living, and how best to educate customers on accessible support.



## AI

- Similarly to customer support, they want to be able to return to the topic of AI in the future – to see how the planned approach may change and develop.





# Appendix



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Photo by Nick Fewings on Unsplash



**1** Sample breakdown

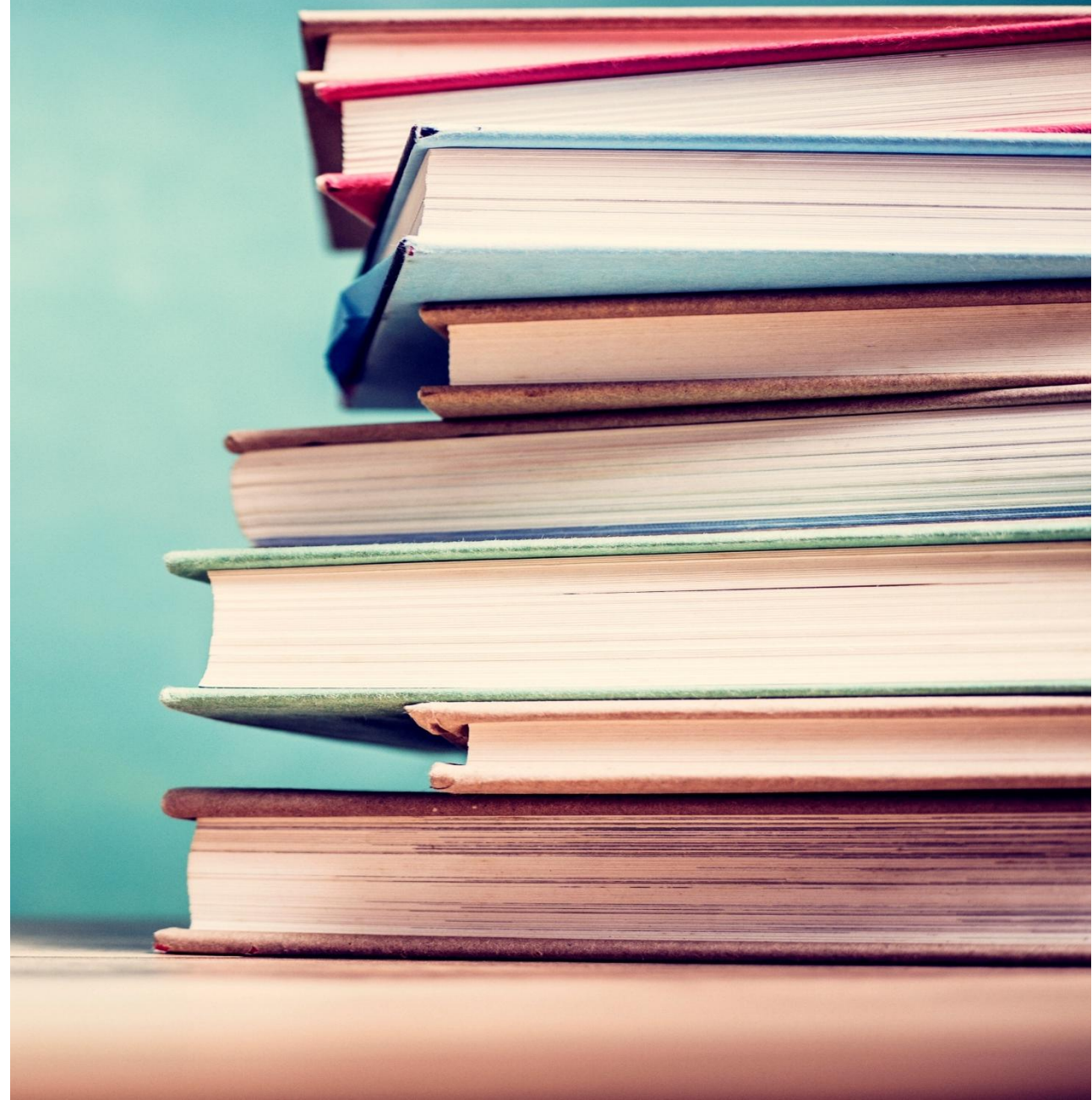
**2** Member feedback

**3** AI mood boards

**4** Materials: Simplified process plan

**5** Materials: Example stimuli

**6** Customer Context from Wave 1





18-29: 9%  
30-44: 25%  
45-59: 34%  
60+: 31%



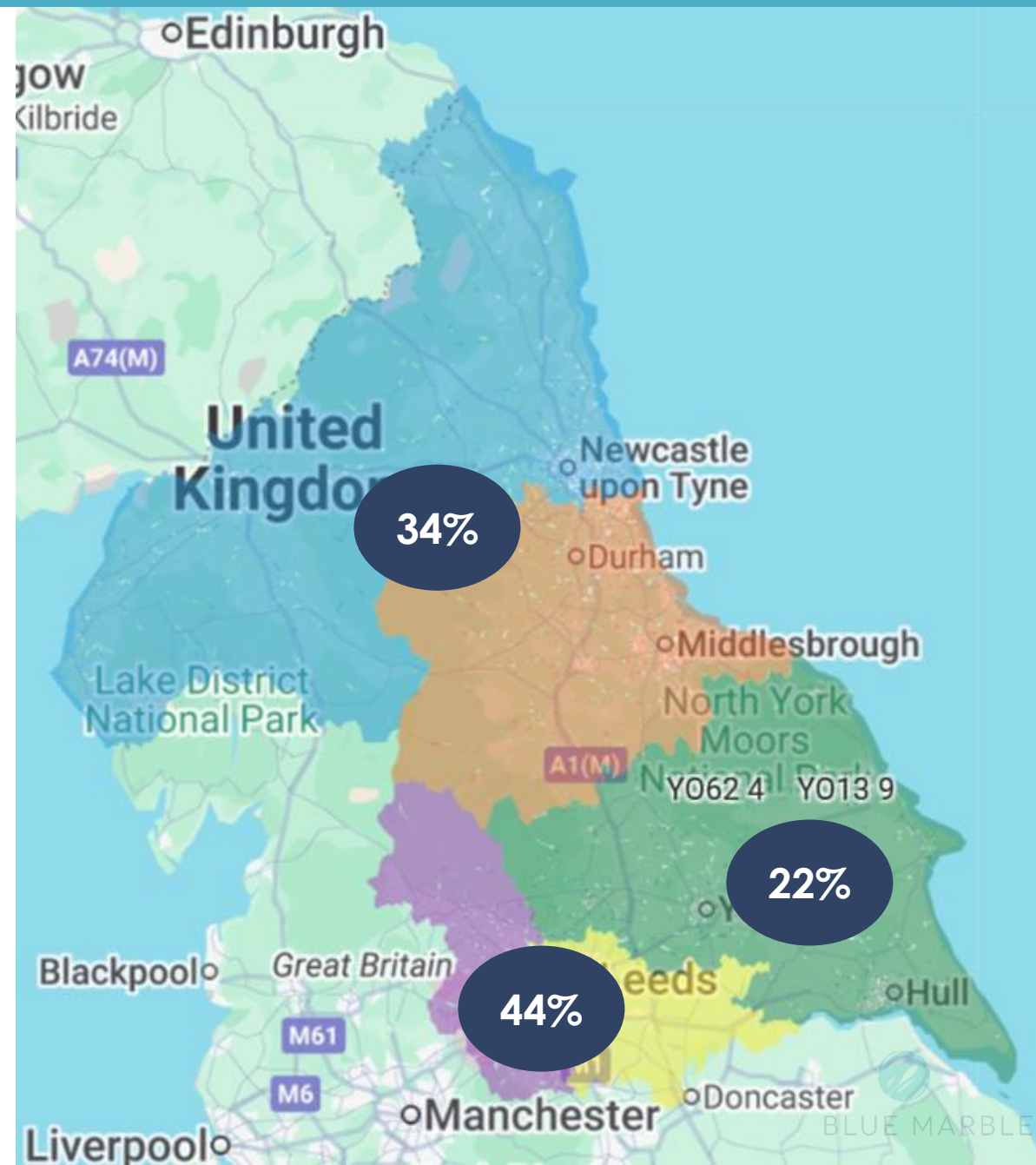
Female: 53%  
Male: 44%  
Non-binary: 3%



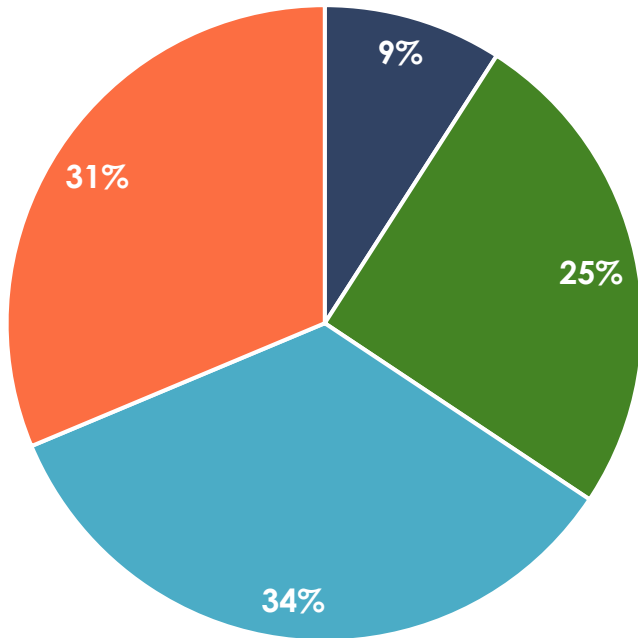
White British: 63%  
Asian/Asian British: 22%  
African: 3%  
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: 3%  
Other ethnic group: 3%  
Prefer not to say / self describe: 6%



Micro/Small business owners  
(NHHs): 4

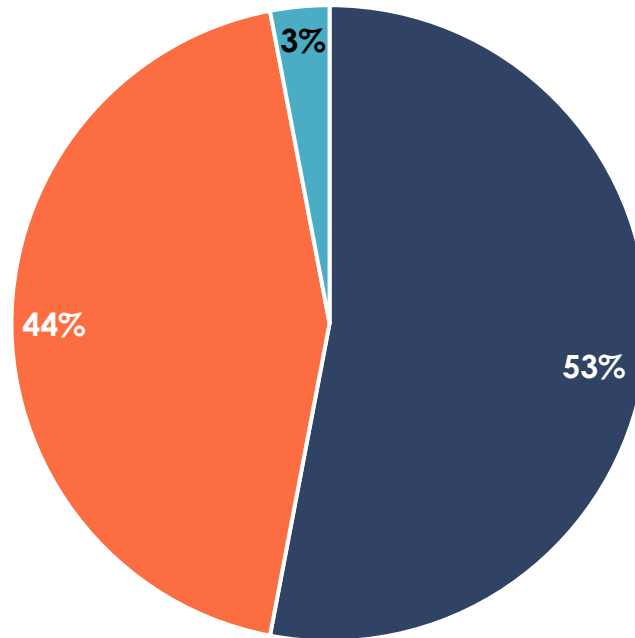


### Age



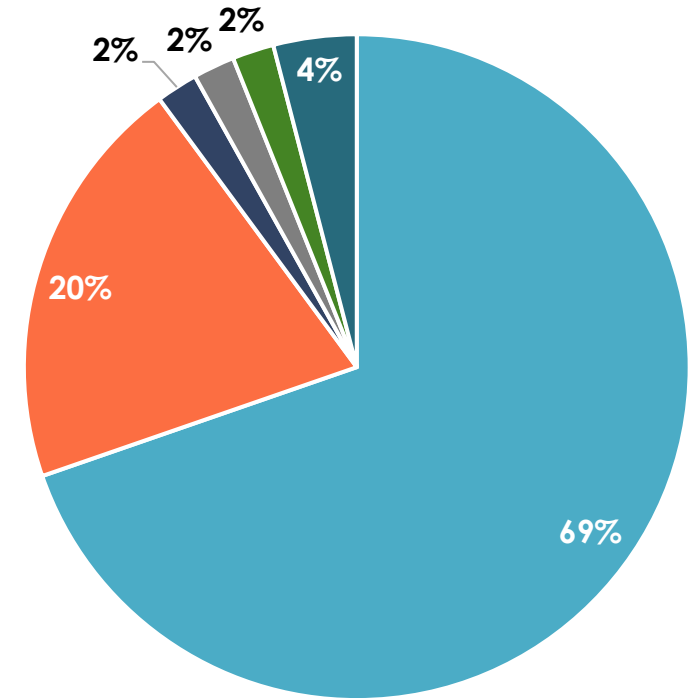
■ 18-29 ■ 30-44 ■ 45-59 ■ 60+

### Gender



■ Female ■ Male ■ Non-binary

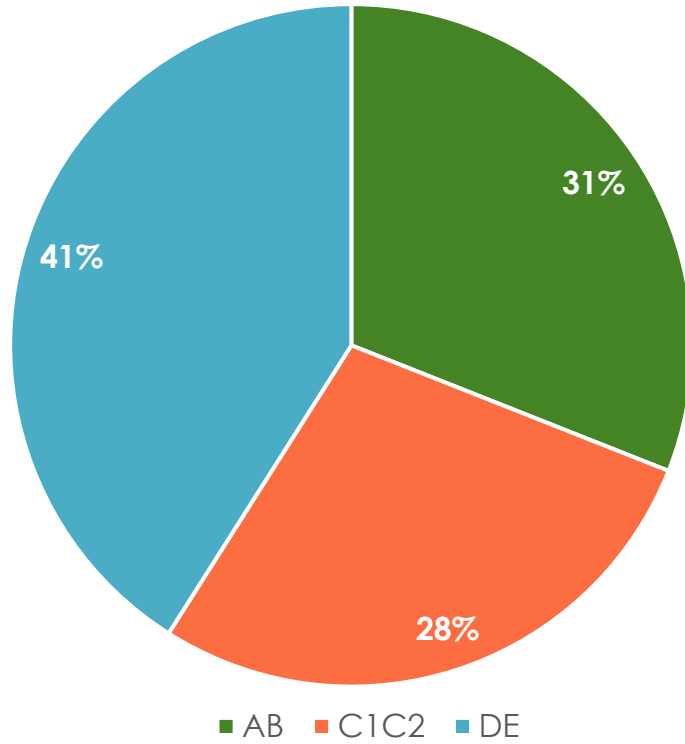
### Ethnicity



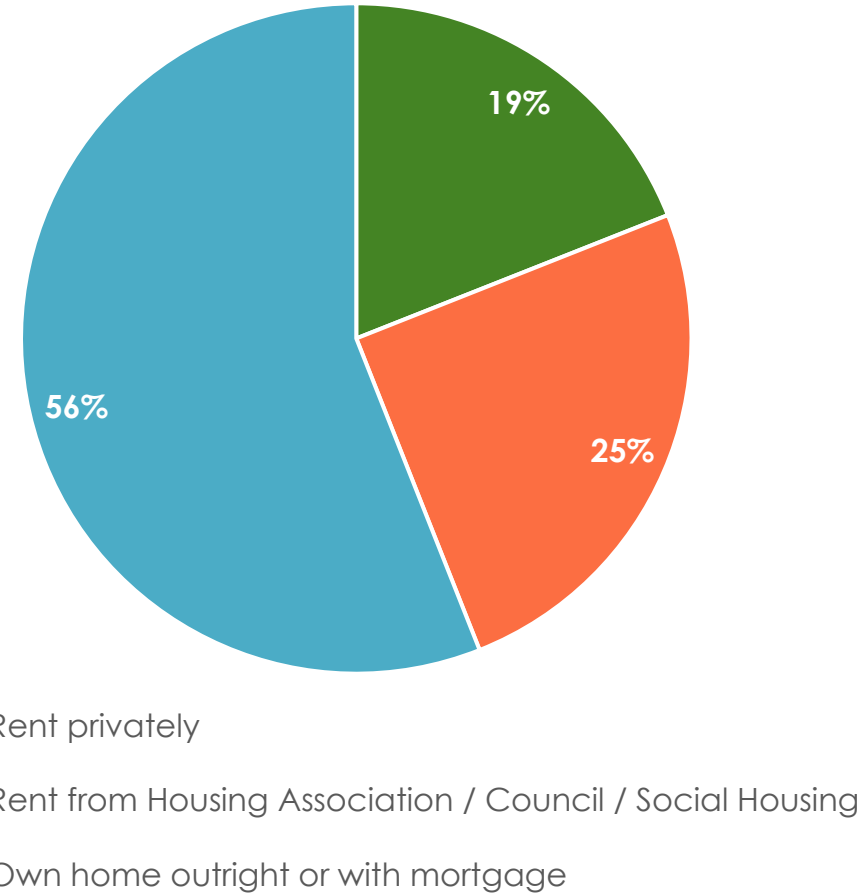
■ White British ■ Asian/Asian British  
■ African ■ Mixed/multiple ethnic groups  
■ Other ethnic group ■ Prefer not to say



**SEG**



**Tenure**



<b>Gender</b>	Male	3
	Female	7
<b>Age</b>	18-29	2
	30-44	4
	45-59	2
	60+	2
<b>Ethnicity</b>	White British	8
	Asian / British Asian	2
<b>PSR status</b>	Registered on PSR	6
	Not registered on PSR	4
<b>SEG</b>	ABC1	8
	C2DE	2

	Mental health disability	Physical disability	Cognitive disability	Sensory disability	Long-term health condition
1					X
2	X				
3		X			X
4		X	X	X	X
5		X			
6	X				X
7		X		X	X
8		X			
9		X			X
10		X			

**1** Sample breakdown

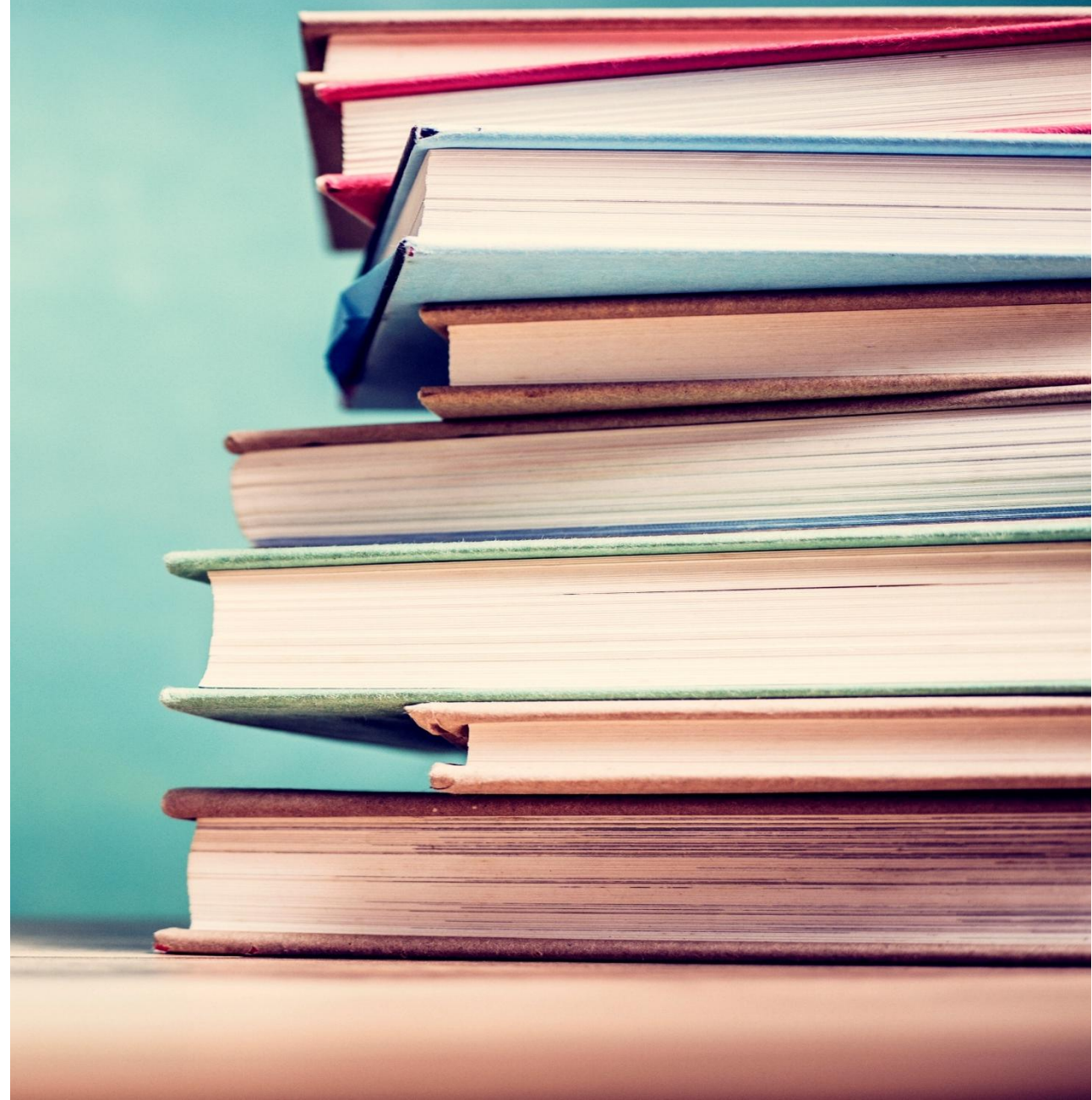
**2** Member feedback

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**6** Customer Context from Wave 1



## Members welcome the introduction of break out rooms to solve noise issues and are happy about food improvements

- A majority answered 'nothing' when asked about points to improve, describing the event as well organised and smooth.
- Catering received positive feedback, with several describing it as 'much improved'.
- Breakout rooms received strong praise for enabling quieter, more focused discussions.

*"Nothing, superbly organised. A strong thank you to all who managed and delivered all aspects of this event."*

*"This was my favourite workshop, more of the same please. The breakout rooms were a great idea."*

## Further improvements raised by a minority included minor technology, briefing, discussion timings, and transportation issues

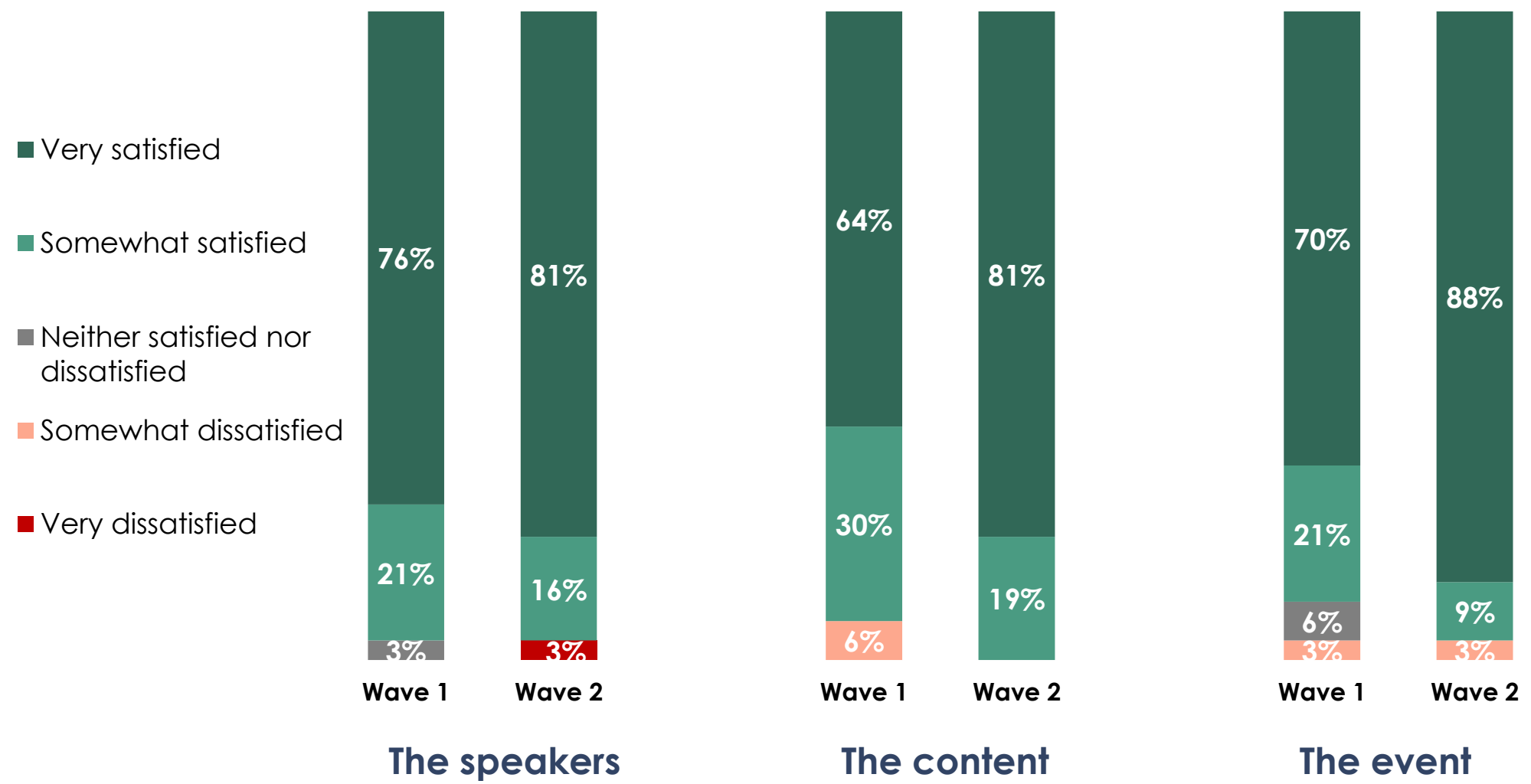
- A few noted issues with microphone in the morning.
- A minority would have liked more time for discussions, particularly for the afternoon AI session.
  - Some would like more prior briefing on the topic, with one noting the AI subject felt too ambiguous (NB. they may mean ambitious), and suggesting use of simple videos to help inform members.
  - One suggested having the longer speaker sections in the morning.
- Public transport disruptions should be checked in advance.

*"Longer time in the break out rooms with less question.eg the AI subject was far to ambiguous to complete in time."*



## How satisfied were you with...?

Base: All Wave 1 workshop attendees (33); All Wave 2 workshop attendees (32)



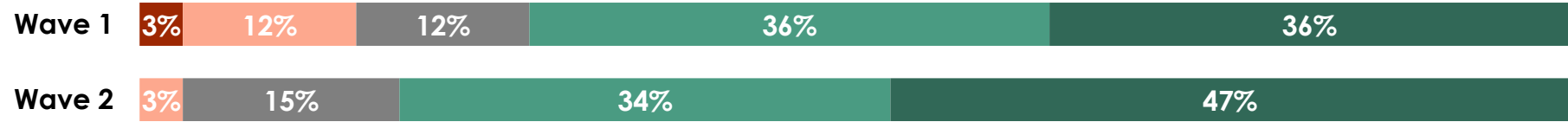


## To what extent do you agree / disagree with the following...

Base: All Wave 1 workshop attendees (33); All Wave 2 workshop attendees (32)

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

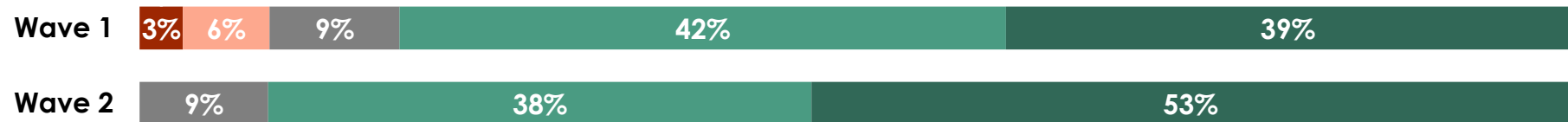
Sufficient time was allowed for discussions



I was provided with enough information



The information provided was easy to understand



The event was accessible



## To what extent do you agree / disagree with the following...

Base: All Wave 1 workshop attendees (33); All Wave 2 workshop attendees (32)

■ Strongly disagree 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Neutral 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Strongly agree

**NGN designs engagements in a way that makes me feel involved and heard**



**NGN is honest about its future choices and what my engagement will influence**



**NGN engagement is a good use of time and money**



\*'Discussion on table to be shared equally' and 'Travel - check for issues with local public transport on the weekend of the event' were reasons behind change in satisfaction.



# Satisfaction towards providing and making use of panel feedback, as well as receiving clear information improves this wave with a 6% increase

## To what extent do you agree / disagree with the following...

Base: All Wave 1 workshop attendees (33); All Wave 2 workshop attendees (32)

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

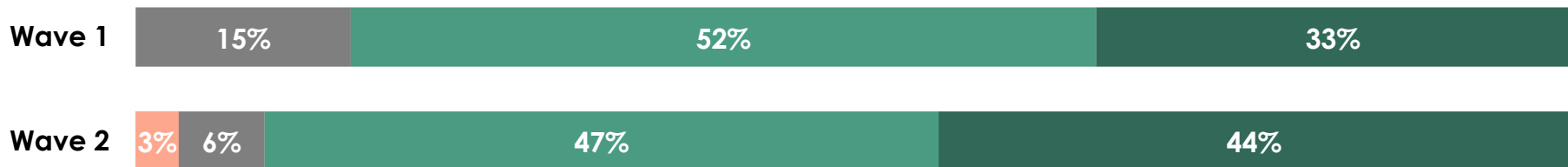
NGN makes it clear how it has used its feedback to change its business plans



NGN provides me with clear information



NGN enables me to give feedback on the topics that interest me most



Key themes emerging from member responses in the feedback form relate to transparency, caution, staying people-focused and having strong governance.

“Be mindful about it and take precautions”.

“Keep an open mind. Regulate and use with caution.”

“Be careful - check everything by human”

“They should involve the AI in like initial steps and people should do the remaining checks like AI do the first half and people do the other half of checking and implementing.”

“Be clear about the processes involved”

“Be super transparent if being used for making executive decisions or just influencing”

“Current policy described appeared to be a strong way forward. Make sure this is implemented and delivered as AI develops.”

“Ensure there is no human cost to implementing AI.”

“NGN needs to use AI in data processing basis and have strong set of guidelines and rules”

“Strong data protection”

“It needs to be externally regulated (not in house)”

**1** Sample breakdown

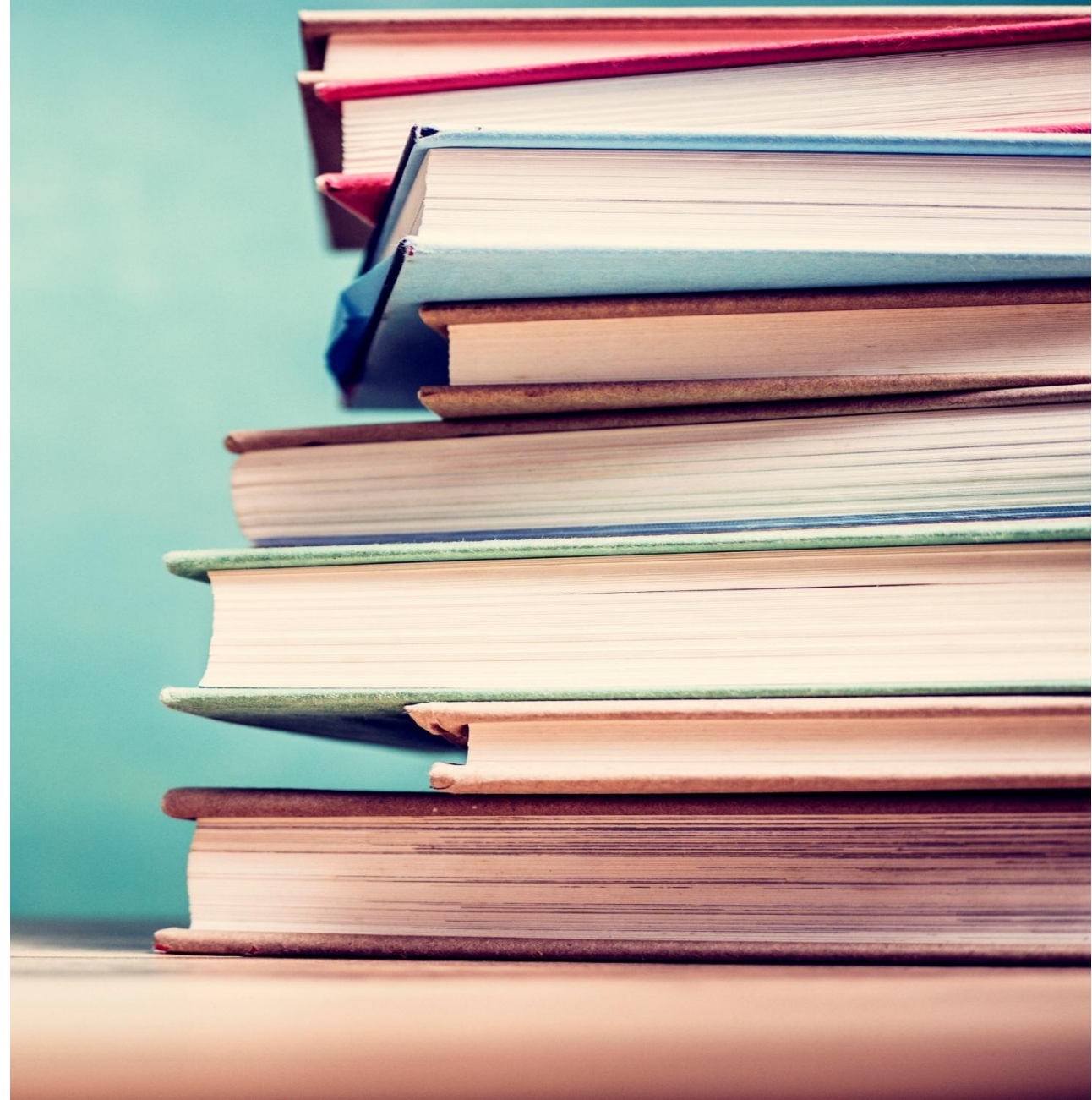
**2** Member feedback

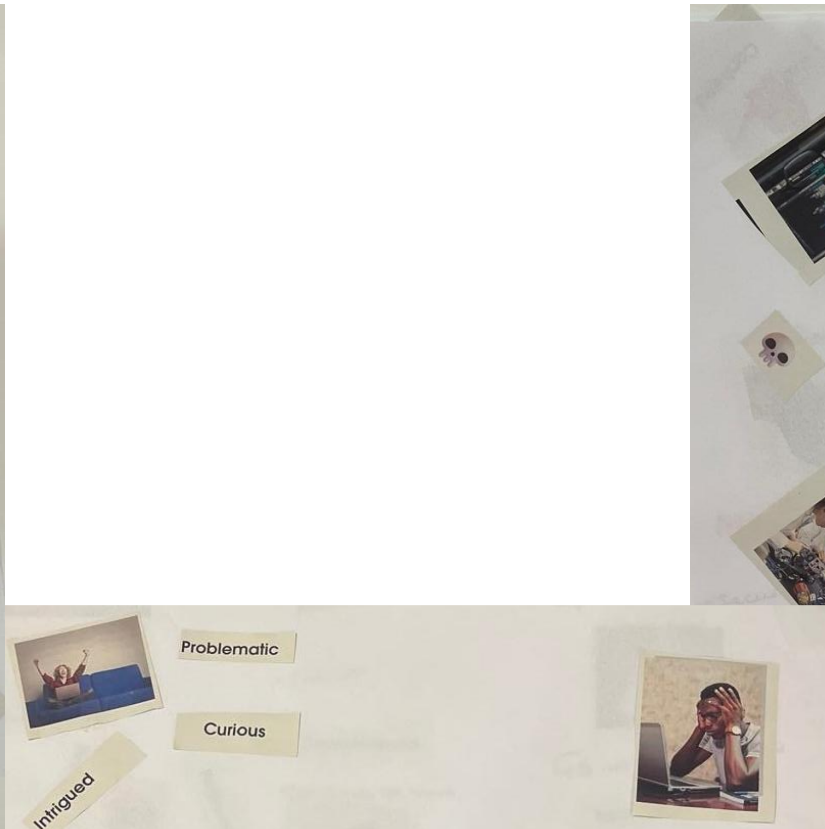
**3** AI mood boards

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**5** Materials: Example stimuli

**6** Customer Context from Wave 1





**1** Sample breakdown

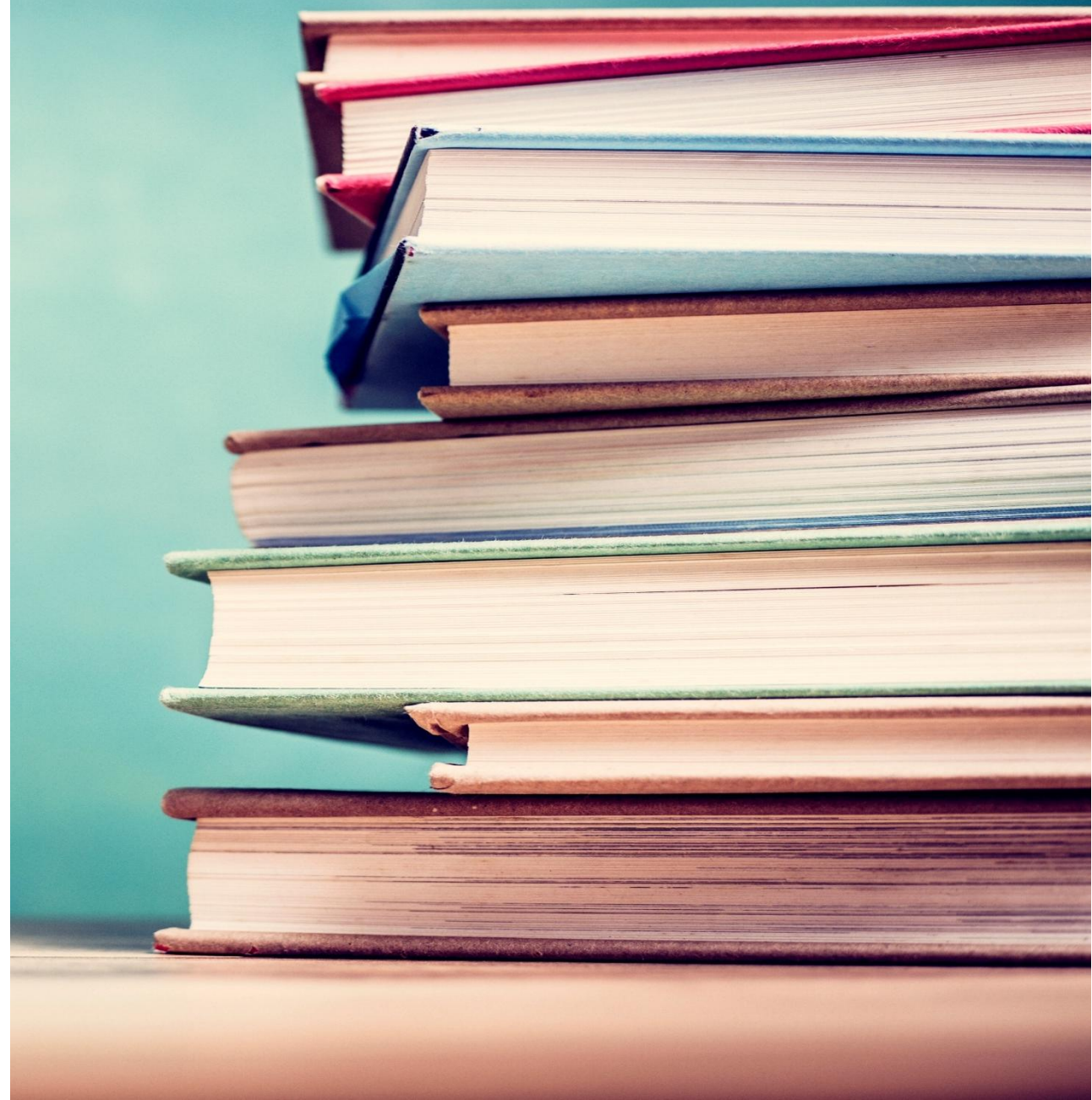
**2** Member feedback

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**Length**  
**Format**  
**Session objectives**

5.5 hrs (incl. breaks)  
In-person event

**Topic**  
**Date & time**

Customer Support Fund and AI  
Sat 8<sup>th</sup> November 2025 10:00 – 15:30

- To gain customer insight to shape the future of the NGN Customer Support Fund (CSF)
  - To build understanding of the shareholder-funded CSF, in the context of the three funds NGN operates, and current challenges and customer vulnerabilities (of the NGN region)
  - To explore what would best support NGN customers in future:
  - To understand how NGN should be investing the CSF.
- To gain customers insight to support NGN in establishing sustainable and responsible AI in the business to maintain public and customer trust
  - To understand panel member knowledge and sentiment around AI – how they use it, what they understand it is.
  - To inform and educate panel members of the range of use of AI – real life examples of AI and how it is being used by businesses or organisation (online shopping, voice search, chat bots, process improvements)
  - To gain insight into panel member perspectives on NGN’s plan / approach to adopting AI, including feedback on NGN’s AI strategy
  - To engage on the governance, assurance and ethical approach NGN plans to adopt; share NGN’s draft AI impact assessment tool.



Agenda	Activity / focus
Registration	Sign participants in, with refreshments plus meet and greet to build rapport
Welcome and plan for the morning	<p>Participants to sit at tables for briefing on engagement purpose and agenda</p> <p>This to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a reminder of the citizen panel approach and the 'conversation agreement' made at July workshop</li> <li>• a 'you said, we did' overview of the findings from the last workshop and how these have been acted on</li> </ul>
Reintroductions and group discussion	<p>Group discussion, facilitated by BM moderator.</p> <p>Reintroductions to support participants to connect. This will flow into the context / attitudes discussion.</p> <p>Discussion to focus on current context of energy customers, and understand NGN's role in supporting energy customers.</p>
Presentation by NGN: Introduction to Customer Support Fund, incl. Q&A	NGN presentation (10 mins): Present 3 NGN funds available to support customers, how the CSF has changed and have been previously allocated. Current support available including taking up and eligibility. High level introduction of short/medium/long term and immediate/sustainable project types + Q&A (10 mins)
Group discussion: Perceptions of CSF Activity: Example Project Trade Off	<p>Group discussion (10 mins): Perception of CSF</p> <p>Panel to discuss by table their reactions to CSF, the ways funds have been allocated, and pros and cons of short / long term support.</p> <p>Project trade-off activity (25 mins)</p> <p>Discuss in mini groups which project examples they would prioritise and why. (10 mins) Mini groups to present back to table which they prioritised and factors important to them.</p>
Comfort break	
Group discussion: Factor priorities & fund allocation	<p>Table discussion (20 mins):</p> <p>Tables to discuss which types of projects they would prioritise funding and why, and which factors matter most/least</p> <p>Fund allocation (15 mins):</p> <p>Tables to work together to decide how to allocate the CSF. Each to receive 10 tokens, representing 10% of the Customer Support Fund. Each to spend time reflecting on how they would like to allocate the funds</p>



Agenda	Activity / focus
Morning summary & plan for the afternoon	Plenary information-giving on objectives for the afternoon. BM to present tallies of funding across the different tables.
Group task: AI mood boards	Groups to make mood board, select words/emojis/pictures in the middle of the table to represent how they feel about AI on tables. (15 mins)
Presentation by NGN (part 1) Plenary discussion (10 mins)	NGN AI presentation: part 1 (5 mins) Presentation on how AI fits into daily lives, ideas of how it's being used at scale in practical; anything known about its use so far in energy system Plenary discussion (10 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does what you've just heard change how you understand AI is being used in our lives today?</li> <li>Do you yourself think you use AI? Moderator to ask for show of hands – how many people think they are using AI?</li> </ul>
Presentation by NGN (part 2): AI strategy, approach and impact tool. Incl. 15 mins Q&A	NGN AI presentation: part 2 (10 mins) Presentation on how NGN is planning on using it, context of it, planned benefits. Presentation to cover NGN's strategy, ethical approach/governance and their AI impact assessment tool. To include YIC feedback. Q&A (15 mins)
Comfort break	
Group discussion: Perception of NGN strategy Activity: Flip chart on AI assessment tool	Group discussion (20 mins): Table discussion of impressions of NGN's approach towards the use of AI, as well as governance and assurance of AI. Flip chart activity (20 mins): On table to assess handouts of a summary of NGN's AI impact assessment tool. Moderator to stand with flip chart, which will have the 7 boxes for the overarching areas of the AI impact assessment tool: Purpose, Oversight, Accountability, Privacy, Legal Compliance, Ethics, and Accessibility.
Group share: Table presentations of their afternoon discussion summary	Groups to share afternoon discussion summary (using flip chart) with the room (15 mins)  Lead facilitator to ask about Views on uses of AI for NGN, and Views on the governance of AI use by NGN and their assessment tool



Length	~45/60 mins plus pre-read	Topic	Customer Support Fund
Format	Online 1-1 depth	Date & time	W/c 27 <sup>th</sup> October – w/c 3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2025
Session objectives	Cover one key research question of the November workshop in a concise way appropriate to a 1-1 depth		
Key information to communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To continue to build rapport and develop a deeper understanding of each inclusive panel member’s personal context, to better interpret their perspective.</li> <li>• Prioritise discussion around the Customer Support Fund, which will be most meaningful to them to give input on.</li> <li>• Ensure key insights are captured and can be shared to support the core panel workshop in their deliberations.</li> </ul>		

Timing	Activity / focus
Pre-depth	Respondents will receive a short pre-read information pack with introduction to topics in Wave 2 interviews, and a ‘you said, we did’ overview of the findings from the last workshop and how these have been acted on
Depth	Focus will be on Customer Support Fund
End/during of Depth	Recorded clips shared with core panel on the day of the workshop

**1** Sample breakdown

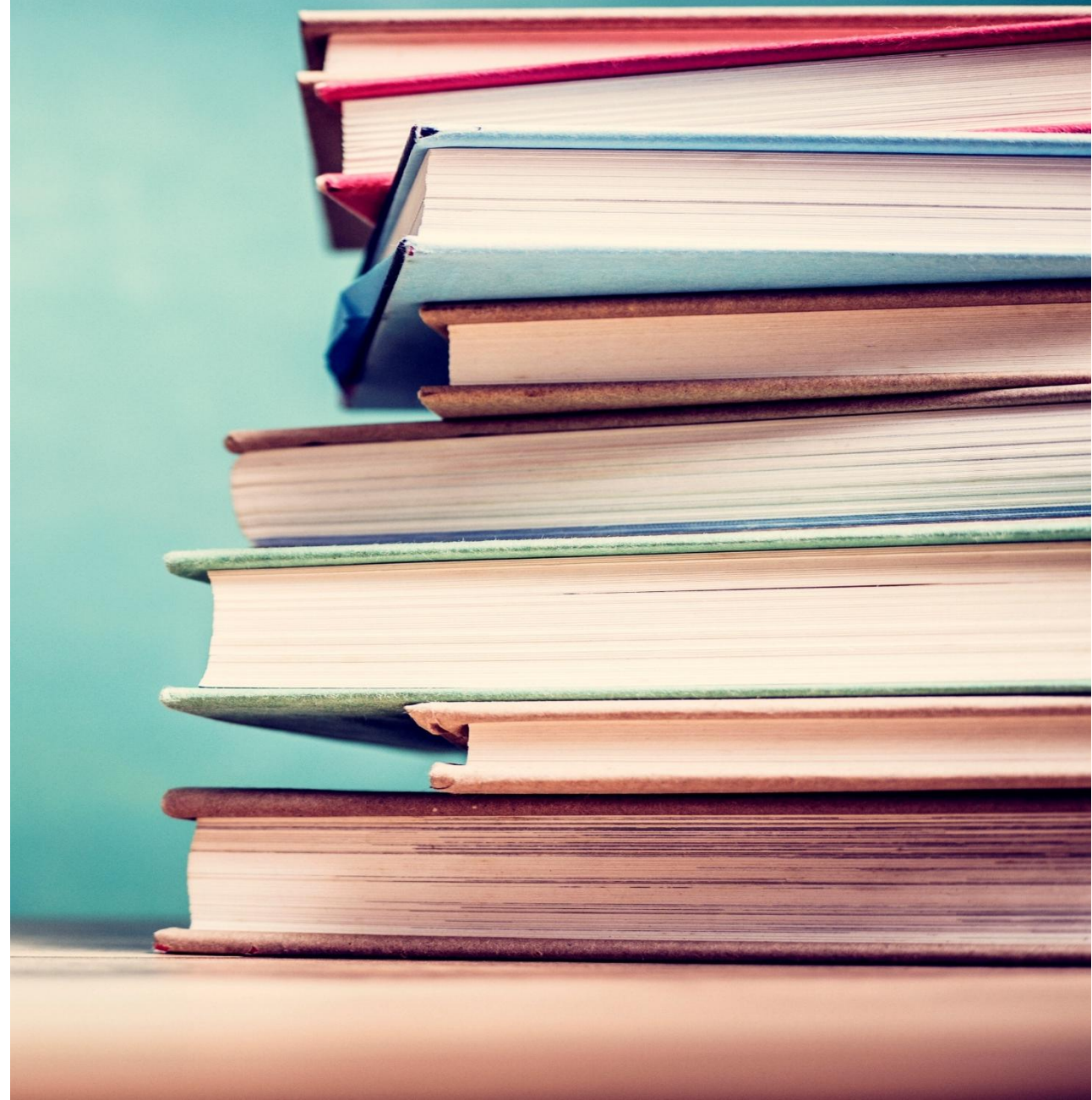
**2** Member feedback

**3** AI mood boards

**4** Materials: Simplified process plan

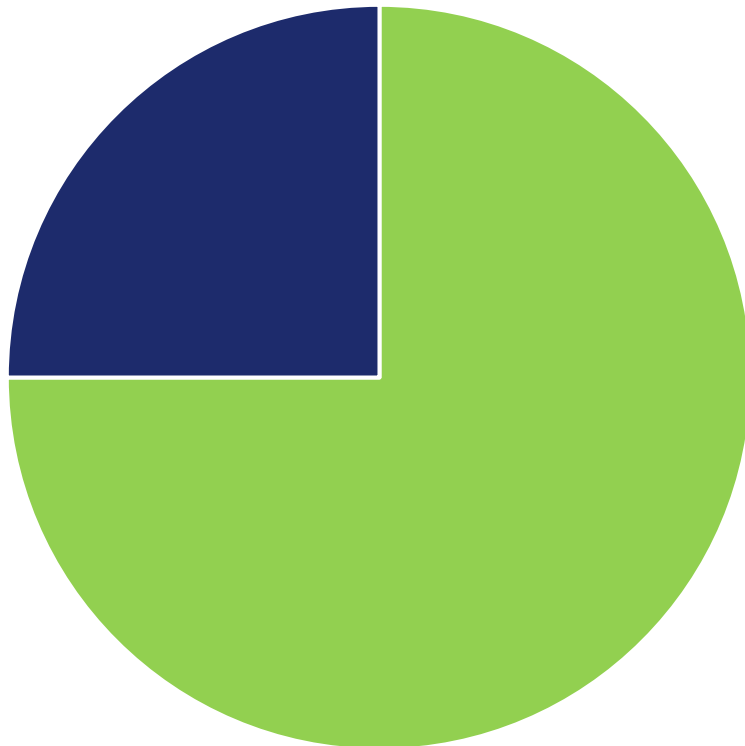
**5** Materials: Example stimuli

**6** Customer Context from Wave 1



# Today

## Current Customer Support Fund Landscape:



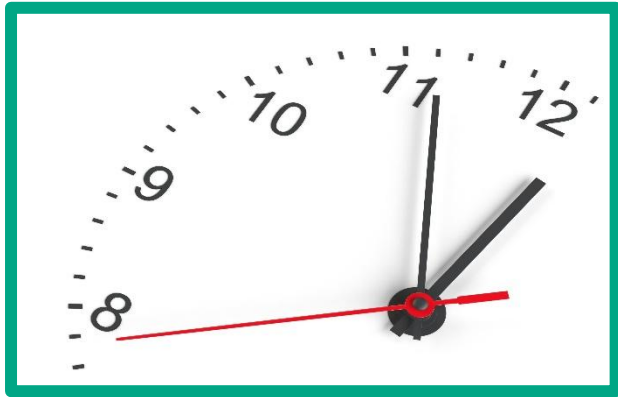
■ Short-term

■ Long-term

**The majority of the CSF is targeted towards immediate support**



# Enhanced payment for Gas Supply Interruption



**What:** Provide additional £30 payment to customers who experience a gas supply interruption.

**How:** Payments are usually made after a customer has been without gas for 24 hours. NGN voluntarily makes an extra payment at 4 hours.

<b>Who</b>	All customers experiencing supply interruption between 4-24 hours
<b>Support theme</b>	Financial
<b>When?</b>	Immediate
<b>Duration of impact</b>	Short term
<b>How many helped?</b>	3,000 households
<b>Social return on investment</b>	£1.33
<b>Co-benefits</b>	Wellbeing
<b>Example annual cost</b>	£90,000
<b>Example % CSF</b>	45%

# Off Gas Warmth



**What:** Provide gas connection and/or first time central heating for households who are at risk (typically health affected by cold home).

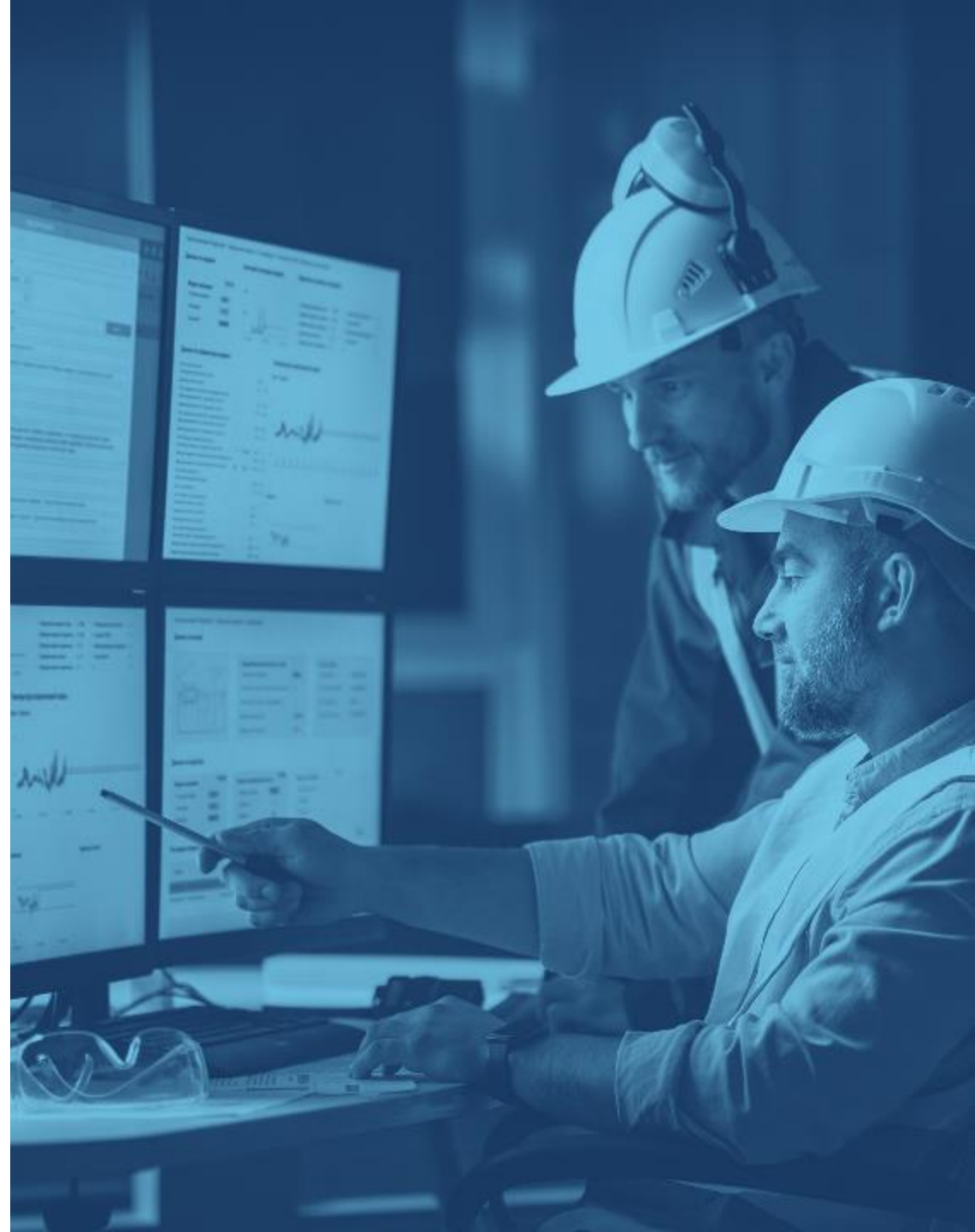
**How:** Funded gas connection and/or fully installed gas central heating system for fuel poor households not currently using gas for heating (typically no existing gas connection) where no other funding options are available.

<b>Who</b>	Low income households whose health is affected by the cold, who are not currently using gas for heating
<b>Support theme</b>	Installation
<b>When?</b>	Within 8 weeks of enquiry
<b>Duration of impact</b>	Long term
<b>How many helped?</b>	7 households
<b>Social return on investment</b>	£7.28
<b>Co-benefits</b>	Wellbeing Reduced carbon emissions (if household moves away from solid fuel)
<b>Example annual cost</b>	£50,000
<b>Example % CSF</b>	25%

# AI in the Life of Derek (from Berwick)

In the future, Artificial Intelligence solutions could be helping 'Derek' throughout his working day - and most of the time he wouldn't even notice...

- Assisted dispatch
- Automated scheduling/alarm-response
- Optimised stock ordering
- Site assessments
- Improved testing for new applications
- Personal health and wellbeing monitoring





# NGN's Artificial Intelligence Impact Assessment (AIIA) tool

**What:** This form assesses how any Artificial Intelligence (AI) or Machine Learning (ML) system may affect the rights and security of people and organisations. It helps identify how data is used, highlight potential risks, and decide whether those risks are acceptable or need mitigation.

**When:** NGN would complete this form whenever a new project, process, or system using AI or ML begins, or when an existing one is changed to include or alter its use of AI or ML.

Here is a summary about what is asked in each section of the AIIA form:

## 1. Purpose

- Who the AI solution is for.
- What benefits it's expected to bring.
- What risks or harms might arise.
- Whether the AI will be used to make decisions - and if so, about what or whom.

It also includes a **task complexity check**, helping to classify whether the AI is doing something simple (like spell-checking), moderately complex (like predicting words), or very complex (like generating full text).

## 2. Oversight & Reliability

- Who's in charge of testing and managing the AI system.
- Whether those responsibilities are clearly documented.

It also explores how humans interact with the system - for example, whether people just respond to alerts, or whether they actively review and approve what the AI produces.

## 3. Accountability & Transparency

- Whether roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
- If performance indicators (KPIs) have been set.
- How those KPIs will be shared and with whom.

This ensures the AI system is being monitored and that its performance is visible to the right people.



## 4. Privacy

- Whether the AI uses personal or sensitive data.
- If it was trained on such data.
- Whether steps have been taken to protect that data (like encryption or anonymisation).
- If the organisation's privacy policy has been updated to reflect this.

It also includes a **sensitivity check** to flag any serious risks, like impacts on someone's legal rights, health, or access to services.

## 5. Legal Compliance

- Whether the AI uses data or content owned by others.
- If third-party rights have been considered.
- Whether the system uses techniques like data scraping (using a computer program to extract specific data - usually from a website), which could raise legal concerns.

## 6. Ethics & Sustainability

- Who has been consulted about the AI system (e.g. stakeholders, unions).
- Whether the environmental impact has been considered.
- If a sustainability metric has been calculated and included in the business case.

## 7. Accessibility

- Ease of use - for different backgrounds, support needs or digital skills
- Fairness in how it makes decisions (avoiding algorithmic bias)
- Diversity of individuals included in both the design and testing



**1** Sample breakdown

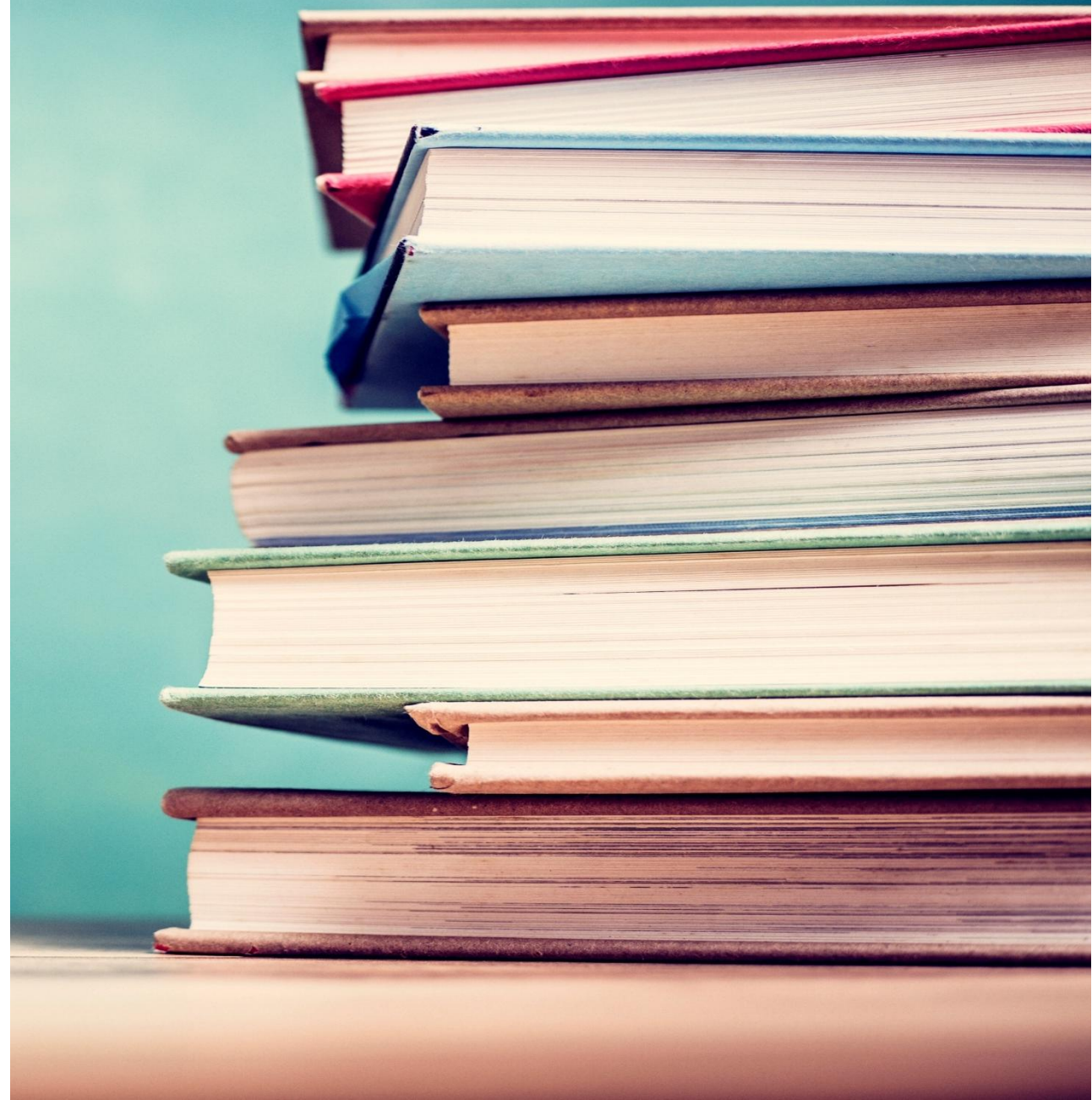
**2** Member feedback

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## The context for talking about business plans & strategies is bleak



- The cost of utility bills is a major concern, which has worsened trust in companies to act in the interest of consumers.
- This also affects consumer appetite for investment where it increases bills.
- Paired with a general lack of faith in climate action, members are sceptical of the impact environmental policies can have.

## Life feels out of control



- Members have felt the brunt of the economic instability in the UK, with all impacted by significant jumps in their bill costs within the past 18 months.
- Supermarkets and energy companies are seen to be engaging in predatory practices, taking advantage of the economic conditions, and causing hardship for consumers.

## There is a lack of optimism for the future



- There is a strong sense that the UK is stuck in a pattern of economic uncertainty, with no clear solutions on the horizon.
- Few members had faith in the Government's ability to change this agenda.
- The economy, paired with climate change, left most members concerned about what life will be like for young people and future generations.





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