


# Collaborative Gas Distribution Networks

Discretionary Reward Scheme  
Submission | 2018–2021





**This report details the activities and achievements the GDNs have collectively made through collaboration between April 2018 and March 2021**

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# Foreword

**The four gas distribution networks (GDNs) – Cadent, Northern Gas Networks (NGN), SGN and Wales & West Utilities (WWU) – have a long and embedded track record of collaborating to achieve better outcomes for customers and stakeholders across GB. Over the past three years, we have been striving to further build on the progress made since 2013.**

We're collaborating to tackle some of society's biggest and most pressing issues, such as decarbonisation and fuel poverty. These issues impact customers and stakeholders across all our geographical

areas, now and into the future. By joining together to achieve the shared goals outlined in this report, we're able to have a far greater impact than if we worked alone. We're also able to work more effectively and efficiently on these shared goals, as collaboration allows us to share expertise, investment and resources.

This report details our collective activities and achievements between April 2018 and March 2021. Our collaborative efforts remain focused on three strategic areas:

- minimising impact on the environment, through sharing and adoption of sustainable best practice, and leading the way in the decarbonisation of energy

- raising awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning
- providing enhanced support and protection for customers in vulnerable circumstances, including those living in fuel poverty.

An important component to our submission this year is the universal adoption of common priority UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) across the GDNs, helping to establish common benchmarks and objectives both within and outside of the gas industry.

The relevant UN SDGs are referenced throughout this document in association with the collaborative initiatives described.

## Environmental outputs

**Acting responsibly sits at the heart of how our gas networks operate. This principle informs everything we do, every day.**

In the face of the global climate change emergency, UK and Scottish Governments have set ambitious carbon emission targets. Our gas networks have a vital role to play in achieving these targets and realising a decarbonised future.

We're committed to operating greener, more sustainable networks. Together, we aim to:

- minimise the impact of our day-to-day activities on the environment
- help shape regulation and legislation that supports low-carbon initiatives
- deliver our collective vision to be the world's first net-zero gas network.

### Part 1: Improving the environmental performance of gas networks

**We work on collaborative environmental activities through the ENA-led Gas Environment Group (GEG), where we discuss common issues and opportunities to improve environmental performance.**

**This group acts as a forum to discuss environmental incidents and lessons learned, sustainability best practice, and changes in legislation, directives or industry guidance.**

#### The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)



Through sharing best practice, we identified that all our gas networks were independently working on alignment to the UN SDGs and realised the benefits to consistently reporting progress against goals that are common to all networks. At the suggestion of SGN and NGN, we therefore produced a jointly-funded UN SDGs collaborative progress report along with National Grid Gas Transmission.

**Sustainability Report Our Commitments 2021** is a joint commitment by Britain's gas networks to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The report benchmarks current progress towards the goals and aims to drive consistency in working towards shared industry aims, demonstrating our credentials as responsible businesses. It identifies common sector goals and highlights a mix of case studies against each of the common priority goals.

Across our gas networks, hundreds of individual initiatives are being delivered by thousands of colleagues, who are all playing their part in supporting many of the UN SDGs. Although some SDGs are more closely aligned to our activities, we aspire to ultimately contribute to all of them.

#### GDN-agreed common SDGs

Examples of actions we are taking	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green energy to offices</li> <li>• Transitioning to clean energy</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting equality and closing the gender pay gap</li> <li>• Supporting vulnerable communities</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure updates</li> <li>• Limiting gas escapes</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing waste</li> <li>• Reducing virgin aggregates</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decarbonising gas networks</li> <li>• Decarbonising fleets</li> <li>• Reducing supply chain emissions</li> </ul>

For more information visit: [sdgs.un.org/goals](https://sdgs.un.org/goals)



## Reducing single-use plastics in mains replacement

Stakeholders and customers have told us they expect us to do more to address the prevalence of single-use plastics and plastic waste in the industry.

It is an issue that has risen in profile, and the general public's consciousness, over the last three years. One of the biggest sources of plastic waste for GDNs is the single-use plastic associated with our mains replacement programme, a process whereby polyethylene (PE) pipe is used to replace old metallic mains.

We have engaged jointly with our principal PE pipes and fittings suppliers to identify opportunities for elimination of these plastics. Working with our supply chain, the GEG will investigate opportunities to reduce both the amount of single-use plastic packaging used and the prevalence of double bagging for adoption across all gas networks. The use of sustainable sources of plastic packaging is also being investigated, although this remains at the research stage.

The GEG will be meeting with the main supplier, Radius, and discussing ways to reduce the volume of single-use packaging. Recommendations will be sought on achievable and quantifiable reductions in the amount of plastic waste generated.



## Consistent carbon footprint measurement and reporting

We've been working together to develop a consistent gas network methodology and approach for carbon footprint reporting across Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions\* to drive better management of environmental performance and ensure a clear framework is in place for the start of the next price control in 2021.

\***Scope 1** covers direct emissions from owned or controlled sources.

**Scope 2** covers indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating and cooling consumed by the reporting company.

**Scope 3** includes all other indirect emissions that occur in a company's value chain.

All GDNs have created targets, in line with a science-based methodology, that have either been adopted or proposed for use within each respective company. These have been developed to establish metrics for a consistent approach that enables industry benchmarking of progress as well as accommodating individual company needs.

All gas networks are investigating how we can accurately collate data in support of embodied carbon methodologies. These can be used to determine lifecycle carbon emissions for both capital investment projects and works to repair the gas network by calculating the carbon contribution from all significant raw materials and operational activities.

All GDNs have published Environmental Action Plans and are now jointly tackling the challenge of gathering 'embodied carbon' data in an effort to consistently measure and reduce this environmental aspect.



## Classification and testing of street works' excavated spoil

When the Environment Agency issued a new position statement on enhanced regulatory standards, we needed to understand the level of risk posed by excavated spoil emanating from our street works. Streetworks UK estimates there are 4 million excavations a year across all utilities, so it was important gas networks and other utilities joined forces to tackle this issue.

All utilities involved worked to assess the identification, classification, transportation and disposal of excavated waste spoil for short-term and emergency street works activities. The project started in 2019 and is led by an existing Streetworks UK working group, with additional technical expertise provided by a new Expert Practitioner Group of street works specialists to deal with the technical details of developing a solution.

The GDN group contributed to commissioned trials on 1,600 soil samples taken from street works across the network areas, revealing that around 20% were categorised as hazardous waste. A protocol was subsequently developed with input

from the GDNs to manage this issue, which sets out industry-wide working practices and training needs. This protocol will be further developed in conjunction with the Environment Agency and then adopted as the industry standard across all utilities.



## Adapting to climate change

Gas networks have a longstanding history of collaborating to understand and mitigate climate change risks posed to our critical infrastructure, communicating these risks to UK Government, and taking steps to safeguard the resilience of our networks.

Together with the electricity network companies, SGN, NGN and WWU commissioned the Met Office to review and then apply the UK Climate Projection (UKCP18) tool and data, and other existing studies, to understand the potential impact to energy infrastructure assets from climate change. Learnings were also taken from the WWU project with Landmark, which launched Britain's first national flood map to the market in 2018, incorporating current and future predictive flood scenarios for 2020 and beyond. The findings of research funded by the three GDNs have been used to assess current risks to the energy network.

The risks were assessed and quantified within a collective Gas Risk Matrix, developed by the GDNs based on their individual approaches and reporting parameters for assessing risk. The collective rating will be used to benchmark future progress and identify priorities or mitigation activities. This is advantageous to the GDNs as focusing investment on mitigating against flooding also minimises supply disruption to customers.

UKCP18 data hasn't indicated any significant changes in risk to the networks for the foreseeable future or suggested that any new identified hazards are likely to impact gas network operations. This gives assurance that our current measures to manage adaptation and ensure protection of the networks will continue to support our operation as climate change impacts are realised.





## Part 2: Decarbonisation of our gas networks to achieve net-zero carbon targets

The UK has ambitious and stretching decarbonisation targets that legally bind us to achieving net-zero carbon emissions in less than 30 years. Our stakeholders believe there is now strong evidence that decarbonised gas networks will play a crucial role in achieving this.

Our previous reports have detailed the collaborative work undertaken to reduce the carbon impact of gas networks. This includes standardisation of biomethane gas entry regulations to encourage greater numbers of biomethane connections, and the collaborative research and development projects to understand the feasibility of, and best route to, introducing hydrogen gas into our networks.

Consulting with stakeholders on our progress and challenges, it became clear that to effectively support the UK's decarbonisation targets, we needed a **joint strategic vision and pathway** to deliver our ambition to be the world's first net-zero network – **Gas Goes Green (GGG)**.

GGG charts the hydrogen journey, setting out state-of-the-art network innovation projects, and the vision for how network and wider activity is building the evidence base for the role of hydrogen across the energy system.

The **GGG plan** sets out:

- how our gas networks' transition to 100% hydrogen is practical and deliverable;
- how a transformation to hydrogen provides benefits beyond those to the core domestic and commercial customers for the distribution networks, and to the core power and large industry customers for the transmission network; and
- the programme of work needed to deliver a safe and cost-effective hydrogen transformation in practice.



### Developing our shared strategic vision and pathway: Gas Goes Green

We've engaged collaboratively with National Grid on its national Future Energy Scenarios, leading to the development of regional scenarios for gas and heat. The GDNs, working with the ENA, have engaged widely with stakeholders from other sectors, including government and policy makers, while concurrently undertaking further decarbonisation research to inform the debate.

The high-level pathways to zero emissions for buildings, industry, transport and power, as set out in the **Pathways to Net-Zero Report** we produced with Navigant (now Guidehouse), has resulted in our joint delivery plan to 2050.

This is articulated in **Gas Goes Green – Delivering the Pathway to Net-Zero**, launched in April 2020. Gas Goes Green sets out the need for key stakeholders to work together to achieve a net-zero gas network that supports power generation, heating and transport, while offering best value for money to customers with the least disruption.

It details the programme of work Britain's gas networks are collectively following in pursuit of net-zero.

The programme's six workstreams are structured to deliver short-term, low-regret actions that gas networks can take to progress on the pathway to net-zero.

#### Gas Goes Green has six workstreams:

- 1 Investing in net-zero: the optimal route to a net-zero future, in a balanced energy system
- 2 Gas quality and safety: the safe transportation and distribution of net-zero and low carbon gases
- 3 Consumer options: evaluating implications for consumers of green gases in an integrated whole system
- 4 System enhancement: revising network equipment and processes to facilitate net-zero networks and smart operation
- 5 Hydrogen transformation: to establish hydrogen as a feasible means of transitioning to net-zero
- 6 External Affairs and stakeholder engagement: gain feedback by engaging stakeholders on environment, economic and social benefits of a decarbonised gas grid



Recognising the importance of a broad range of stakeholder views, Gas Goes Green has established a Programme Advisory Group made up of key stakeholders across government, health and safety, electricity network operations, green gas producers, gas suppliers, industry experts and academia, with a steering group comprising all of our gas networks.



## Gas Goes Green key projects

Across the six Gas Goes Green workstreams, we are already delivering on a number of key projects:

### Zero-Carbon Commitment – Deliverable 1.1

The commitment establishes an overview of investment required during the next five years (the RIIO-GD2 price control) to prepare Britain's gas grid for the switch from methane-rich natural gas to zero-carbon hydrogen and low-carbon biomethane. Investment is grouped into four categories:

- new networks for hydrogen
- hydrogen blending
- repurposing the network for hydrogen
- cross-cutting issues.

The commitment report also details the strategic investment required over successive regulatory periods to achieve the world's first zero-carbon gas grid.

In May 2020, our **Hydrogen: Cost to Customer Report** was published alongside the Zero-Carbon Commitment. It sets out analysis relating to upstream (production), midstream (transmission and distribution) and downstream (heat, power and transport) costs of establishing a hydrogen economy through to 2050.

Our report shows that repurposing our gas networks, whilst expensive, is forecast to be significantly cheaper than full electrification of heat and transport. This important finding indicates that decarbonising gas networks will ultimately be less disruptive and less costly for customers than full electrification.

A key output from our report is that the £182 billion of investment needed to develop the Gas Goes Green pathways would save British bill payers £89 billion by 2050, compared to the continued use of natural gas. This insight has been used to inform investment proposals we have put forward to the regulator and shared with stakeholders.

# 1.3m

1.3 million households supplied with biomethane nationally, saving over 5 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e each year.

## Iron Mains Risk Reduction Programme (IMRRP) – Deliverable 1.2

We have assessed the greenhouse gas emission reductions delivered through the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)-driven IMRRP and the projected future years' savings. The GGG pathway identified that climate change benefits could be delivered by accelerating the programme.

Using information collated across the networks and extrapolated out, it demonstrates the IMRRP will have achieved a 66% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions by 2032, equivalent to taking 526,433 cars off the road since 2014. This is in addition to the future-proofing that a PE network achieves by being hydrogen-ready.

# 66%

Reduction in CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions through our IMRRP, equivalent to taking 526,433 cars off the road since 2014.



### Future of gas in transport – Deliverable 3.3

Achieving the ambitious target of net-zero emissions will require significant progress across all sectors. Heavy vehicles have previously not seen as much focus as light passenger vehicles, yet to meet the target, almost all HGVs must be converted to low-carbon alternatives with an acceleration towards 100% low-carbon sales.

Having explored the challenges facing the decarbonisation of HGVs and freight with stakeholders, it is clear that gas has an important role to play. GGG has published its **Green Gas Transport Pathway Report** that prescribes practical transition pathways from fossil-based and renewable gas today to a net-zero transport future, giving key stakeholders the confidence to invest in green sustainable transport options.

### Entry connection standardisation – Deliverable 4.1

Stakeholders told us a lack of standardisation for gas entry requirements was a blocker to introducing greater volumes of greener gases into networks. We've therefore worked collaboratively since 2018 to standardise gas entry requirements, and also established an Entry Customer Forum to provide green gas producers with a single, consistent route

via which they can raise issues and facilitate closer working between gas producers and networks, improve transparency and empower customers and stakeholders.

The progress we have collectively made to encourage biomethane into the UK's gas network has resulted in capacity to supply the equivalent of 1.3 million households with biomethane nationally and cut GHG emissions by over 5 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e every year.

## Hydrogen Network Plan – Deliverable 5.1

In early 2021, we published **Britain's Hydrogen Network Plan**, setting out a blueprint of the actions we will take to turn our hydrogen ambitions into reality and deliver a world-first net-zero gas network. The plan sets out targets to blend up to 20% hydrogen with natural gas, and to help the UK meet its hydrogen production target of 1GW by 2025 and 5GW by 2030. It also describes how we will:

- ensure the safe delivery of hydrogen through innovation projects, including H21, H100 Fife, HyNTS Future Grid, as well as the BEIS-led Hy4Heat programme to test hydrogen capability of household gas appliances and boilers
- maintain security of energy supplies, ensuring gas network capacity is sufficient to meet energy demand using hydrogen. This includes capacity modelling and connection projects, such as Project Cavendish on the Isle of Grain – a pioneering hydrogen production facility connecting to the existing gas network
- focus on customers, working to reduce carbon emissions while retaining customer choice of low-carbon technology for homes and business. Projects such as Future Billing Methodology and Real-Time Networks will help safeguard accurate consumer bills as more hydrogen is introduced into the gas grid
- deliver jobs and investment, including a gas pipe replacement programme to deliver hydrogen-ready pipes and a £1.5 billion investment in industrial decarbonisation across the UK, supporting the Government's aspirations for a green recovery.

## A pathway for the future

Through our Gas Goes Green pathway, we are establishing a clear forward plan of projects and activities to keep us on track to achieve net-zero. Transition of our existing assets to hydrogen is one of the most important parts of the decarbonisation challenge.

All 2020/21 workstreams have been delivered on time and our future plans will be published in November 2021.



# Carbon monoxide (CO) safety outputs

**Safety is at the heart of all we do as gas distribution network operators. Raising awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide is fundamental to keeping the communities we serve safe.**

Over the last three years, our successful collaborative work around CO safety has continued to deliver far-reaching benefits to communities across the UK, not only delivering legislative change, but also driving behavioural change to save lives.

Our success in delivering initiatives that protect and also connect with hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups comes from a maturing strategic approach, learning from past successes and a recognition of our collective strength in working together to make a difference.

**Our approach focuses on three core strands:**

- **Educating** young people about how to stay safe from CO
- **Informing** mass audiences and specific groups
- **Influencing** policy and legislation by working with stakeholders.

**We have remained committed to distributing CO surveys to benchmark our continued success in raising customer awareness of carbon monoxide.**

**Our results from the past three years show a clear improvement of customer awareness of the dangers of CO poisoning.**

## 262,927

Between 2018 and 2021, we've carried out 262,927 CO surveys.

## +30%

Following engagement with us, average customer awareness ratings on CO rise from 6.8 out of 10 to 9 out of 10 – a 30% increase.

## 170,978

Collectively we've distributed 170,978 CO alarms to customers over the last three years.

## Part 1: Educating



**We've delivered a number of innovative campaigns to educate young people around the dangers of CO. We use targeted methods to connect in a way that enables them to access important information, know how to stay safe, and act as advocates who promote CO safety on our behalf.**

We've focused our work on this age group for two main reasons. Firstly, they're more high-risk, as they're more susceptible to the effects of CO poisoning compared to adults. Secondly, by educating this age group, we believe CO safety messages will reach at least two adults via the children actively taking key learnings home and sharing them with parents and carers.

### Safety Seymour goes online

Over the last three years, together we've built on our previous success of Safety Seymour, the fun, interactive resource created to educate five to seven-year-olds about CO. The campaign has become a core part of all four networks' school outreach programmes, providing safety education sessions about CO, the symptoms of CO poisoning and how to avoid it.



As of April 2021, together we have:

**trained 90 colleagues**  
to deliver safety sessions

attended more than  
**536 schools**

held sessions in  
**770 classes**

reached  
**23,000 children nationwide**

In April 2020, we collectively launched the Safety Seymour website, making it easier for children, teachers and parents to access our collective CO safety resources online and ensure these important safety messages are delivered in a single, consistent and powerful voice.

This has allowed us to continue to reach our target audience despite the restrictions imposed on school visits during the COVID-19 pandemic. As of March 2021, the website had been accessed over 5,932 times.





## Identifying new partnerships to spread the message further

Even a global pandemic couldn't stop Safety Seymour successfully engaging with primary schools in 2020. Through a new partnership with Primary Times' online magazine, we reached over 70,000 parents and teachers in three months with our Safety Seymour messaging, and doubled traffic to the new Safety Seymour website.

We ran a full-page advertorial sharing our basic CO safety messages and included a link to allow schools to register interest in a Safety Seymour session. Additionally, we were able to promote our annual CO competition on its competition page.

The advertorial received 68,229 views, with over 1,000 views of the competition page. Our Safety Seymour website was visited 337 times the week the advertorial went live, nearly double the number of visits of the previous week.

This activity was supported by four social media posts between July and September 2020 which received 1,838 views on Facebook (with 420 engagements) and achieved 2,164 views on Twitter (with 120 engagements).

## A creative approach to CO safety

As well as continuing to reach our target audience with our Safety Seymour resources during the pandemic, we've also continued with our annual CO safety competition as we have in each of the last three years. Young people nationwide have helped us raise awareness of CO through poetry, art, video and posters, with 2,070 entries submitted over the last three years. Not only does this teach children basic CO safety messages, it has the added benefit of also reaching parents, teachers and carers at the same time.

We're able to reach even more people and educate them about the dangers of CO through media coverage of the competition winners, featured in local newspapers nationwide.



## Fun Kids Radio

We recognise the potential to raise mass awareness of CO through national advertising. However, given the on-demand nature of TV consumption, TV advertising doesn't present an effective medium to deliver a good return-on-investment for awareness campaigns, particularly among young children.

In response to an increase in online and digital radio consumption by younger audiences, we developed a radio campaign to raise awareness of carbon monoxide among nearly half a million young children.

We partnered with Fun Kids Radio – an outlet for six to 12-year-olds – and developed a radio campaign to introduce children to carbon monoxide, raise awareness of the risks involved and promote the importance of having a CO alarm at home.

It was delivered as 12 podcasts based on the adventures of Safety Seymour.

**425,000 listeners**

have heard the series to date

**7,358 downloads**

of the podcast

**14,626 views**

of the video on YouTube

**11,830 visits**

to the dedicated series information webpage

## Safety Seymour saves lives and becomes the Pride of Britain

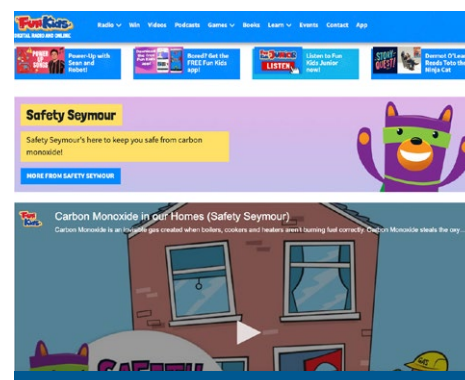
The true success of our education programme was brought to national attention in 2019 when seven-year-old Jaydee-Lee Dummett saved her family from CO poisoning thanks to a Safety Seymour session delivered by WWU at her school.

When her brother woke in the night disorientated and hallucinating, Jaydee-Lee recognised the symptoms as CO poisoning and noticed the CO detector had turned from green to red. Luckily, she recalled the **0800 111 999** emergency number from her Safety Seymour session a few weeks earlier and was able to tell her mum.

She won the Child of Courage Award at the 2019 Pride of Britain Awards and through the media and TV coverage of the story we reached nearly 17.5 million people, raising valuable awareness of the dangers of CO.

**“From being involved in a simple lesson on gas safety, she knew exactly what to look for. Looking back, without this lesson, I genuinely don't think we'd still be alive.”**

— Lindy, Jaydee-Lee's mum



## Part 2: Informing



**We're always looking for new ways to raise awareness about the dangers of CO and effectively communicate safety information both to large numbers of people as well as to specific vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups.**

**We recognise our collective voice is often not enough to connect with hard-to-reach groups. We've chosen to partner with other 'trusted voices' to make sure we can get important safety messages to those who may need extra support and advice, including high-risk groups.**

**When working with trusted partners, we use tailored communication methods and messages to most effectively engage our target groups.**

### Billboard campaign

Based on insight from a trial run by Cadent, we ran a six-month national billboard campaign hosting large posters on nine key commuter routes into city centres across our networks. The billboards carried a single, instantly visible safety message that CO is a 'silent killer', with a short call to action to install an alarm.

We partnered with Project Shout – a national campaign raising awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning, supported by CO alarm manufacturer Fire Angel – and the posters directed viewers to visit the Project Shout website for more information.

**Our messaging was seen by 2.9 million commuters per week, receiving more than 75 million views over the course of the campaign.**

**Visits to the Project Shout website had increased by 60% at the end of the first month of the campaign.**



### New parents and mums to be

Unborn and newborn babies are one of the most vulnerable high-risk groups. While the effects of carbon monoxide on babies are well understood, the risk of CO in the home is often overshadowed by the messaging around smoking during pregnancy. We identified the NHS distributes Bounty packs to 38% of the UK prenatal market and the Bounty app, website and newsletter are trusted sources of information for new mums and mums to be.

Building on research about the impact of CO exposure on unborn babies, we put together a news article to feature on the Bounty app. The article focused on the idea of making a home baby-safe and recommended a CO alarm to make homes CO-safe for little lungs. We also used the opportunity to promote the Priority Services Register (PSR).

Since the article went live in November 2019, it has been read 9,440 times and shared by mums and new parents 127 times.

### Supporting those living with disabilities

Recognising that those living with disabilities are another group who are often vulnerable, and having previously undertaken work in this space with PSR and Utilities Against Scams campaigns, we established Kidz to Adultz magazine – a magazine supported by the charity Disabled Living – was an effective outlet to reach people living with disabilities, with 90,000 registered readers receiving the publication.

We took out an advertorial in the September 2020 edition of the magazine, which is targeted at parents, carers and young disabled adults. The feature directed people to the resources online on our new Safety Seymour website.

The advert drove a 42% increase in traffic to our Safety Seymour website during the week of our advertorial, with an 18% increase on visitors in the following week.

# 9,440 views

Our news article on the Bounty app about the impact of CO exposure on unborn babies has been read 9,440 times since it went live in November 2019.





## Part 3: Influencing



**By forming partnerships and working with government and policy makers, we're able to harness our collective influence to play a crucial role in influencing the political agenda. We believe that raising the profile of CO to inform and influence policy makers will protect more people and save lives.**

### Influencing the political agenda

We've continued to disseminate CO awareness messaging through our collective sponsorship and work with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Carbon Monoxide (APPCOG), building support and awareness for better CO safety amongst MPs and peers.

Over the past three years, with our support, the APPCOG has:

- added five new parliamentarians to its ranks of active supporters
- organised and collaborated on 47 stakeholder meetings and events
- ensured its work is referred to in three separate parliamentary debates
- had over 50 written questions tabled in the Commons and Lords.

As the organisation's largest sponsors, we feed into its activities and its quarterly meetings of advisory, communications, medical and stakeholder groups. This activity brings together over 100 different individuals and organisations from politics, industry, academia, medicine, and the public, regulatory and charity sectors.

These are the key forums for the co-ordination and shared effort to reduce levels of CO poisoning. Learnings from these groups have fed into numerous parliamentary roundtables, including:

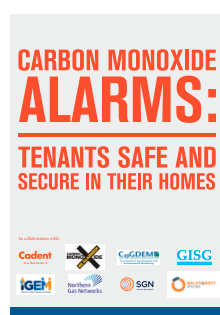
- CO and the brain – leading to a House of Commons debate, a ministerial meeting with the Minister for Public Health and Primary Care Seema Kennedy MP, followed by an initiative to establish a new CO neurology clinic at St George's Tooting in January 2020
- CO and pregnancy – leading to trials of advice to midwives and pregnant women, with plans for a smart alarms trial in Greater Manchester
- APPCOG and the APPG for Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency joint meeting with Ofgem to discuss the regulator's future strategy to support vulnerable energy customers, and the focus and governance of consumer vulnerability and CO safety projects.

This activity is shared, as well as CO updates from across the GDNs' networks, via a quarterly newsletter to nearly 200 stakeholders, including parliamentarians.

### Changing policy on CO alarms

Following the publication of APPCOG's **Carbon Monoxide Alarms: Tenants Safe and Secure in their Homes Report** in 2017, the UK Government launched a consultation to extend requirements in England for CO alarms in rental and owner-occupied accommodation for all fuel types (excluding gas cookers) in November 2020.

The proposed change in government policy demonstrates the importance of sustained campaigning over many years. However, the ultimate winners will be the tenants and occupiers who will be safer in their homes as a result.



### Changing clinical guidelines

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has adopted APPCOG recommendations in its updated guidance on **'Indoor air quality at home'**. Following its consultation between June and August 2019, the published document includes a number of guidelines to help healthcare professionals raise awareness of, and prevent, CO poisoning.

A notable improvement is the guidance's recognition that unborn children, people living in poverty and young children are vulnerable to poor indoor air quality, including CO poisoning. This recognition will improve CO awareness amongst practitioners and aid them in providing preventative measures to high-risk households.

### Taking on big retailers

The sale of black-spot CO detectors has been a concern for many years, one echoed by Which? magazine in early 2020 in their advice about which carbon monoxide alarms to buy.

Believing it's safer to have an audible alarm to alert to the dangers of carbon monoxide, we were concerned to see black-spot CO detectors on sale on Amazon. After being contacted by APPCOG members in March 2020, Amazon agreed to remove all black-spot detectors from their website with immediate effect.

We are waiting for a response from eBay having written to them requesting that they do the same.



### Driving policy through research

Carers have been very much in the public eye during the COVID-19 pandemic. New APPCOG research, carried out with our support, will identify the extent to which frontline health and social care workers are at risk of CO poisoning when working in a patient's home and how to reduce that risk.

It is hoped the findings, due to be published in summer 2021, will be used to update guidance for frontline workers on how the risk of CO exposure might be mitigated in a reasonable, manageable way. This may include raising awareness of CO poisoning, the symptoms and providing clear instructions on what to do in a CO incident.

### Collaborating on national campaigns

Gas Safety Week is a well-established annual campaign, which sees the energy industry join forces with political partners to raise awareness of gas safety. As GDNs, we support the campaign with extensive social media content, including graphics and videos across multiple channels. In 2020, our social media posts reached more than 25,945 people on Facebook and received 51,993 impressions on Twitter.

In 2019, a new social media campaign was launched by APPCOG members to mark CO Awareness Week. It aimed to raise awareness of CO before the winter months, when CO deaths and injuries are traditionally higher. The 2020 campaign resulted in 594,280 social media impressions and reached 495,516 accounts.



# Social outputs

## Supporting and safeguarding customers in fuel poverty and vulnerable situations is a key priority.

Our alignment with Ofgem's Consumer Vulnerability Strategy (CVS) 2025 has allowed us to collaboratively focus on five areas where we can drive strong improvements for customers in vulnerable situations and those living in fuel poverty:

- Improving identification of vulnerability and smart use of data
- Supporting those struggling with their bills
- Driving significant improvements in customer service for vulnerable groups
- Encouraging positive and inclusive innovation
- Working with partners to tackle issues that cut across multiple sectors.

## Part 1: Combining forces to combat fuel poverty



**National Energy Action (NEA) reports around 4 million UK households are in fuel poverty, meaning they are unable to afford to live in a warm, dry home. In its Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics Report 2020, BEIS reported that homes without mains gas are twice as likely to be fuel poor.**

**Over the past three years, we've worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the issue among policy makers, while helping directly combat fuel poverty by connecting fuel-poor households to our networks.**

### Combining our reach to promote the FPNES together

Our stakeholders have long-supported the Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES) as one of the most impactful ways we can help lift customers out of fuel poverty. Our customers have told us that receiving a gas connection to use gas central heating makes a real difference to their quality of life. Collectively, in the last three years, we have provided 27,384 gas connections to fuel-poor households. In total over RIIO-GD1, we have delivered 92,057 new connections to households in fuel poverty, allowing these families to live in warm, dry homes.

It is important we continue to look for innovative and effective ways of raising awareness of the FPNES scheme and its benefits. Working together, we have created two short promotional films with two very different purposes and targets – one aimed at poor households and their support networks, and the other at policy makers, social housing providers and advice services.

This targeted approach showcases how we are partnering with frontline organisations to source funding for new gas central heating systems and insulation measures. It also highlights how the FPNES offers a sustainable solution for the future as we reduce the carbon impact of our activities through the injection of green gas and hydrogen blending.

## Supporting for the UK's largest fuel poverty conference

Throughout this regulatory period, we've supported National Energy Action (NEA) through our membership and collaboration. Our support of its annual conference and exhibition has provided a national forum to debate key issues relating to domestic energy efficiency and fuel poverty to inform future policy. The NEA Annual Conference has consistently attracted around 250 participants from across government, the energy industry, the health sector, local authorities, housing associations and other not-for-profit agencies. We have used this opportunity to raise the profile of the FPNES and our other safeguarding services as well as to gain feedback from key stakeholders on our approach and effectiveness.



## Celebrating Heat Heroes

Delivered by National Energy Action (NEA) with our collaborative support, the Heat Heroes Awards recognise the achievements of those who have gone above and beyond in their work to tackle fuel poverty. This well-attended event in 2019 was a new opportunity for us to showcase our safeguarding services, as well as our plans for RIIO-GD2, and gain stakeholder feedback and support.

Forty-one submissions were received from across England, Wales and Scotland, which were judged by Maria Wardrobe (former Director of Communications and External Relations at NEA) and a representative from each network.

Our Heat Heroes and their nominees received their awards at a ceremony held at the House of Commons and attended by 21 MPs, stakeholders and GDN representatives. The awards were promoted across a variety of communication channels, including via the NEA Annual Conference and on social media, reaching an estimated 803,120 people on social media alone.





## Engaging policy makers to effect positive change

### The Cross-Party Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency Group (FPEEG)

The FPEEG is a coalition of cross-party MPs and industry stakeholders committed to maintaining awareness of fuel poverty issues in Parliament. We have continued our support of the FPEEG over the last five years, which has provided the opportunity to engage with several MPs and key stakeholders, discuss our approach to the FPNES and gain their support to help reach our targets.

Our sponsorship of the group's annual dinner brought together MPs from the FPEEG and 100 stakeholders across the energy sector and its supply chain to discuss the challenges and opportunities of tackling fuel poverty and improving the energy efficiency of buildings.

### Tailoring our scheme to target those most in need

In July 2018, the decision to remove the area-based Index of Multiple Deprivation

(IMD) eligibility criteria from the FPNES was a setback, despite our lobbying. However, we successfully negotiated an extension period of 12 months to complete any accepted projects, ensuring customers who had already accepted work were not disadvantaged.

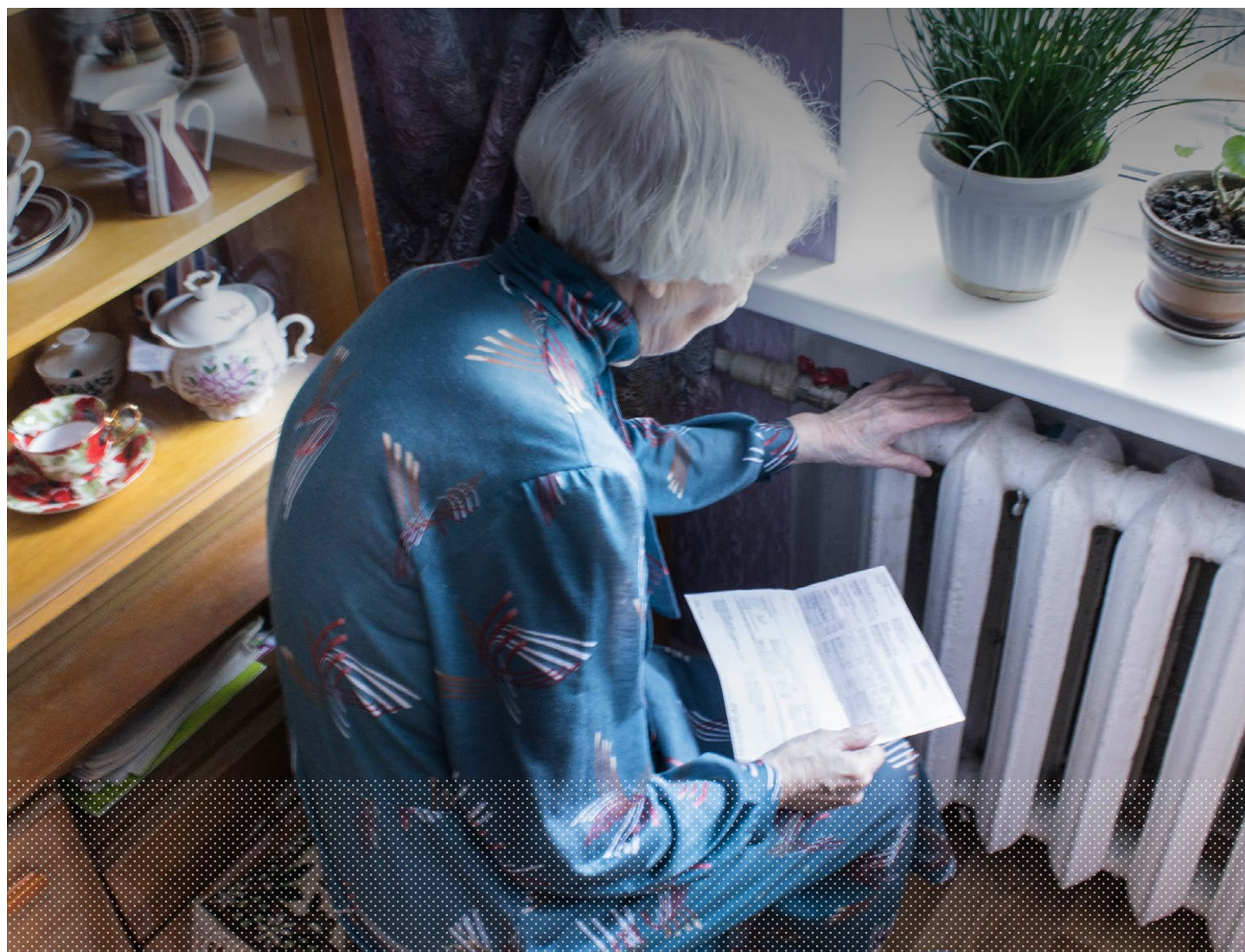
In December 2018, the Energy Company Obligation (ECO3), a government energy efficiency scheme to tackle fuel poverty and help reduce carbon emissions in Great Britain, amended its eligibility criteria. We held a number of sessions with the scheme creator BEIS, and we successfully lobbied for the additional qualification route of a 'local authority flexible eligibility'. This has enabled us to deepen our relationships with local authorities, who are best-placed to understand their local communities and level of need, as well as deliver community-based schemes.

During the development of our RII0-GD2 business plans, we have worked closely with BEIS again to ensure that gas is seen as part of the solution to decarbonising heat, including the increased use of green gas, hybrid heating systems and district heat networks to ensure our customers have the ability to heat their homes both now and in the future.



**“The gas connection process was really easy and was completed quickly and smoothly. The central heating installers were nice and my home is now lovely and warm – I couldn't be happier.”**

**— 82-year-old widow Patricia**



## Part 2: Working together to understand and support customers living in vulnerable situations

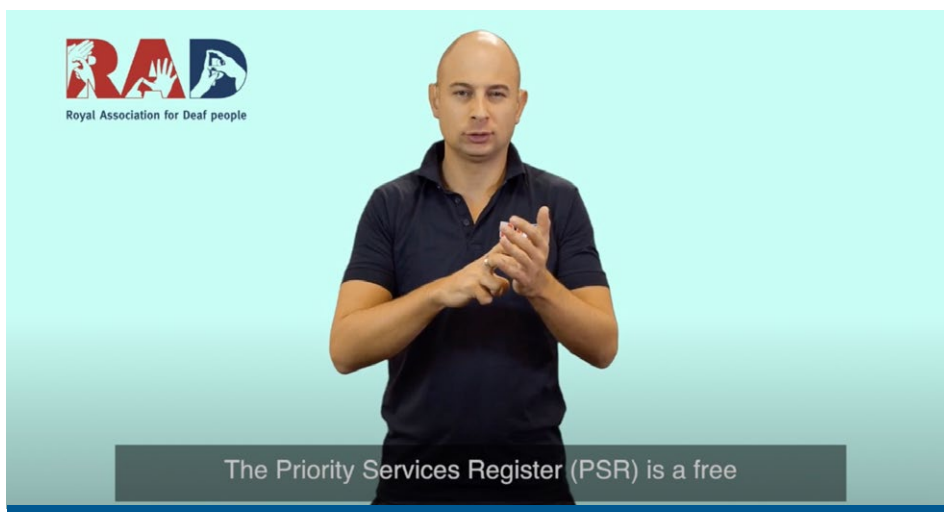


We recognise that to best safeguard our most vulnerable customers, we need to adapt our services to their individual needs and requirements. By working collaboratively with partners from inside and outside the energy sector, we've been able to develop our service provision over the past three years and further improve our support for customers living in vulnerable circumstances.

A key focus area for improvement has been the Priority Services Register (PSR). The PSR is a way for the energy industry to tailor our day-to-day support to best help customers with additional communication, access or safety needs. It also allows us to provide priority support to those who need it most in a gas emergency, so improving the management of the service is of paramount importance to us all.

# 56,640

Customers referred to the Priority Services Register by the GDNs in the last three years.



### Improving PSR support for customers

Working together via the cross-utility Safeguarding Customer Working Group (SCWG) and the GDN safeguarding working groups, we've updated our internal systems in readiness for extending PSR data sharing with other industries. We reviewed the industry justification matrix, which details expected and relevant actions for the PSR Needs Codes by industry participant (ie GDNs, DNOs or suppliers), to ensure we provide a more consistent and smarter approach for safeguarding services that does not create a postcode lottery.

This review identified several areas where we could collectively improve our processes to reduce the potential impact of our work on our more vulnerable customers. As an example, for customers who rely on personal careline alarms and telecare devices, we designed our processes and agreed as a group how we would best communicate with our customers should we strike a communication cable when excavating. As another example, if a customer is reliant on oxygen cylinders or concentrators, we all agreed we would attend to any reported gas emergency at their property within an hour due to the heightened safety risk of oxygen in a gas leak situation.

### The importance of registering once

Over the past three years, we have continued to work relentlessly with electricity networks and suppliers to create a PSR which ensures customers in vulnerable situations only need to register once. Through explicit consent gained at the point of registration, all parties then have visibility of the customer's needs at a household level.

Through the SCWG, we have now worked collaboratively with the water industry to create one set of PSR Needs Codes that can be applied across energy and water companies to make it even easier for customers to register. Our cross-utility work led to Ofwat and Ofgem issuing a letter to the utility industry in 2020, detailing the formal changes to align licences in 2021.

In addition to our initial PSR service improvements, we have also all continued to raise awareness of the register and encourage registrations across our print, digital and social media channels, as well as face-to-face and telephone interactions with customers. This has made a huge difference to our customers and communities, allowing them to more easily access the right safeguarding services, as well as financial support such as the Warm Home Discount and water social tariffs.

### Translation and interpretation services and partnerships

Working closely with the Royal Association for Deaf people (RAD), we had previously created three videos in British Sign Language. These are now available on all GDNs' websites and overall have received 1,039 views. We have also shared our experiences of using BSL interpreters, as well as translation and interpretation services for non-English speakers, and incorporated our collective learning and best practice when rolling out these services to our operational colleagues.



## Helping our colleagues to best support our vulnerable customers

As employers, it's vital we provide our people with the awareness and understanding to tailor our approach to best look after customers in vulnerable circumstances. The Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Friends programme aims to change people's perceptions of dementia and transform the way people think, act and talk about the condition.

Over the past three years, including during the pandemic, we've collectively trained 3,092 colleagues across our four companies to become Dementia Friends.

## Working with the right partners to promote our support

By working more collaboratively and with third sector partners, we have established a joint approach on how we signpost the PSR, carbon monoxide and key safeguarding services to respond to the more national nature of many charity partners.

We've produced a range of materials to create a single 'cobranded' message of the services we all provide. This has included items such as roller banners and leaflets to use at national conferences and events, which are likely to attract audiences from across the UK, not just the geographic area where the event is taking place.

Although a number of national conferences, including Dementia 2020 and Alzheimer's Society's annual conference 2020, were postponed due to COVID-19, we are exploring the opportunity to create a 'virtual' stand so we can continue to support and share our safeguarding services. We also targeted several national charity magazines to raise a greater awareness of services and issues that are particularly relevant to their audiences, for example, the PSR, our locking cooker valve and carbon monoxide awareness.



## Making it easier to find safeguarding services

We've created a new dedicated landing page for customers to quickly and easily discover which company looks after the gas network in their area. By entering just a postcode at [findmygdn.co.uk](http://findmygdn.co.uk), customers are provided with details of their GDN and how to contact them, along with a link to the customer safeguarding information page on the relevant GDN's website. This single web address makes for easier communication with our customers as we can use it on all cobranded materials.



## Safeguarding those with dementia and autism with our LCV

Over the last three years, we've fitted our free locking cooker valve (LCV) for 1,668 customers nationwide. This simple safeguarding device has helped customers living with dementia and autism to retain their independence at home, and provided reassurance to family, friends and carers that they cannot accidentally turn the gas on or leave it on.

We continue to work with community safeguarding groups including social services, occupational therapists and emergency services to identify more customers who could benefit from this safety device.

To support this work, we refreshed our joint LCV information leaflet, funded by Cadent, which is now used across all networks and by our partners. This leaflet comes into its own where our partners might be a national organisation and would be restricted by geographic boundaries if branded by one GDN.



## Collaborating to keep customers safe and warm during COVID-19

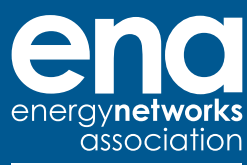
During the coronavirus pandemic, our customers were relying on us more than ever to keep their families safe and warm. While safety remained our number one priority as we kept gas flowing to homes and businesses across the country, we had to make changes to our ways of working to protect our colleagues and communities.

Representatives from all four GDNs' Safety, Operations, Customer Service and Communications teams virtually joined together each week to share progress and plans on how we were all adapting to the challenges and opportunities the pandemic presented. By openly sharing knowledge and experiences of the ever-evolving situation with each other, we ensured we were able to collectively continue to look after and safeguard our customers through such unprecedented times.

## Preparing for RIIO-GD2

We have been keen to ensure that we are collectively prepared for the next regulatory period and the introduction of the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA). To do this we have restructured working groups, refreshed terms of reference and invited key external members to the newly formed groups to provide challenge and an impartial review.

We have also shared our approaches in developing our individual business plan Social Return On Investment (SROI) models and we have together developed a small number of common SROI models to support the collaborative VCMA projects. This puts us in a great starting position for RIIO-GD2 and has resulted in projects being ready to progress through the new funding process.



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