

Vulnerable Customers and Energy Efficiency

Funding mechanism:	LCNF Tier 2
Project budget:	LCNF: £3.32m UK Power Networks: £0.93m Partners: £1.24m Overall: £5.49m
Status:	Live Start date: January 2014 End date: December 2017



Project concept/overview/challenge

Enabling and encouraging customers to change their pattern of demand and participate in Demand Side Response (DSR) and other energy saving activities will help to mitigate the challenge of increasing and more uncertain demand on our electricity networks.

To date there has been little direct research and operational attention directed at supporting vulnerable and fuel poor customers. This group of customers can benefit considerably from the low carbon transition but have the least ability to access low carbon technology. The project will support this group and allow them to fully participate in energy saving and DSR opportunities as well as supporting DNO management of network reinforcement using flexible alternatives.

Aim

The overarching aim of this project is enhance our insight into the needs of customers classified as vulnerable and fuel poor, and to explore how to engage with them to facilitate their increased participation in energy efficiency and 'time-of-use' tariffs. The project will demonstrate the extent to which this group can be engaged in such activities and consequently change their energy consumption away from peak demand periods to benefit the network by deferring or avoiding network reinforcement.

The project's six core objectives are to research and build evidence-based learning on the:

- method to identify and use existing trusted social groups and resources to effectively engage with this customer group
- level of response to smart meter data and price signals
- energy saving and shifting (in energy and monetary terms) achieved by participating in energy efficiency and DSR
- the impact on network reinforcement from any reduction or shift in energy consumption

- engagement materials and communication channels that were effective in supporting this group of customers
- measures taken to ensure the customer protection when customers are interacting with smart meter technologies

How we'll achieve this

The project's customer recruitment pool will be British Gas customers who are residents of Tower Hamlets Homes and Poplar HARCA properties within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The project aims to recruit and maintain the participation of 550 households. The same 550 households, divided into two groups, will participate in two sequential 12-month trials, whilst the low voltage (LV) and high voltage (HV) networks are monitored:

Trial 1 – Energy Saving: Identifying the magnitude of energy savings when customers have access to smart metering solutions, simple affordable energy saving devices and energy saving advice.

Trial 2 – Energy Saving and Shifting: Assess the level, and impact on the network, of any energy demand shifting achieved through a 'time-of-use' tariff when introduced in parallel with providing energy saving advice.

Partners



