

# Lights Out

Improving people's  
experience of power cuts



**citizens  
advice**

March 2026

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# Introduction

Power cuts make headlines every year. Most recently in Europe, the blackout in Spain and Portugal concentrated people's minds on the importance of reliable electricity in everyday life.<sup>1</sup> But what makes fewer headlines are the companies who have the responsibility to 'keep the lights on' and support people if the lights go out: electricity networks. In fact, 43% of people in England and Wales either don't even know who their electricity network is or that they are separate to their supplier.<sup>2</sup> Maybe this is as it should be. Perhaps it reflects that things are going well and people rarely need the help of their electricity networks.

This report examines how domestic consumers experience power cuts and sets out areas for improvement. We explore questions such as:

- are things going well for electricity network customers in a power cut?
- are they getting the service they want, especially when they may be more vulnerable without power?
- is that service sufficient for a future where planned and unplanned power cuts are likely to increase?<sup>3</sup>

As the statutory consumer watchdog for the energy sector we have an important role to play in shining a spotlight on the problems consumers encounter, providing solutions to these problems and ensuring their voices are heard when important decisions are made about the future of this essential market.

That's why in this report we will examine the evidence and make recommendations on how to ensure:

- electricity network customers get good service
- people don't suffer preventable detriment in a power cut

This is especially important as we transition to a world where electricity could power everything in our homes: heating, cooking, communications and driving. Making sure people are supported in the event of a power cut is critical. It's critical to people's lives, and also to their trust that a more electrified world will be sufficiently reliable to justify increasing bills to get there.

## Key definitions

**Power cuts:** planned or unplanned interruptions to a person's electricity supply because of something happening to the grid, including to the cut-out connecting the grid to a property. For example, a falling tree damages an overhead line.

**Electricity networks:** these companies own and run the infrastructure which carries electricity from the high-voltage national grid to homes and businesses across Great Britain. They are called Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) and Independent Distribution Network Operators (IDNOs). Only the former are directly subject to the 'Revenues = Incentives + Innovation + Outputs' (RIIO) price control framework.

**Domestic consumers:** people who need an electricity supply to where they live.

# Executive summary

## What have we found?

Electricity network evidence suggests there is good customer service during power cuts. Our evidence highlights areas for improvement and a need to standardise good practice.

We're seeing increasing numbers of people contacting us for help with network supply issues: cases have trebled between 2019 and 2025. It is discouraging that the Storm Arwen review, which in 2022 published recommendations to improve consumer protection and support in severe weather events, has been not followed by a decline in demand for our help.<sup>4</sup>

The most common issue our clients come to us about is compensation, for which there is a known fix: better communication by electricity networks. This was a problem and solution highlighted in the Storm Arwen review.<sup>5</sup>

The most concerning issue is that some people who are dependent on electricity for medical needs, life-critical and otherwise, are not getting the support they need. This is further exacerbated when a power cut makes remote communication impossible for them.

Meanwhile, customer satisfaction has improved since Storm Arwen, with human interaction, accurate information and frequent updates driving that satisfaction.

[Page 7](#) has an overview of our report findings.

## Priority Recommendations

The government, Ofcom and Ofgem should work together to ensure that, as far as is reasonably possible, in a power cut everyone can call emergency services and electricity networks. [page 20](#)

Electricity networks should add a category to the Priority Services Register (PSR) needs code for people at risk of communication black-out in a power cut, by 1st February 2027. [page 23](#)

Ofgem should introduce guaranteed standards of performance so electricity networks must provide alternative power or practical solutions to those who have a threat to life when off-supply. [page 27](#)

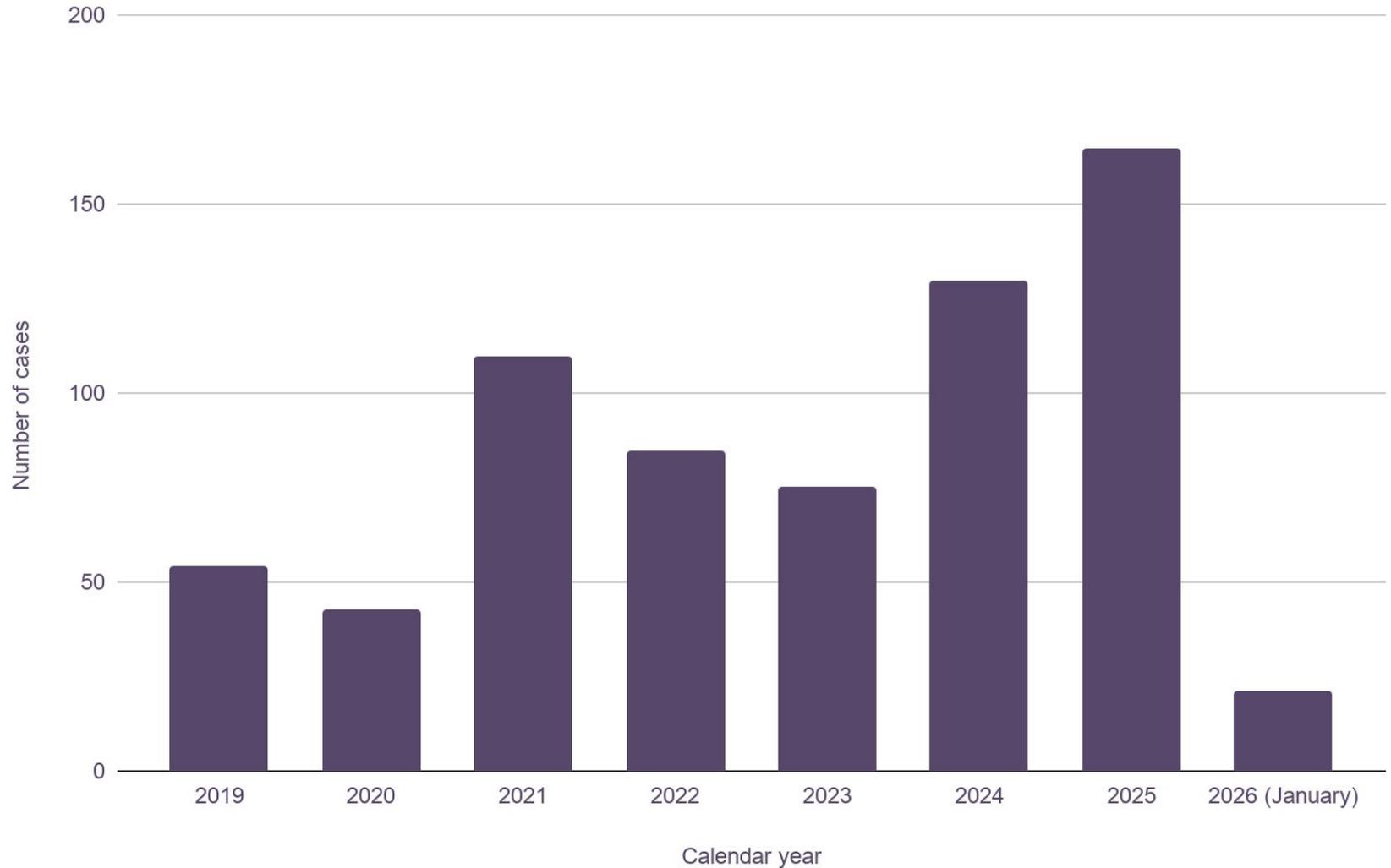
Ofgem should use the price control regime to improve oversight and incentivisation of DNOs' practical support in a power cut. [page 28](#)

Electricity networks should improve their communication about statutory compensation and goodwill payments after a power cut. [page 33](#)

# We're seeing increasing numbers of people phoning us for help with a power cut

Number of cases where domestic consumers contacted Citizens Advice consumer service for help with a power cut

With notable storm names included (red wind warnings)

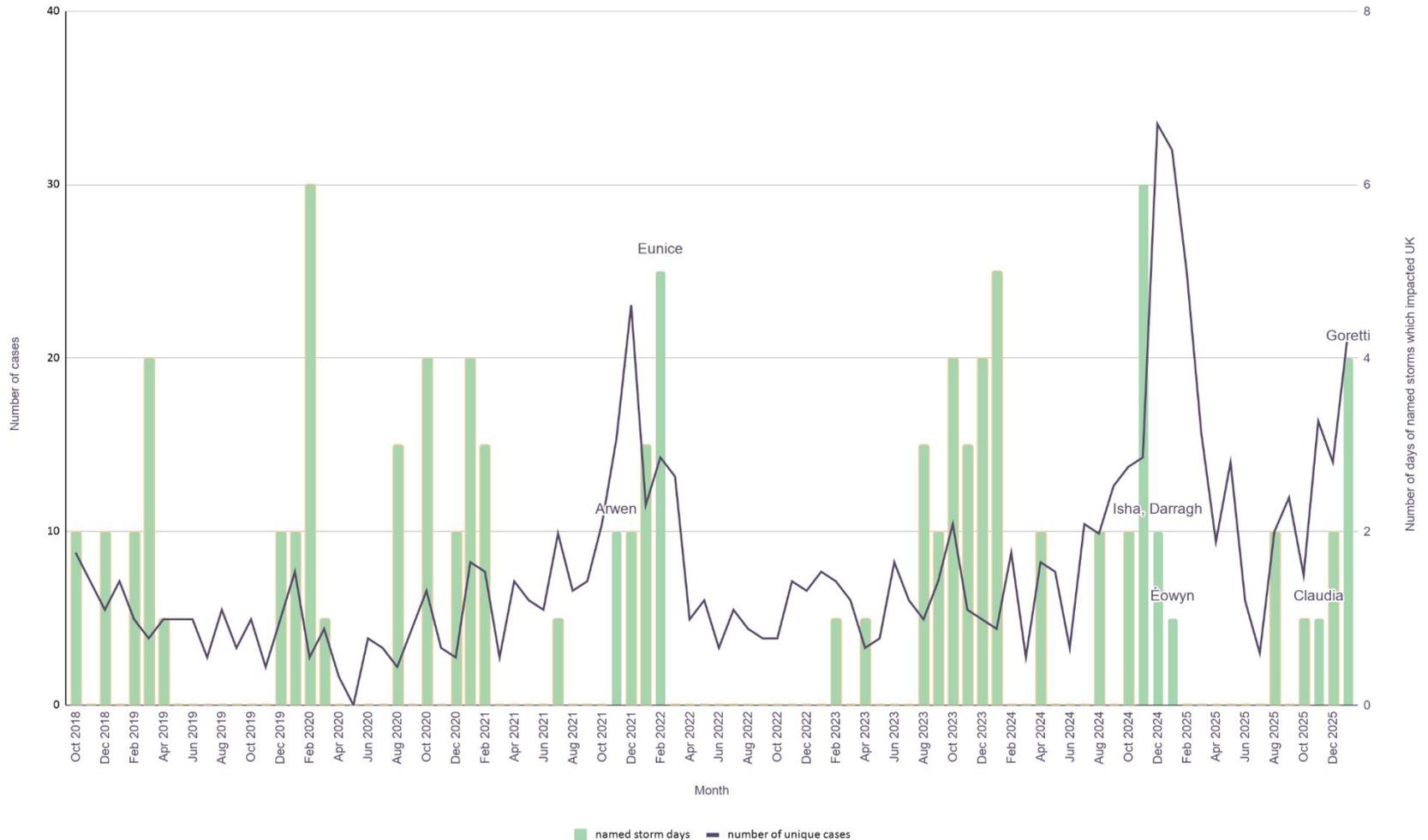


N.B: This is a conservative number, showing a subset of people seeking power cut help as it excludes advice offered by the electricity networks, Advice Direct Scotland, directly by our local Citizens Advice network, and advice recorded by the consumer service under other case categories. Typically people call the emergency 105 phone number in a power cut. Citizens Advice [consumer service](#) is the official source of free and independent energy advice in England and Wales. From April 2019, the consumer service stopped offering advice to people living in Scotland and Advice Direct Scotland took up this role. The numbers shown have been calculated using analysis of 2025 cases recorded as a network supply issue. We identified the proportion of those which were about power cuts, and for volumes in other years used that proportion as a proxy.

# As expected, it seems that more people call about power cuts when there's a disruptive storm

Number of cases where domestic consumers phoned Citizens Advice consumer service about network supply issues

With notable storm names included (red wind warnings)



N.B: This is a conservative number as it excludes advice offered by the electricity networks, Advice Direct Scotland, directly by our local Citizens Advice network, and advice recorded by the consumer service under other case categories. Typically people call the emergency 105 phone number in a power cut. Citizens Advice consumer service is the official source of free and independent energy advice in England and Wales. From April 2019, the consumer service stopped offering advice to people living in Scotland and Advice Direct Scotland took up this role. The numbers shown have been calculated using analysis of 2025 cases recorded as a network supply issue. We identified the proportion of those which were about power cuts, and for volumes in other years used that proportion as a proxy.

# DNO evidence suggests good customer service, but our evidence highlights areas for improvement and a need to standardise the good



## What's going well

**Fixing the problem:** it seems networks have marginally improved in recent years

**Communication from electricity networks** before and during a power cut: generally helpful and informative

**Communication in a power cut:** initiatives and recommendations exist to make it possible

**Support for vulnerable people:** Satisfaction with power cut customer service is higher for people on the PSR, support can be useful and industry has initiatives in place to make this work well

**Communication about compensation:** there's some good practice in how DNOs communicate about compensation

**Compensation for damage from power surges:** people can take some steps to avoid damage and need for compensation

**Future of power cuts:** there's innovation underway to improve the resilience of high risk communities



## What needs improving

**Fixing the problem:** there's opportunity to improve restoration of small-scale and low-visibility power cuts

**Communication from electricity networks:** the regulatory framework can challenge DNOs to do even better

**Communication in a power cut:** more needs to be done to ensure it's possible, and to safeguard people when it isn't

**Support for vulnerable people:** people on the PSR aren't always being contacted in a power cut, and practical support can be lacking, including for the most vulnerable

**Communication about compensation:** generally unclear and confusing, must be improved

**Compensation for damage from power surges:** people have limited ability to prevent, and sometimes pay for, damage

**Future of power cuts:** power cuts will likely increase, so Ofgem needs to more proactively safeguard high risk communities

Page 40-45 has a list of recommendations, categorised by their audience: multiple stakeholders including government, Ofgem, electricity networks, and Ofcom.

# Methodology

The report examines evidence to identify what detriment electricity network consumers in Great Britain are experiencing, which the regulatory regime and government is failing to address. It focuses on power cut customer service of DNOs (with some case analysis including IDNO customer service), and the broader experience of people in power cuts.

This report does not compare DNOs' customer service, nor does it analyse how factors such as geography and length of power cut impact customer satisfaction or the experience of DNO customer service. We've used a variety of research methods:

- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of responses to the DNO customer satisfaction survey from April 2020- March 2025. This is collected by DNOs according to Ofgem's instructions and guidance,<sup>6</sup> and we requested that data from them. We collated and analysed just under 336,000 survey responses of domestic customers who'd been in contact with, or received contact from, a DNO, relating to a general enquiry or a planned or unplanned power cut.
- Quantitative analysis of cases recorded when domestic customers contacted the Citizens Advice consumer service about a network supply issue between 2018-2025.
- Qualitative analysis of a sample of 168 cases recorded when domestic customers contacted the Citizens Advice consumer service about a network supply or safety issue between 2022-2025.<sup>7</sup>
- Desk-based research analysing DNO websites, DNO PSR policies and Ofgem reporting.
- Initial findings from our qualitative and quantitative research about the Multi-Sector Priority Services Register.<sup>8</sup>
- Qualitative analysis of feedback submitted on our Citizens Advice webpage ['Get compensation if you have a power cut'](#)





**Fixing the problem**

## Fixing power cuts: overall picture

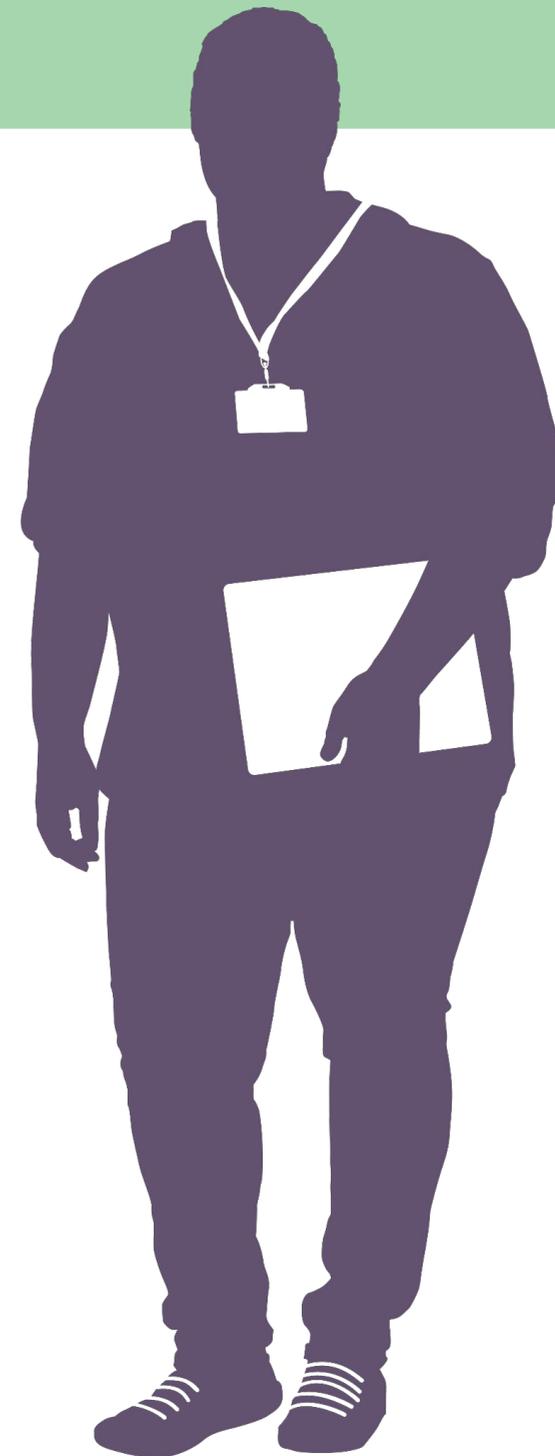
Overall, the evidence available from Ofgem and networks suggests that the impact of power cuts and networks' response has marginally improved over recent years. It is hard to judge completely as the overall statistics are not published, but:

- The average time a person is without electricity in a power cut (excluding when a storm has caused very severe damage or there is a one-off exceptional event), is 35 minutes. This has stayed around the same level (30-37 minutes) for the past 9 years.<sup>9</sup>
- Out of every 100 people, roughly 40 experience a power cut (which isn't caused by very severe weather damage) each year. This has generally decreased from 46 people 9 years ago.<sup>10</sup>
- In power cuts when a storm has caused very severe damage, the time without electricity has generally reduced since Storm Arwen in 2021. For 98% of customers it lasts under 20 hours, compared to 36 hours in 2021/22.<sup>11</sup>

We welcome this evidence and are especially encouraged by the fact that the time people are without electricity following a severe weather event has reduced since Storm Arwen.



We recommend that Ofgem publish comprehensive data about power cuts, without exclusions for severe weather events and one-off exceptional events. This ensures the full picture of people's experience of power cuts is understood, regardless of whether or not those power cuts were within a company's control. This is a recommendation that applies across the board; Ofgem should always publish unadjusted performance data, and then adjusted data can also be published, with explanation of those adjustments.



## Fixing power cuts: small-scale and low-visibility power cuts

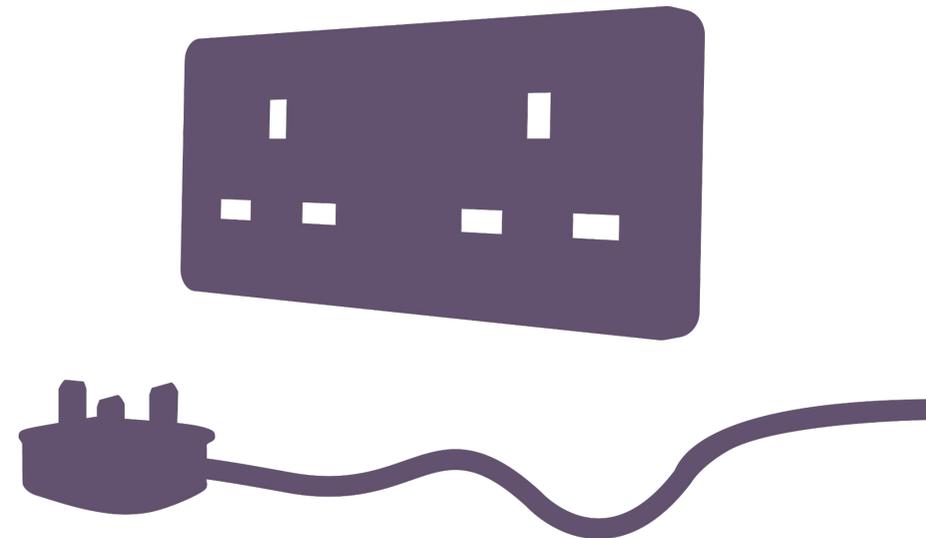
A minority of people who contact us about power cuts are seeking our help because they can't get a problem fixed, and are struggling to convince their DNO to fix it. In most cases, they're experiencing multiple power cuts. They ring their DNO about it, who will say they can't fix the problem, or won't give any indication on when they might fix the problem. They also don't explain that customers can claim compensation for multiple power cuts, which is an issue we address [on pages 30-34](#).

Sandra\* is a disabled pensioner who, along with her partner, has been experiencing multiple power cuts, as have some of her neighbours. Each interruption caused their surge protection to trip, shutting off the entire electricity supply. Resetting the power requires reaching a fuse box mounted high on the wall, which she can't access due to her disability. She rang her DNO who sent out an engineer, who said there was nothing they could do, but they would ask for a monitor to be fitted. Several days later, she experienced more power cuts, so she rang the DNO again. They explained that the monitor could take months to become available, and in the meantime to wait. So she emailed us for advice, worrying about months of power cuts. She used our advice to contact the DNO, which prompted them to send another engineer and fix the problem within the following week. '...the village that I live in, we get power cuts all the time, way more frequently than anyone else...anytime there's a bit of wind or rain or the tiniest bit of adverse weather, you can guarantee that we get a power cut, but in this particular incident there was none of that, and we still got a power cut...I would say on average we get around six or seven a year...they are quick to fix it, but they should be going for the root cause in the first place and not inconveniencing people.' - dissatisfied customer, customer satisfaction survey

\*names changed

It is known that the regulatory regime does not currently target improving the experience of the minority of customers. Averages drive performance, and DNOs are incentivised to prioritise supporting the greatest number of people, over faults affecting fewer people.

Further, for some interruptions on the low-voltage network, DNOs won't automatically know about the faults. It can take multiple customers ringing, someone who caused the fault reporting it, or enough reliable smart-meter data, for DNOs to decide that there is a fault to their infrastructure which they need to fix. Their incentive to then actually fix the problem will vary depending on the number of customers affected and the cost of identifying and fixing the fault.



## Opportunity: fixing small scale and low-visibility power cuts

Ofgem have acknowledged that ‘some customers continue to experience repeated unplanned interruptions’ and highlight that this is more common in rural communities or areas where the infrastructure is ageing or constrained.<sup>12</sup>

Ofgem are proposing that DNOs ‘identify and publish data on customers and regions experiencing multiple unplanned interruptions’, and that DNOs publish proposals on how to support and reduce the number of customers in their business plans for the next price control.<sup>13</sup> They are also proposing to incentivise DNOs to limit the length of power cuts over 12 hours, when weather does not cause an extreme number of faults, and to retain DNOs’ access to use-it-or-lose-it funding to improve reliability for worst-served customers.<sup>14</sup>

However, DNOs don’t currently know everyone who experiences multiple interruptions. As explained on the previous page, they don’t automatically know who is affected, and knowing that one house is affected at the low voltage level doesn’t mean they know which other houses are affected. DNOs also already report faults which cause customer interruptions to the regulator.



We therefore encourage Ofgem to be specific in their ask on multiple interruptions so that DNOs are consistent in what they report and how. We would also encourage the regulator to make the regulatory regime work as effectively as possible to address this problem, recognising that reputational incentives can have limited effect without proper scrutiny. We encourage the development of solutions which efficiently reduce the likelihood of people experiencing multiple power cuts, and longer duration power cuts.

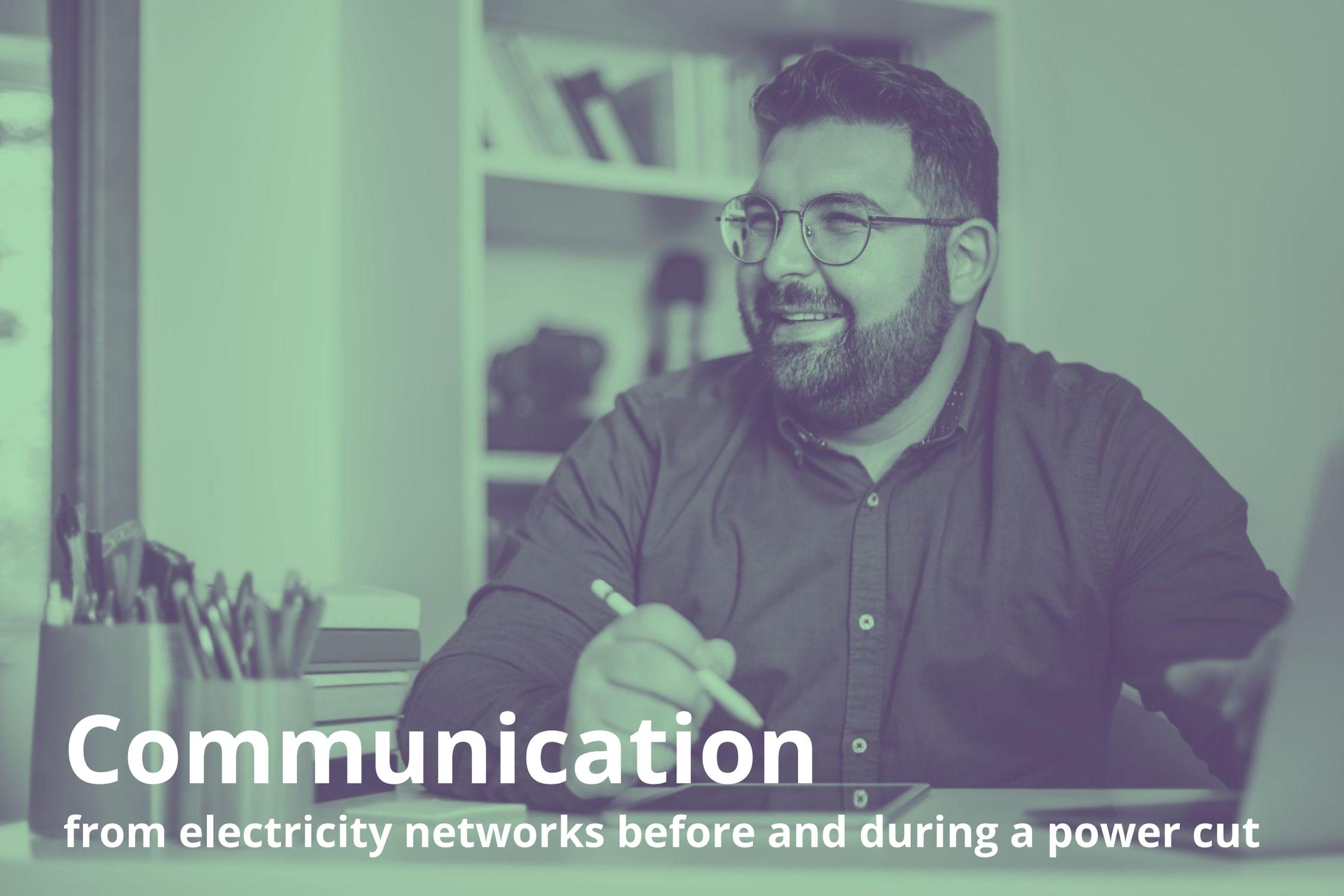
Smart meters can also help alert DNOs to power cuts, or confirm that there is a power cut.<sup>15</sup> This should continue to develop over time, as the reliability of the alerts improves, and as more people have smart meters installed.

However, using smart meters is not a reliable way of tracking power cuts:

- We’re aware that these alerts may not be reaching DNOs promptly or consistently, potentially reducing their utility.
- These alerts can also signal other types of supply disconnection, not exclusively DNO power cuts.
- It is also likely that some smart meters will rely on home broadband connections through the ‘VWAN’ model. This could prevent the alerts being sent in a power cut.<sup>16</sup>



We encourage the industry to improve the reliability of smart meter alerts, and ensure that this is future-proofed where home broadband is the communication method, and when smart meters depend on 4G connection, so they can be used by DNOs to identify and track power cuts. We also encourage suppliers to roll-out smart meters more widely, and ensure that smart meters are consistently working so that consumers can get their full benefits.<sup>17</sup> This will further remove the burden upon consumers to report interruptions on the low-voltage network, and help ensure all those impacted are compensated if they’re eligible.



# Communication

from electricity networks before and during a power cut

# Communication from electricity networks is generally helpful and informative

We analysed the survey responses of people who experienced a planned or unplanned power cut between 2020-2025.<sup>18</sup> Of over 217,000 respondents, 92% were satisfied with the customer service they received from their DNO. This means they scored satisfaction as seven out of ten or higher. What is clear is that tailored, timely and proactive communication matters to people during a power cut:

 In a power cut, DNOs must try to keep customers on the Priority Services Register (PSR), a register designed to ensure vulnerable people are appropriately supported, updated with information about restoration times and help available.<sup>19, 20</sup> Customers on the PSR scored the customer service more highly than those who weren't, with an average score of 9.10 vs 8.93. This suggests that **people are more satisfied when they receive proactive communication** from their DNO in a power cut.

 **People are more satisfied if they speak to someone**, than if communication is via text, email, web-chat or pre-recorded phone messages. Their average satisfaction was 9.07 as opposed to 8.89, and just higher than satisfaction for service during a planned power cut.

 The **further in advance that customers are warned about a planned power cut, the more satisfied they are.** Most customers are getting 5 or more days notice of planned power cut.

 **The quality of information** most strongly drives satisfaction for customers in an unplanned power cut. In other words, the utility, accuracy, and updating of information matters more than the ease or politeness with which it is accessed or provided, as table 3 on the following page shows.

Service Type	Average Overall Satisfaction Score
General enquiries	9.33
Planned interruption	9.06
Unplanned interruption - Agent	9.07
Unplanned interruption - Message	8.89

table 1- satisfaction by service type

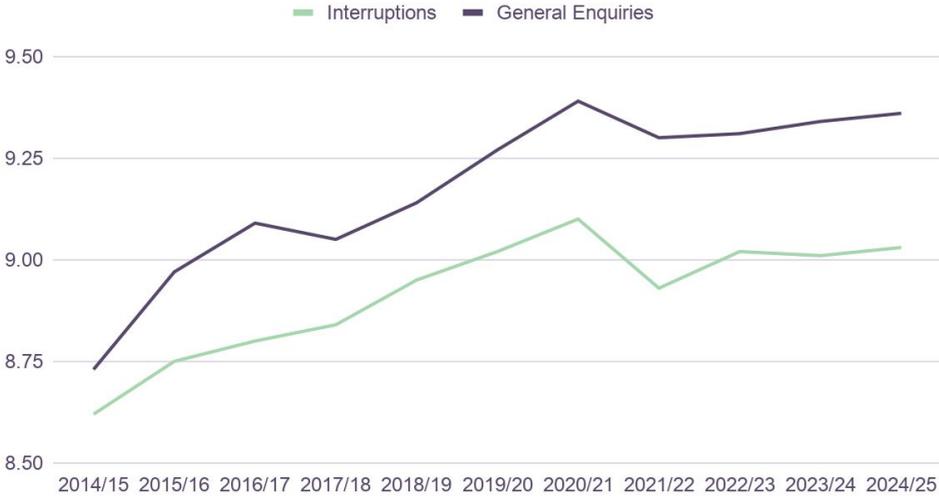
Amount of Notice Given	Average Overall Satisfaction Score	Proportion of customers (%)
Don't remember	9.00	9.1
1-5 days	8.56	11.1
5-10 days	9.14	36.1
More than 10 days	9.27	40.6

table 2- satisfaction for planned interruptions

# Communication from electricity networks has improved, and must continue to do so

As the graph below shows, customer satisfaction with DNOs has increased over time.<sup>21</sup>

**Customer Satisfaction (out of 10)**

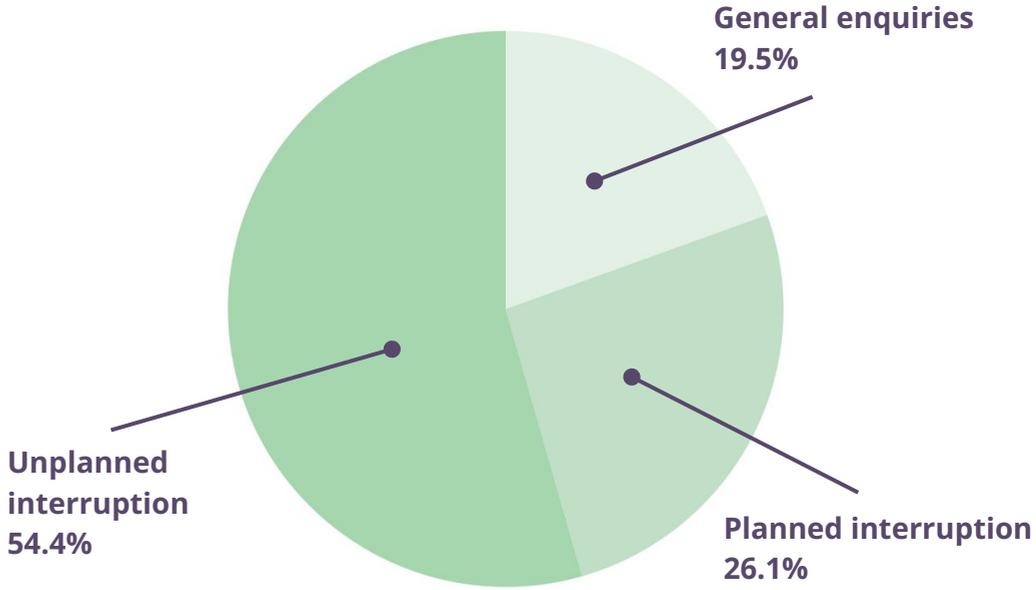


Most of electricity network customer service is to support people during a power cut; this is the main reason for people to contact their electricity network. Indeed, 20% of domestic customers responding to the satisfaction survey had a general enquiry, whilst 54% had a power cut.<sup>22</sup> However, people are less satisfied with service in a power cut than the 'general enquiry' customer service. We think it should be the other way round.

Getting customer service right during a power cut is also more important. We appreciate that customer service is harder during a power cut, because there's more demand, urgency and potentially distress from the customer. It can be hard to predict how long a power cut will last for, and provide the right advice. But the improvements in customer satisfaction over time show that DNOs are capable of responding to the challenge.



We therefore recommend that, for the next price control starting in April 2028, the Broad Measure of Customer Satisfaction (BMCS) incentive should re-weight the categories so that power cuts customer service matters more than general enquiry customer service. General enquiries: 20%, Planned interruption: 26%, Unplanned interruption: 54% reflects the proportions of actual respondents to the survey.<sup>23</sup>



# Communication from electricity networks has improved, and must continue to do so

Regarding accuracy of information, we are encouraged that DNOs have implemented changes recommended by Ofgem and the government following Storm Arwen to improve in this area. The government recommended that 'DNOs ...improve their assumptions for estimating restoration times and improve the quality of their communication to customers, so that customers can make informed choices about their needs.'<sup>24</sup> DNOs reported that this recommendation had been addressed.<sup>25</sup> We encourage DNOs to build on these improvements.

## Please hold...

The Storm Arwen report also brought attention to the long call wait times customers could experience. What is encouraging is that in our sample analysis, only one person seeking our advice reported this problem at the end of 2024. They had been trying for two and a half days to get through to their DNO in a power cut. Nonetheless, the term 'wait' came up 616 times in the responses of dissatisfied customers (those with a score less than 7). This reflects frustration with delays in restoring electricity, but also receiving service or information updates that didn't meet their expectations or tolerance. As one customer noted: "I know we're in a difficult situation at the moment but I think trying to get through to somebody on the phone and not having to wait about. I think we waited for an hour before we found out what the issue was" .

Satisfaction with...	Average Satisfaction	Correlation with overall satisfaction
Usefulness of information provided	8.98	0.74
Accuracy of information provided	8.85	0.72
Being kept up to date	8.73	0.72
Ease of contact (agent only)	9.12	0.66
Politeness of agent (agent only)	9.71	0.52
Online service (message only)	9.18	0.73

Table 3- satisfied customers: Spearman's rank correlation coefficient between overall scores and scores about information quality, (1= perfect correlation, 0=no correlation)



# Communication from electricity networks must continue to improve

## Cookie cutter comms aren't cutting it

There is a flipside to people valuing speaking to someone. People who only received power cut customer service via message (including an automated message over the phone) rather than speaking to a person were the most likely to be dissatisfied with their overall service. They were nearly twice as likely to be dissatisfied as those with a general enquiry.<sup>26</sup>

Further, in our analysis of the answers of dissatisfied customers (those with a score less than 7), the term “automat”—referring to automatic or automated systems—appeared 446 times. While this technology is intended to help network companies communicate information to service users more widely and efficiently, many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the experience.

Customers felt that automated messages lacked sufficient detail and accuracy, prompting them to seek human assistance instead. As one person noted:

*“There wasn't enough detail in the automated message for what I wanted to know—that's why I waited to be put through to an advisor.”*

Several customers also expressed a clear preference for personal contact over generic or repetitive automated responses:

*“Not just given an almost automated response. A more personal touch would be useful. Although they provided information, it was the same as online, which doesn't help. I'm still waiting to hear back about a complaint I submitted. There have been several power cuts in the area, and I've only received one email saying they're looking into it.”*

These findings suggest that automated responses or text messages do not always meet consumers' needs or expectations, particularly when customers require timely, specific, or reassuring updates.

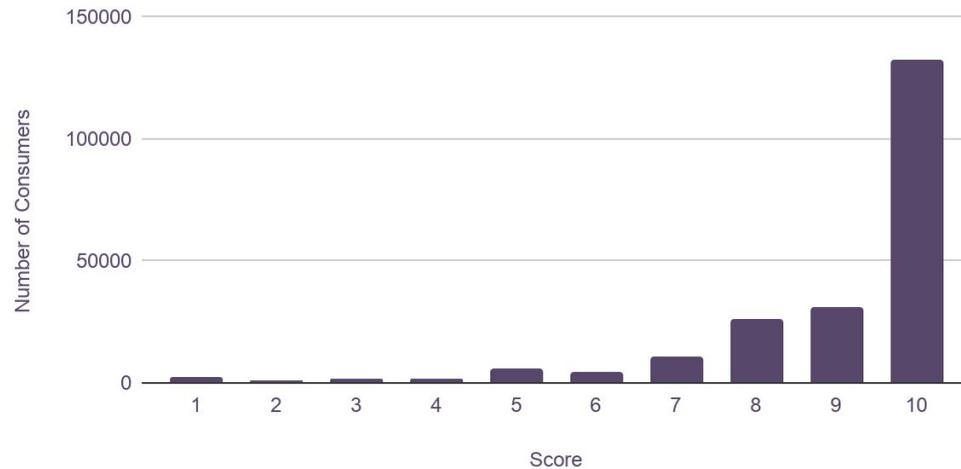
## Power surge advice

One type of advice that some people aren't either receiving, or acting on, is regarding power surges which happen when power is restored. Over one in 10 of the people coming to Citizens Advice for help are seeking recompense for the damage caused to their appliances by power surges when the electricity comes back on. One solution is to ensure people unplug their expensive equipment (fridge, boiler, stove, storage heater, computer etc) until they know the electricity is back on. DNOs do advise people to do this in some of their communications, which we encourage. Doing this during a power cut is an effective point in time to do so, although it is not always possible to follow that advice. We investigate other solutions beyond advice on [page 36](#).

# The regulatory framework can challenge DNOs to do even better

There is a long tail of dissatisfaction with the service provided in power cuts, as shown in the graph below.

## Overall Satisfaction Score: planned and unplanned interruptions price control years 2020-2025



For those dissatisfied customers, who scored less than 7 for overall satisfaction, there is low correlation between satisfaction with elements asked about in the survey and their overall satisfaction, as table 4 shows. This suggests there may be factors which the survey is not capturing; the survey is framed around communication, when customer service in a power cut also includes practical support and compensation.



We therefore recommend that Ofgem should add further questions to the customer satisfaction survey to identify factors driving dissatisfaction. This includes questions about practical support in a power cut, and understanding and access to compensation.

Satisfaction with...	Average dissatisfaction (scores <7)	Correlation with overall dissatisfaction
Usefulness of information provided	5.44	0.39
Accuracy of information provided	5.12	0.37
Being kept up to date	4.41	0.37
Ease of contact (agent only)	6.77	0.18
Politeness of agent (agent only)	8.54	0.15
Online service (message only)	6.63	0.22

Table 4- dissatisfied customers': Spearman's rank correlation coefficient between overall scores and scores about different factors, (1= perfect correlation, 0=no correlation)



# Communication in a power cut

## Dead phone lines could be deadly...

In a power cut, some people are left without any means of communication.<sup>27</sup> Without mains electricity, WiFi routers stop working, as do some mobile signal masts and broadband services.<sup>28</sup>

The lines of defence against remote communication blackout are:

- analogue landlines
- mobile networks: local mobile signal masts which are unaffected or with back-up power
- digital landlines: home broadband services where both the external and internal infrastructure has adequate back-up power (rare)<sup>29</sup>
- battery-powered FM radio to receive updates

Not everyone has an analogue landline, and **by February 2027, most won't.**<sup>30</sup> This is because of the switch-off of the Public Switch Telephone Network (PSTN). This could leave people in areas without mobile coverage, or who haven't got a mobile phone, without remote communication in a power cut. Further, the government has recently announced a review considering the managed transition away from FM radio.<sup>31</sup>

There is a significant weakness within the current communication framework, where reliance on digital systems, which will soon be the default, leaves consumers particularly vulnerable during power cuts. The lack of reliable alternative communication channels can exacerbate harm, especially for those who depend on timely information for safety or wellbeing. This isn't just about people being unable to contact their DNO, or use the internet to find out what's going on. They're left unable to contact emergency services too.

### What's being done?

The government, Ofgem and Ofcom are aware that vulnerable households have been left without a means of communication in power cuts. They're also aware that this will become significantly worse and likely hit more rural and remote communities when analogue landlines switch off in 2027. They've made recommendations and published guidance to try to address this.<sup>32</sup> However, much of this is guidance, and responsibilities between sectors, government bodies and individuals are split.<sup>33</sup> It is essential that these responsibilities align and are enforced, so that in a power cut, people are able to contact their DNO and the emergency services for help.



### What's next?

We recommend that the government, Ofcom and Ofgem should work together to ensure that, as far as is reasonably possible, in a power cut everyone can call emergency services and electricity networks, including when customers are reliant on digital communications. They should develop a log identifying which households are at risk of communication black-out due to 'single points of failure' of communications infrastructure in power cuts. They should evaluate what the backup is for those households, such as:

- Battery backup length for specific mobile masts or broadband connections
- Other connectivity i.e radio communication, which Local Resilience Forums can use and offer to households nearby<sup>34</sup>
- DNO and communication provider plans on where and how power should most quickly be restored.

They should then identify where there are gaps, and what solutions could be implemented. This should include evaluating whether the regulatory regime, which relies heavily on guidance, is sufficiently effective.

# Mobile networks in a power cut

Even if people do live in area with mobile coverage, not all local masts have back-up power, and rural areas are particularly vulnerable as there are fewer masts to provide coverage.<sup>35</sup> Ofcom estimates that two thirds of UK premises can maintain emergency mobile connectivity for up to one hour during a power cut.<sup>36</sup> Our evidence shows that mobile signal is failing in power cuts:

People seeking our advice after a power cut are reporting that they were without mobile signal during that time.

James\* and his wife are in their late 70s. In Storm Darragh, they didn't have power for 4 and a half days. They couldn't use the heating, lights, or cook. The local phone mast was affected, so they had no signal. They left the house each day so they could speak to their daughter and find warmth, and bought equipment like a gas cooker and a kettle. Their DNO offered them a £100 'goodwill' payment, which didn't cover the cost of the equipment.

In our analysis of dissatisfied customers responses to the satisfaction survey, the terms 'signal' and 'internet' appeared 113 and 240 times respectively.



"When the power goes off in the rural community, you don't have mobile signal; I had to drive somewhere to fire up the app as the app wasn't working. We had no power over a week during Christmas and the app wouldn't fire up...We have no other way of getting in touch with them. We don't have a landline here"-dissatisfied DNO customer

The switch off of 2G (by 2033) will also increase dependence on 4G connectivity, creating further single points of failure for mobile networks.<sup>37</sup>

\*names changed

## What's being done?

After Storm Arwen, the Electronic Communication Resilience & Response Group (EC-RRG) published a post-incident report with lessons learned, which stated that 'thousands of mobile cell sites were disrupted by power outages'.<sup>38</sup> However, the fact we are finding evidence of the same thing happening in Storm Darragh suggests that lessons have not been learned.

Meanwhile, Ofcom's guidance regarding resilience for communication providers has a notable gap about the 'last mile' of connectivity for mobile networks, because it still undertaking work to explore appropriate measures.<sup>39</sup> The regulator recently published estimates that it would cost £1bn to improve power backup for one mobile network operator to reach all of the masts in the UK, as a supplier of last resort.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, the government's just launched Mobile Market Review referenced this piece of work, recognising the 'the importance consumers place on being able to have uninterrupted access to mobile services'.<sup>41</sup>



## What's next?

We recommend that Ofcom update the resilience guidance based on the further work it has undertaken on mobile cell Sites. We recommend that the 'Shared Rural Network', which aims to improve mobile rural coverage 'without duplicating infrastructure', takes into account resilience to power failures as it carries out its programme.<sup>42</sup> Failing to do so would be a missed opportunity, and ignoring the fact that its design is baking in single points of failure.

# Digital landlines in a power cut

We are concerned that those who can be most vulnerable in a power cut, namely the elderly in rural communities, may be left without any means of communication in a power cut.<sup>43</sup> 7% of people aged 65 and over do not use a mobile phone.<sup>44</sup> This makes their landline connection even more important, especially when their telecare alarms rely on that connection. However, by February 2027, most people will no longer have access to analogue landlines; they'll be replaced by digital landlines, which are reliant on home broadband. This needs power both at home and to the communications infrastructure outside the home (this can be mobile network infrastructure- see previous page).

## What's being done?

Ofcom has issued guidance to communications providers on how to comply with their duty to reduce the risk of, prepare for the occurrence of, and remedy the effect of a resilience incident.<sup>45</sup> They suggest best practice of 4 hour backup for some of the home broadband infrastructure outside the home. They have also issued guidance that communications providers should 'guarantee access to emergency services for at least one hour during a power outage for customers who rely solely on landlines. This is often accomplished through a battery backup.'<sup>46</sup>

1 hour is a short period of time, especially given that power cuts from storms can last for days. We're encouraged that most communications providers have signed a charter committing to 'work to provide solutions that go beyond the Ofcom minimum of 1 hour of continued, uninterrupted access to emergency services'.<sup>47</sup>

## What's next?

It seems that, even if communications providers follow the guidance, people on digital landlines can at most expect 4 hours of connectivity in a power cut which affects their household and the broadband infrastructure. This isn't sufficient to prevent harm. It is therefore up to a network of organisations, including DNOs and communications providers, to act in a coordinated manner to safeguard people who rely on digital landlines in a power cut.

However, we issued an information request to DNOs, asking them whether whether Ofcom or Ofgem have formally engaged with them on what the PSTN switch-off will mean for them. They responded that the regulators had not engaged.

This is worrying evidence that the sectors and bodies with responsibilities to act in the interests of these consumers are not aligning those responsibilities. If organisations aren't coordinated when preparing for such events, that does not bode well for their response when the crisis actually happens.

# Opportunity: safeguarding the most vulnerable in a communication and power blackout

It may be that innovation and market developments create a secondary communication network which could be used as a backup in power cuts. However, most evidence points to increasing single points of failure as we transition to digital communications systems. Safeguards are therefore urgently needed to ensure that those who are most vulnerable, and left unable to communicate in a power cut, are kept safe.

## Making good practice a consistent safeguard: local resilience

We're aware of innovation as DNOs investigate solutions to provide greater resilience to at-risk communities and their customers.<sup>48</sup> This could help provide backup so people can communicate in a power cut, or provide alternative communication methods, such as satellite phones.<sup>49</sup> However, this innovation won't be comprehensively deployed in time for the analogue landline switch-off next year.



We therefore recommend that Ofgem more proactively ensure innovation which is of clear consumer interest is implemented and deployed swiftly. We discuss this further on [page 37](#).

## Making good practice a consistent safeguard: a register of those at risk

In May 2024, the previous government set out its intention for a multi-sector PSR.<sup>50</sup> This would have ensured that telecoms providers and DNOs shared data consistently, allowing them to identify the most vulnerable for proactive support in a power cut. However, this did not materialise. The opportunity has been missed so far to safeguard vulnerable people in time for the analogue landline switch-off. Further, we're aware that some communications providers and DNOs are working together to identify who is vulnerable during a power-cut. While a legal gateway for threat-to-life data sharing exists, this is not being used consistently, promptly or effectively.<sup>51</sup>



We therefore recommend that the Government should commit to facilitating an MSPSR in water, energy, telecoms by April 2028. A top-down approach for multi-sector PSR is needed to ensure consistent and comprehensive data-sharing so that vulnerable people without means of communication in a power cut are easily identified.



Meanwhile, to ensure a safeguard prior to April 2028, we recommend that a category should be added to the PSR needs code which identifies people who are likely to be without a means of remote communication/at risk of communication blackout in a power cut, by February 2027.<sup>52</sup> This would enable DNOs to prioritise reaching these customers at risk of communication blackout who are also vulnerable without power, by cross-comparing this code with other needs codes.



**Support for  
vulnerable people**

## Support for vulnerable people can be useful

As well as their obligation to try to keep customers on the PSR updated, DNOs must follow a series of principles regarding vulnerable customers. This includes the principle that they 'effectively support consumers in vulnerable situations' through management of the PSR, delivering a wide range of support in power cuts which reflects different customer needs.<sup>53</sup> This 'could include, but is not limited to, crisis packs, hot meals and drinks, mobile generation, alternative accommodation or on-site welfare units.'<sup>54</sup>

DNOs reported on how they do this last year, with support during power cuts ranging from issuing battery packs, providing hot drinks, torches, alternative accommodation and vouchers with food delivery services.<sup>55</sup> One DNO ensured that '96.2% of power cuts lasting over 6 hours saw face-to-face support provided by a proactive responder.'<sup>56</sup> Following a pilot, another DNO is providing battery packs for people who are medically dependent on electricity.<sup>57</sup>

DNOs use a shared 'needs code' where they categorise customers on the PSR by their vulnerability in order to help triage the appropriate service and support as quickly as possible.<sup>58</sup> For example, they might offer someone a generator to ensure they can keep the power running, as per the case study below. It is encouraging that there is a variety of good practice which gets some vulnerable customers the help they need.

Valerie\* has a baby who is just over 6 weeks old. A cable issue has caused multiple power cuts over four days, and they rang their DNO. Their DNO came to fix the problem and after 16 hours provided a generator so the house had power whilst the underlying problem was being fixed.

\*names changed

*"We kept having power cuts and I have injections in the fridge. I was worried about them going off. My wife phoned them and the next day they sent me a bag to put them in which keeps them cool for hours if the power goes off."*

Satisfied customer  
(MSPSR research)

# Vulnerable people aren't always getting the support they need

Despite this good practice, some people still come to us for help who need power to run medical equipment, or keep medicines in the fridge. Unable to do so during a power cut, they have been without alternative power solutions or appropriate advice from their DNO. This creates a lot of anxiety and distress, and puts some at medical risk. In more critical circumstances, power cuts have directly endangered medically vulnerable individuals. The case below highlights how prolonged or repeated power interruptions are not merely inconvenient- they can be life-threatening.

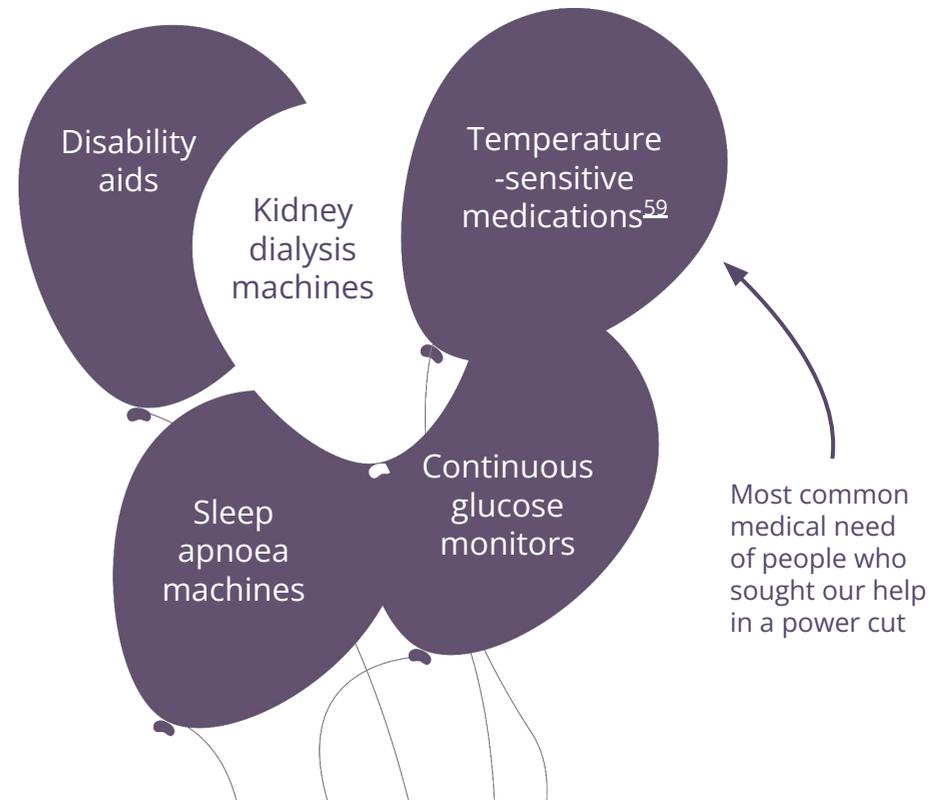
Linda\* has terminal intestinal and renal failure, and depends on a home dialysis machine for survival. Over two years she's experienced over forty power cuts, lasting up to five hours at a time, often without warning. Each interruption causes the machine to fail mid-treatment, resulting in the loss of blood and posing a serious and immediate threat to their health. She contacted her DNO to raise a complaint, but received no written response, and was told over the phone that the DNO is 'not obliged to provide a steady supply in regards to medical equipment.'

Between April 2020-March 2025, 20 people came to us with power-dependent medical needs who haven't had the help they needed from their DNO in a power cut. Whilst this is a relatively low number, the depth of harm is compounded by having multiple vulnerabilities and being without heating, hot food and hot water, and sometimes without signal to ring for help.

\*names changed

Siobhan\* has young children, including one who has medication which needs to be kept in the fridge. During Storm Darragh, her home in Wales was without power for 78 hours, which meant no heating and hot water, no WiFi or mobile signal, and no means of keeping the medication at the right temperature for her child. She had no support or updates from her DNO during the power cut. Once her power was restored, she called them, and they told her she should have called, which she couldn't have done without signal. They also told her the lines were too busy anyway.

People with power-dependent medical needs include those with:



## Opportunity: ensuring vulnerable people get the support they need

The needs code is something DNOs have developed voluntarily, so there is no guarantee that their responses are the same nor that they will respond. DNO customer service teams state that they have no responsibility to provide practical support. They explain that any practical support is 'in the interests of good customer relations' or providing 'goodwill' payments. People need guaranteed standards rather than high level principles which can be interpreted and neglected, and incentives based on the average customer experience. Ofgem draw attention to the negative impact this had in Storm Arwen; people were unsure about what welfare support was available. Nearly three years later, in Storm Darragh, the same problem happened.

The gas sector already has guaranteed standards to ensure vulnerable customers are offered practical support if their gas supply is interrupted. Depending on the number of people affected, Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs) must provide alternative heating and cooking facilities within 4 to 8 hours. If more than 250 customers are affected and the power cut is longer than 2 days, they must offer access to a hot meal and in some instances, hot water.<sup>60</sup>

These standards do not exist in the electricity sector. Standards only apply to DNOs regarding inconvenience payments after, and communication before, power cuts. It is critical that Ofgem doesn't leave people unprotected, especially as more and more people will rely on electricity, and if power cuts become more frequent.



This is why we're recommending that, at a minimum, Ofgem introduce guaranteed standards of performance obliging DNOs and IDNOs to provide alternative power or practical solutions to those who have a threat to life when off-supply. This would aim to ensure that the most vulnerable customers are guaranteed support, whether via provision in case of a power cut, or during the power cut, so that they do not need to get to hospital to stay alive.

We are open to working with the Energy Networks Association (ENA) and Ofgem, building on the electricity networks' knowledge of the PSR and the needs code to develop this to be as effective as possible. This would likely include defining threat to life, time to provide a solution, and taking into account the possibility to ensure resilience prior to the power cut. In practice, we imagine this would standardise what electricity networks already do.



## Vulnerable people aren't always getting the support they need

Even those who aren't reliant on power for medicine or medical equipment are vulnerable during power cuts, such as the elderly, those with young children, or those whose medical condition is worsened by the cold. This is because power cuts put heating out of action, whether they have gas boilers or heat pumps, meaning they can't use the heating or hot water. Meanwhile, some people are, and more will be, entirely dependent on electricity for heating and hot water.

Tilly\* has a partner with Parkinson's so they are on the PSR. They had multiple power cuts over a short period. She had to throw out the food in her fridge and freezer and she couldn't put the heating on in minus temperatures. Her partner suffered in the cold. She rang her DNO who advised her that she may receive compensation and offered her a £35 credit to order food, but this was difficult to use as she lives in an area which delivery companies find too remote.

Mo\* has a 7-month old baby and works remotely at home. Between the end of November and beginning of February he experienced 5 power cuts. One left his family cold and in the dark for 15 hours. He called the PSR team about getting hot water to sterilise the baby's bottle, but they did not help. Mo came to us wishing to claim compensation for this and for the loss of revenue from being unable to work.

Further, being on the PSR does not always safeguard people we've helped people on the PSR who've been without contact or physical support from their DNO during a power cut. Ofgem found that people on the PSR were without proactive contact in Storm Arwen.<sup>61</sup> The fact this is still the case is concerning.

Ali\* is registered on the PSR with health issues, and a son who is vulnerable. During the power cut, she did not receive any communication, so she called her DNO who gave no explanation of the cause nor when she might expect to have her supply restored. She spoke to her supplier, who explained that they had let the DNO know multiple times about her son's vulnerability.

George\* has prosthetic legs which have to be charged to function, and is on the PSR. During a powercut, he rang his IDNO who said to ring 999 and go hospital if they had no issue, but provided no other solutions. He went to a hotel so he could charge his limbs, and there was no disabled room available. His supply was restored 24 hours later, but unfortunately he was not eligible for any compensation. He felt that he'd been 'left in a vulnerable state' by the company.

The lack of contact isn't just a problem for people on the PSR; people might not be on the register who would benefit from it. Although the reach of the PSR improved in all 14 licence areas in 2024/25 compared to the previous year and met their individual targets, there are still huge discrepancies in the proportion of eligible customers registered for support. For example, one DNO identifies 1.1 million eligible households, but the target is to reach at 60% of them.<sup>62</sup> This means 40% of people who could benefit from being on the PSR aren't benefiting.

\*names changed

# Opportunity: ensuring vulnerable people get the support they need

We've identified some ways to improve the regulatory regime to ensure that vulnerable people get the help they need. We're aware that there are trade-offs which electricity networks must make when deciding how to respond in the event of a power cut. However, we don't believe that any of these recommendations will limit the ability of electricity networks to make the most effective decisions to prioritise support to where it is most needed.



## To ensure everyone is contacted (where the channel isn't disrupted)

During a power cut, DNOs should contact all their domestic customers for whom they have contact details, regardless of their PSR status, to avoid people falling through the cracks. We suggest that contact should be made within an hour, for power cuts lasting longer than the average customer minutes' lost. In deliberative workshops, people supported everyone being contacted in a power cut.<sup>63</sup>



## To ensure PSR reach is as comprehensive as possible

Ofgem should consider setting PSR reach targets at 100%, with a greater incentive reward the more licence areas reach that target. This would incentivise DNOs to collaborate and share best practice on the way they keep their register up to date and comprehensive, which is something we recommend they do regardless. Ofgem should also regularly and transparently publish comparative results showing the proportion of eligible customers on the PSR by DNO.



## To ensure there is transparency and oversight regarding the support delivered to vulnerable customers

Ofgem should further standardise the DNO's annual vulnerability report so that power cut responses can be compared. DNOs could develop common metrics to report how they've achieved outcomes based on ED2 vulnerability principles.<sup>64</sup> For Principle 1, those outcomes could look like:

- networks provide timely and useful information to PSR customers during a power cut
- networks provide tailored and useful support to vulnerable customers during power cuts

Ofgem should also publish a summary and comparison of those vulnerability reports.

***"Had a power cut for two days due to Storm Eowyn. ...I am 80 should have been contacted... as I am on the vulnerable list, but didn't hear from them."***

Feedback on our webpage 'Get compensation if you have a power cut'

***"...surely they have a duty to inform the customer when the power is going off."*** - someone who experienced 4 days of intermittent power cuts and called our consumer service for help



# Communication about compensation

## Communication about compensation is unclear and confusing

Confusion about compensation following a power cut was the most common problem we identified for those seeking our advice on a network issue. **One third of people** who sought our advice relating to power cuts and network faults wanted advice on how to seek compensation and how much they would be awarded.

For example, one case involved a consumer who had not received compensation following a prolonged power cut, while another sought clarity on whether they were entitled to a specific level of compensation under the Guaranteed Standards of Performance. In other instances, consumers contacted us to ask whether they could claim compensation for appliances damaged by power surges or voltage instability. These cases highlight a wider issue of unclear or inconsistent communication from network companies about compensation rights and processes. Many consumers are not aware of the standards they are entitled to under GSOPs, leading to confusion and a lack of trust in how claims are handled. In a number of cases, consumers also expressed frustration at having to chase information that should be proactively communicated by networks—particularly following widespread power cuts.

Gina\* was without power for three days and two nights during a storm in December 2024. She contacted us for advice about compensation, as she was aware other people in the area had received compensation already. She wanted to know if she needed to do anything to get the compensation, how she would receive the compensation, and how much she might be eligible for.

\*names changed



## Communication about compensation is unclear and confusing

When people struggle to understand how compensation works, this causes two types of detriment.

The less widespread but more direct harm is that people aren't receiving the compensation to which they're entitled. Over two years up to April 2022, people missed out on over £2.8 million in compensation for power cuts.<sup>65</sup> This is because people have to claim for compensation related to multiple interruptions within 3 months, and insufficient notice of planned power cuts with 1 month. If they're unaware of this, they may not do so, and even if they do, it may be within the 1-3 month timeframe. The DNO may also not be able to identify the right details of people to send them the compensation.

The more widespread, but less direct harm, is that people lose trust in their DNOs. They may feel they are paying for a service and the networks are not holding up their end of the bargain. This is a serious risk; electrifying homes will become harder as people may be more likely to want to maintain a gas supply. This could delay the clean power transition, and leave people paying higher bills.

Linda\* had a power cut lasting over 12 hours. Their DNO sent them a link showing when would they be back on supply. Their neighbours have now received cheques for compensation but they have not. The link no longer works, and they have tried to call the phone number provided but they only get through to different pre-recorded messages, rather than a person, even when they press the button for 'other enquiries'.

\*names changed



***"The compensation forms are not public friendly... compensation form is opaque."***

***"I know I am entitled to compensation for electricity cut during a storm but I cannot find the right form ANYWHERE on the internet."***

Feedback on our webpage  
['Get compensation if you have a powercut'](#)

# Communication about compensation is unclear and confusing

We have previously called for DNOs to 'communicate guaranteed standards and the right to compensation to customers. Network companies could work with consumer groups and industry bodies to identify valuable and relevant information and the best way to communicate the information to customers.'<sup>66</sup> Our case analysis suggests that this is still relevant. Our own desk based research of DNO websites also backs this up. We've found that the information about compensation is often unclear, especially if people want to know whether payments are automatic, how they are made, and what they should do if they don't receive the payments.

## Poor practice- DNO webpages...

Tell people that their DNO will contact them about payment and there's no need for the customer to make contact. That same page also tells people to complete a payment claim form.<sup>67</sup>

Doesn't explain how payment is made, says that payments are usually processed automatically, but doesn't explain what to do if they don't receive automatic compensation.<sup>69</sup>

Direct people to read the documents available to download, without telling them which document to read.<sup>72</sup>

## Good practice- DNO webpages...

Have specific information for compensation related to separate storms, setting out how to claim for goodwill support and that the company will be in touch about formal compensation.<sup>68</sup>

Tell people that, they'll get a payment by cheque, or if they've provided their bank details, by bank transfer.<sup>70</sup> Explains that compensation will be made automatically within about 10 days.<sup>71</sup>

Clearly signpost the relevant pdf with one link.<sup>73</sup>

## Ideal practice

Compensation information is linked through to the power cuts update webpage, and tailored depending on which power cut customers are seeking updates on. This could automatically tell them, based on the length of the power cut and number of customers, how much they'll be entitled to and how that was calculated.

It is made clear upfront when customers need to apply for compensation i.e after x number of days from the powercut and not receiving compensation, or within a month or three months for multiple interruptions and short notice planned power cuts respectively. How payment is made is clearly set out.

Information is displayed up front without a need to click through to a pdf. Customers can quickly find the situation which is relevant to them and what compensation they're eligible for just in that situation.

# Opportunity: communication about compensation

## What's being done?



As set out on the previous page, there is already some good practice in this area, and customers do often receive texts or follow-up letters to get their details for compensation.

When we spoke to one DNO about signposting compensation on their power cuts live info page, they said they would look to achieve this. There is clear appetite for change.

It is also in DNOs' interests to communicate clearly about compensation; missed payments ultimately result in a 'negative revenue adjustment' where the cost is recouped and collectively returned to consumers.<sup>24</sup> It is of more benefit to DNOs that people get the direct payment, and potentially score their satisfaction more highly.

Rita\* had no electricity for five days during Storm Darragh. They called their supplier, who told them to call their DNO. They called their DNO, who offered no help and directed them back to their supplier. Unable to cook and keep warm, they stretched their budget to eat out. Meanwhile, their friend 10 doors down received £240 in Tesco vouchers, as well as the obligatory compensation for the inconvenience.

\*names changed

## What's next?

We are confident that with enough focus, this problem could be fixed, leading to a better consumer experience, higher trust, and fewer missed payments. There's even possibilities for innovation in this space; tailored updates via smart meters, or on the power cut tracking portal online.

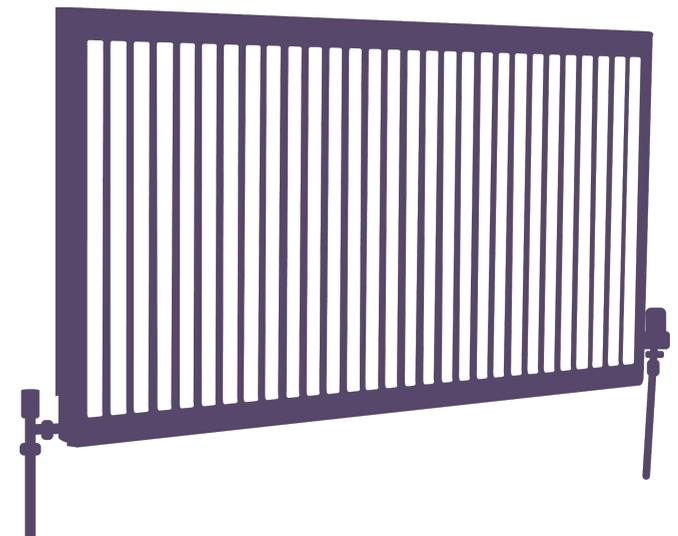
We are keen to make this communication better and are open to collaborating with DNOs to do so. We want to share our expertise as the statutory advice provider on energy problems into how to make this communication as effective as possible.<sup>25</sup>



We recommend that DNOs carry out joint consumer research on how best to communicate with consumers regarding compensation, and update their customer service and communication accordingly, and in a consistent manner.



We also recommend that Ofgem should add a question on understanding about compensation to customer satisfaction survey. This will improve oversight of this part of the customer experience.





# Compensation for damage from power surges

# Compensation doesn't cover unavoidable damage from power cuts

Over one in 10 of the people coming to Citizens Advice for help are seeking recompense for the damage caused to their appliances by power surges when the electricity comes back on. Most commonly this has damaged their gas boiler; people cited costs of £400 to £574 to fix the boiler. However, as electricity networks sometimes explain, financial loss isn't covered by compensation. It can be hard for customers to understand that formal compensation is only compensation for the inconvenience caused by the power cut, rather than any lost income, cover for damaged equipment, lost food, or other expenses incurred.

## What can people do to avoid this damage?

One solution is to ensure people to unplug their expensive equipment (fridge, boiler, stove, storage heater, computer etc) until they know the electricity is back on. DNOs do advise people to do this in some of their communications. Doing this during a power cut is an effective point in time to do so. However, if people aren't at home, can't reach sockets, or the power cut happens when they are asleep, they can't unplug equipment. Another solution is surge protection, although this only prevents damage from some power surges, and needs to be replaced. Ultimately, damage prevention isn't always possible or successful.

## What compensation can people get?

If people are seeking recompense, they may be able to claim on their home contents insurance. However, there can be exclusions depending on the age of the equipment, and sometimes that cover needs add-ons. Further, those who are struggling to make ends meet may not have taken out home contents insurance in the first place. People also may be able to access local grants offered by their council for crisis support, especially if they cannot afford to pay for the repair themselves.

## What's next?

Fixing a fault to electricity infrastructure often results in an unavoidable voltage surge; the electrical potential difference between the point of generation and the point of demand can be very high. The electricity networks therefore have a limited ability to control and stop power surges, which is why they have no liability to provide compensation for this damage.

However, people also have limited ability to prevent power surge damage, and for those who are struggling financially, a limited ability to claim or pay to repair that damage. They are left relying on emergency support from cash-strapped councils.<sup>26</sup>



We therefore encourage Ofgem to consider allowing electricity networks to fund, for low-income consumers, the repair or replacement of essential appliances which have been unavoidably damaged by a power surge. This could follow the precedent in the gas sector, where some low-income customers are eligible for funding to replace essential appliances unavoidably damaged by a power-surge.<sup>27</sup>



We also recommend that regulatory reporting is introduced so that DNOs report voltage levels after power cuts, so there is better oversight of power flows going into homes after power cuts. This could be linked to DNOs' 'annual voltage management' strategy.



# Future of power cuts

## The future of power cuts: high risk communities

Currently, people in longer duration power cuts may drive to get help- to a nearby hot food truck, unaffected family or friend, or other building for warmth. They may also call for help or information. Both driving and making calls are becoming more reliant on electricity as people buy electric vehicles and analogue landlines switch off. Especially in remote communities, this could leave people completely cut off from help. In discussions with DNOs, they explain the limitations of setting standards where everyone who is vulnerable should be provided with alternative heating or cooking facilities within a certain time period:

1. With finite 'on the ground' staff, driving generators, batteries, or other facilities to people's homes could come at the cost of fixing the underlying problem quickly, or for most people
2. Alternative heating and cooking facilities are costly and could drive bills up significantly
3. In particularly severe weather, it can be hard to get to affected communities without further risk to life
4. Emergency services and local resilience forums also have responsibility for ensuring that people are safe in a power cut



As mentioned on [page 23](#), we're aware of innovation as DNOs investigate solutions to provide greater resilience to at-risk communities and their customers. We recommend that Ofgem more proactively ensure innovation which is of clear consumer interest is implemented and deployed swiftly. Projects that deliver significant and demonstrable consumer benefits, such as improvements to back-up provision, should not depend solely on whether networks choose to bring them forward. Where there is a clear consumer interest, Ofgem should signal regulatory priority and ensure that such projects are progressed and implemented, rather than relying primarily on network-initiated proposals through the Innovation Deployment Fund under RII0-3 or internal business decisions.



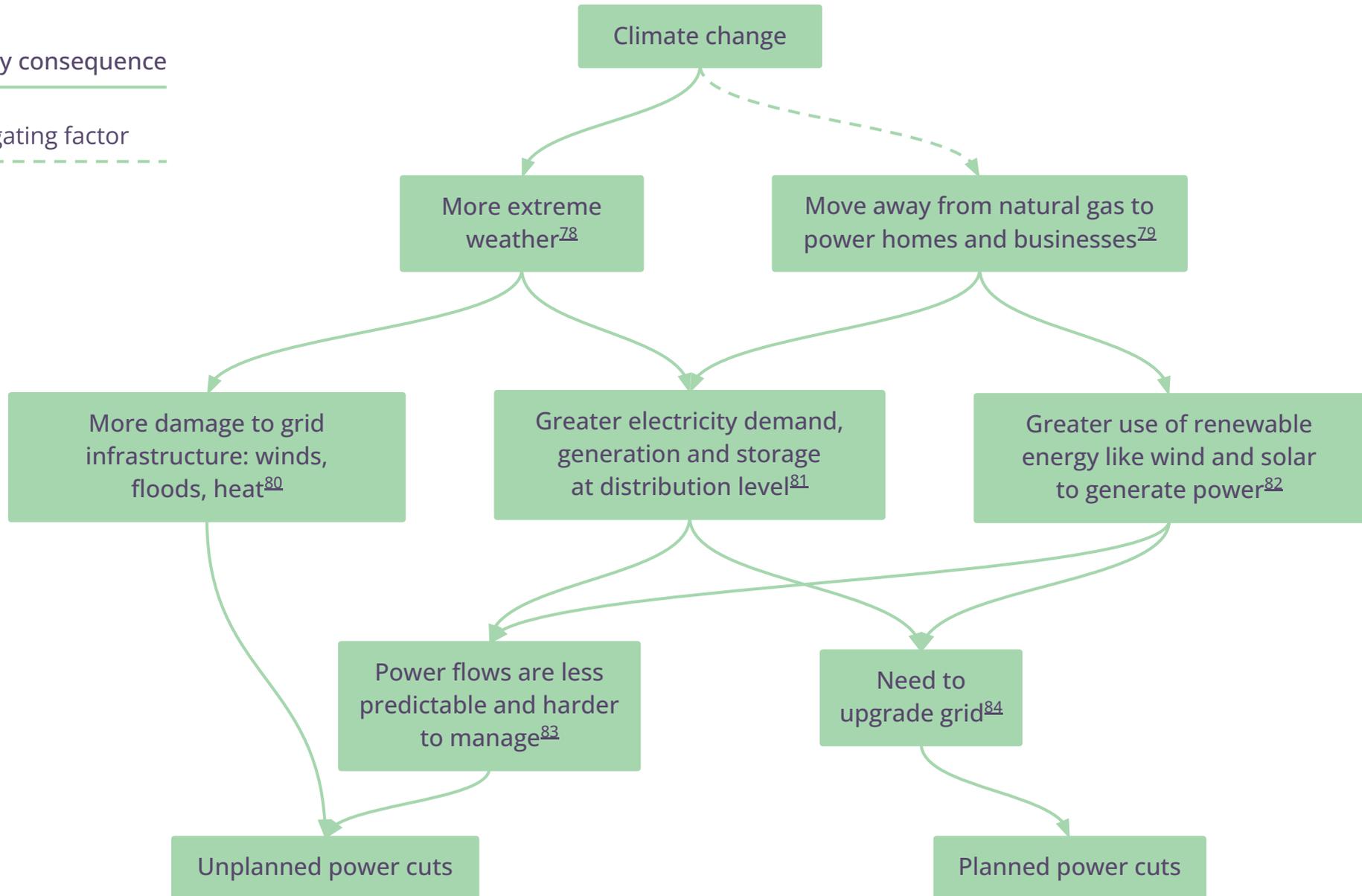
We also recommend that DESNZ and Ofgem investigate and implement better safeguarding and resilience measures for communities at high risk of power cuts, building on the Storm Arwen recommendations and identifying how effective those have been.



# Why power cuts are likely to increase

Likely consequence

Mitigating factor



## Conclusion and detailed recommendations

Power cuts are likely to increase in number and duration as the impact of climate change increases and we decarbonise our homes and businesses. At the same time, we are becoming increasingly dependent on electricity, using it to heat and cool our homes, work, travel and communicate.

That is why it is critical to ensure that people are getting the right treatment in a power cut. It's also critical to get it right now, to ensure people trust the companies running the electricity system. Otherwise, the transition to clean power could be jeopardised. We set out on the following pages our recommendations listed by the stakeholder they concern.



## Recommendations for multiple stakeholders: government, regulators

	Stakeholders who may need to input	Recommendation	Report page for more detail
1	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), Ofgem, DNOs and IDNOs	At a minimum, Ofgem should introduce guaranteed standards of performance obliging DNOs and IDNOs to provide alternative power or practical solutions to those who have a threat to life when off-supply. This would aim to ensure that the most vulnerable customers are guaranteed support, whether via provision in case of a power cut, or during the power cut, so that they do not need to get to hospital to stay alive.	26, <b>27</b>
2	DESNZ, Ofgem, Ofcom	DESNZ and Ofgem should investigate and implement better safeguarding and resilience measures for communities at high-risk of power cuts, building on the Storm Arwen recommendations and identifying how effective those have been.	38
3	DESNZ, Department for Science Information and Technology (DSIT), Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Ofwat, Ofcom, Ofgem	The government should commit to facilitating an MSPSR in water, energy, telecoms <b>by April 2028</b> . A top-down approach for multi-sector PSR is needed to ensure consistent and comprehensive data-sharing so that vulnerable people without means of communication in a power cut are easily identified.	20- <b>23</b>
4	DSIT, Ofcom, Ofgem, DESNZ	The government, Ofcom and Ofgem should work together to ensure that, as far as is reasonably possible, in a power cut everyone can call emergency services and electricity networks, including when customers are reliant on digital communications.	20

## Recommendations for: Ofgem (part 1)

	Stakeholders who may need to input	Recommendation	Report page for more detail
5	Ofgem	<p>Ofgem should continue implementing the Broad Measure of Customer Satisfaction incentive for ED3, with the following changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-re-weight the categories to better reflect the proportion of respondents. General enquiries: 20%, Planned interruption: 26%, Unplanned interruption: 54% reflects the proportions of actual respondents to the survey.</li> <li>-add further questions to the customer satisfaction survey to identify factors driving dissatisfaction. This includes questions about practical support in a power cut, and understanding and access to compensation.</li> </ul>	15, 18
6	Ofgem	Ofgem should consider setting PSR reach targets at 100%, with a greater incentive reward the more licence areas reach that target.	29
7	Ofgem, DNOs	Ofgem should further standardise the DNO's annual vulnerability report so that power cut responses can be compared. DNOs could develop common metrics to report how they've achieved outcomes based on ED2 vulnerability principles.	25-29

## Recommendations for: Ofgem (part 2)

	Stakeholders who may need to input	Recommendation	Report page for more detail
8	Ofgem	Ofgem should report annually (from 2026): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. All power cuts by duration and number of customers interrupted, not excluding severe weather events and one-off exceptional events</li> <li>b. Storm restoration data</li> <li>c. A comparison and evaluation of annual vulnerability reports, including evaluation of power cut support</li> <li>d. PSR reach of different DNOs and IDNOs (and how they plan to improve)</li> </ol>	10, 25-29
9	Ofgem	Ofgem should consider allowing electricity networks to fund, for low-income consumers, the repair or replacement of essential appliances which have been unavoidably damaged by a power surge.	36
10	Ofgem, DNOs	Ofgem should oblige DNOs to contact all their customers for whom they have contact details, regardless of their PSR status, during a power cut, to avoid people falling through the cracks. We suggest that contact should be made within an hour, for power cuts lasting longer than the average customer minutes' lost.	29
11	Ofgem	We recommend that Ofgem proactively ensure innovation which is of clear consumer interest is implemented and deployed swiftly. Where there is a clear consumer interest, Ofgem should signal regulatory priority and ensure that such projects are progressed and implemented, rather than relying primarily on network-initiated proposals through the Innovation Deployment Fund under RIIO-3 or internal business decisions.	23, 38

## Recommendations for: electricity networks

	Stakeholders who may need to input	Recommendation	Report page for more detail
12	DNOs, IDNOs	DNOs and IDNOs should carry out joint consumer research on how best to communicate with consumers about statutory compensation and goodwill payments, and update their customer service and communication accordingly, and in a consistent manner.	31-34
13	DNOs, IDNOs if relevant	Electricity networks should add a category to the PSR needs code which identifies people who are likely to be without a means of remote communication/at risk of communication blackout in a power cut from February 2027. This would enable DNOs to prioritise reaching these customers who have power-critical needs on the PSR, by cross-comparing this code with other needs codes.	20-23
14	DNOs, IDNOs	DNOs and IDNOs should collaborate and share best practice on the way they keep their register up to date and comprehensive, so they reach targets of 100%.	23

## Recommendations for: Ofcom

	<b>Stakeholders who may need to input</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Report page for more detail</b>
15	Ofcom	Ofcom should update the resilience guidance for communications providers, based on the further work it has undertaken on mobile cell sites.	21
16	Ofcom	The 'Shared Rural Network', which aims to improve mobile rural coverage 'without duplicating infrastructure', should take into account resilience to power failures as it carries out its programme.	21

## Footnotes (1)

1. European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity, [28 April Blackout in Spain and Portugal: Expert Panel releases comprehensive factual report](#), October 2025
2. Survey data based on a nationally representative poll of 3,883 GB adults conducted for Citizens Advice by Blue Marble, conducted between March and April 2025. 19.5% of people didn't know there was a difference between networks and suppliers, a further 23.2% of people knew there was difference between networks and suppliers, but didn't know the name of either their DNO or GDN.
3. See flowchart on page 38
4. Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, [Energy Emergencies Executive Committee Storm Arwen Review](#), June 2022
5. *ibid.* page 31-32
6. Ofgem, [RIIO-ED2 regulatory instructions and guidance: Annex H – Customer Service and Consumer Vulnerability](#), February 2025
7. Of 844 domestic customers calling our Consumer Service regarding a network supply or safety issue between 2022-2025, we took a sample with 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error: 265. Of those, 168 were related to electricity network issues.
8. Survey data based on a nationally representative poll of 3,883 GB adults conducted for Citizens Advice by Blue Marble, conducted between March and April 2025. Qualitative findings from interviews and workshops conducted for Citizens Advice by Blue Marble between April and May 2025.
9. Ofgem, [Annual report: Electricity Distribution 2024/2](#), December 2025, page 15
10. *ibid.*
11. Ofgem, [State of the market report: energy infrastructure markets highlights](#), January 2026, page 24
12. Ofgem, [ED3 Sector Specific Methodology Consultation](#), October 2025, page 153
13. *Ibid*
14. *Idid*, page 152 and 159
15. The alerts are known as 'last gasp' and 'first breath', and DNOs can also seek communication from a specific smart meter. If it fails to respond, that suggests a power cut.
16. Smart Energy Code Company, [DESNZ further conclusions on Smart Meters connected to the DCC via the internet and further consultation on the associated policy framework](#), January 2025
17. Citizens Advice, [The State of Smart: Consumer experiences of smart meters](#), February 2026
18. The DNOs are required to survey consenting customers over the phone about their experience of communication during a power cut. See RIIO-ED2 - Annex H Customer Service and Consumer Vulnerability for more information.
19. Ofgem, [Electricity Distribution Consolidated Licence Conditions](#), June 2025, Condition 10
20. Ofgem, [Priority Services Register Review- Final Proposals](#), December 2015
21. Ofgem, Supplementary data files to DPCR5, ED1 and ED2
22. Of all DNOs customer satisfaction responses for price control years 2020/21- 2024/5, there were 217,603 for planned and unplanned interruptions, and 52,720 for general enquiries.
23. Citizens Advice, [Citizens Advice response to ED3 Sector Specific Methodology Consultation](#), December 2025, page 34
24. Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, [Energy Emergencies Executive Committee Storm Arwen Review Final Report](#), June 2022, page 24
25. SSEN, [Storm Arwen Uncertainty Mechanism SSEN Distribution Core Narrative](#), January 2024, page 12
26. 4.68% of general enquiries customers had a score of 1-6, whilst 8.34% of unplanned interruptions-message had a score of 1-6
27. 'The loss of communication services was one of the most significant problems reported by many people', Royal Academy of Engineering, [Living without electricity: One city's experience of coping with loss of power](#), May 2016, page 8
28. WiFi routers stop working unless they have a battery backup
29. Electronic Communications Resilience & Response Group, [2021/2022 Severe Storms Post-Incident Report](#), May 2022, page 4

## Footnotes (2) continued

30. Department for Science, Information and Technology, [UK transition from analogue to digital landlines](#), February 2024
31. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, [Ministers kick off review to safeguard radio's future](#), February 2026
32. There are a variety of initiatives, including: Ofcom, [Network and Service Resilience Guidance for Communication Providers](#), September 2024; recommendations made on collaboration between the power and telecoms sectors- EC-RRG, [2021/2022 Severe Storms Post-Incident Report](#), May 2022, page 5-6; recommendations that DNOs incorporate agreed responsibilities with local resilience partners in their Emergency Plans- Ofgem, [Final report on the review into networks' response to Storm Arwen](#), June 2022, page 40.
33. For example, Ofcom states that 'The resilience and reliability of the access/last mile portion of networks are subject to a number of key factors....Some of these factors are not within a communications provider's direct control, nor under Ofcom's current regulatory remit.' Ofcom, [Network and Service Resilience Guidance for Communication Providers](#), September 2024, page 19
34. Cabinet Office, [Local Resilience Forums: contact details](#), February 2026
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36. Ofcom, [Mobile RAN power resilience: Technical report and CFI update](#), February 2025
37. Ofcom, [3G and 2G switch-off](#), October 2025
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40. Ofcom, [Mobile RAN power resilience: Technical report and CFI update](#), February 2025
41. DSIT, [Mobile Market Review: call for evidence](#), February 2026
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43. Fred Dunwoodie Stirton and Janet Dwyer, Countryside and Community Research Institute, [Exploring Rural Vulnerability from a Public Utilities' Perspective](#), January 2022
44. Age UK, [Facts and figures about digital inclusion and older people](#), June 2024,
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51. One gateway which can apply is the Digital Economies Act 2017, see Part 5. See also The Information Commissioner's Office, [Data Sharing Code of Practice](#), May 2021
52. Ofgem, [Consumer Vulnerability Strategy- Appendix 6- PSR Needs Code](#), April 2025
53. Ofgem, [RIIO-ED2 Methodology Decision: Annex 1 - Delivering value for money services for consumers](#), December 2020, Appendix 3
54. Ibid.
55. See Annual Vulnerability Reports 2024/25 of [UK Power Network](#), [Northern Powergrid](#), [Scottish Power Energy Networks](#), [Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks \(SSEN\)](#), [National Grid Electricity Distribution \(NGED\)](#), [Electricity North West](#)
56. Northern Powergrid, Annual Vulnerability Report 2024/25, July 2025, page 16
57. Energy Live News, [SSEN Distribution offers 20,000 home battery packs for vulnerable customers](#), February 2026
58. Ofgem, [Consumer Vulnerability Strategy- Appendix 6- PSR Needs Code](#), April 2025

## Footnotes (3) continued

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80. Enlit, [UK Power Grid cannot cope with increasing super storms](#), February 2026. Note also that the National Preparedness Committee ranks the risk of extreme weather events to network resilience as high, and lists example extreme weather impacts on network resilience: National Preparedness Commission, [Assessing Energy System Resilience in the UK to 2050](#), June 2025, Figure 24 and 25.
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