



Annual Report on compliance with Code of Practice (CoP) for Consumers in Vulnerable Circumstances

Introduction

Kinecx Energy is committed to delivering safe, inclusive and supportive services for all our customers, particularly those who may be in vulnerable circumstances. This Annual Report sets out how we have met the requirements of the Utility Regulator's Code of Practice for Consumers in Vulnerable Circumstances during the 2025 reporting year. It outlines the actions we have taken to identify and support customers who may need additional assistance, the partnerships we have established to provide tailored help, and the steps we are taking to ensure our services remain accessible, responsive and continuously improving. Our aim is to make sure every customer receives the right support at the right time, and that vulnerability considerations are embedded across all areas of our organisation.

Training

Throughout 2025, Kinecx Energy delivered a wide-ranging programme of vulnerability related training to ensure that all relevant staff, including frontline teams, customer-facing staff, and the Senior Management Team, are equipped to identify and support consumers in vulnerable circumstances. Training was structured according to each team's responsibilities and level of consumer interaction, consistent with the Code of Practice requirements.

Kinecx Energy prioritised provision of training to customer facing teams, while also ensuring that all staff received an appropriate baseline level of vulnerability awareness to enhance a culture of understanding and support within the organisation. The vulnerability training programme delivered during 2025 is summarised below:

RNID Online Training

- December 2025
- All Staff
- Enhanced staff capability to recognise and support consumers with hearing loss and communication barriers, including hidden disabilities.

Autism NI Training

- December 2025
- Customer Care & Vulnerability Champion Team
- Provided tools to support individuals with autism spectrum conditions, with emphasis on communication, environmental considerations, and empathetic engagement.

Age NI Training

- December 2025
- Customer Care & Vulnerability Champion Team
- Strengthened understanding of age-related vulnerabilities, including cognitive decline, mobility issues, and safeguarding considerations.

Aware NI

- December 2025
- All Staff
- Increased knowledge of mental health conditions, identifying signs of distress, and using empathetic approaches to support self-identification.

Advice NI Referral Session

- December 2025
- Customer Care Team
- Improved understanding of support offered by Advice NI and provided guidance to staff on making effective and appropriate referrals.

Three Hands – Outside In Project

- Throughout 2025
- Vulnerability Champion Team
- Provided deep insight into real customer experiences through lived experience engagement. This strengthened champions' skills in identifying vulnerability indicators, supporting customer disclosure, and shaping more inclusive processes and communications. In addition, the programme enhanced understanding of how the transition to net zero may impact vulnerable consumers and highlighted ways to mitigate these impacts.

Data Protection Training (including Special Category data relating to vulnerabilities)

- October 2025
- All Staff
- Ensured all employees understand appropriate handling of vulnerability related data, GDPR obligations and the importance of safeguarding sensitive information.

Partnered Organisations for Further Support

Kinecx Energy works in partnership with specialist organisations to ensure that customers who may benefit from additional support can be connected quickly and safely to the right help. Through these partnerships, we can offer a warm handover, where with the customer's consent we pass their details directly to a trusted organisation that can provide tailored advice or assistance.

We currently have formal warm handover arrangements in place with:

- **Advice NI** – offering independent advice on benefits, money, and debt.
- **Age NI** – supporting older people with a wide range of wellbeing, financial, and social needs.

These partnerships allow us to ensure customers in vulnerable circumstances receive timely, expert support beyond the services we can provide as a gas network operator.

If you feel you may need additional help, or someone in your household would benefit from extra support, please contact us and we can guide you through the options available.

We provide a special identification service for our employees when they are visiting your home. This includes the operation of a password scheme, and a telephone-based identification scheme.

Identification Services

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Verification of Kinecx Energy Employees During Home Visits

Kinecx Energy is committed to helping customers feel safe and confident when our employees visit their home. To support this, we provide a range of identification and verification measures, particularly important for customers who may be vulnerable or feel unsure about allowing someone into their property.

Official Identification Passes

All Kinecx Energy staff attending customer premises carry valid photo identification. This may be: a Kinecx Energy-issued ID pass, or a photo ID card issued by one of our approved contractors (Kier).

These passes are managed centrally to ensure they remain secure and up to date. Our staff are trained to present their ID proactively and encourage customers to check it carefully.

Kinecx Energy maintains an up-to-date list of all authorised Kier engineers. If a customer, or the PSNI QuickCheck 101 service, contacts us to verify the identity of someone claiming to work on our behalf, we can confirm immediately whether the engineer is legitimately assigned to Kinecx Energy activities.

QuickCheck 101 Verification Scheme

As an added layer of security, Kinecx Energy participates in the QuickCheck 101 scheme operated by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). This service allows customers to quickly verify whether the person at their door is genuinely from Kinecx Energy.

To use the service, customers can:

1. Call 101 (the PSNI non-emergency number)
2. Request the QuickCheck service
3. Ask the operator to confirm whether the caller is a genuine Kinecx Energy representative

This service is especially useful if you were not expecting a visit, or if you feel unsure or anxious about allowing someone into your home.

Password Scheme

Kinecx Energy offers customers the option to set a unique password. For any planned or unplanned visits to the property, Kinecx Energy staff or third-party contractors are required to verify their identity by correctly stating this password on request before entry is permitted. This measure operates alongside the Quick Check 101 scheme and forms part of Kinecx Energy's wider approach to safeguarding vulnerable customers during home visits.

Raising Awareness of Your Safety

We regularly remind customers about our identification and safety procedures through:

- Appointment confirmations and written correspondence
- Verbal reminders from our Customer Care Team
- Guidance on our website about staying safe during home visits
- Occasional social media posts, including a safety campaign on Facebook on 25 July 2025 promoting the QuickCheck service
- Across all channels, we encourage customers never to feel pressured to allow entry and to use QuickCheck 101 if they have any concerns at all.

Staff Training and Internal Processes

All staff involved in home visits receive training on:

- How to correctly use and present their ID
- How to explain the QuickCheck process to customers
- How to support customers who may feel uncertain, anxious, or vulnerable

Our engineers and advisors are instructed to actively encourage customers to verify their identity through QuickCheck 101 if they have any doubts.

Alternative Communication Formats

We provide the following alternative formats of communications for those customers who require it. These are free of charge.

Alternative Communication Formats Available

Kinecx Energy is committed to ensuring that every customer, particularly those who may have additional communication needs, can access our information and services easily, clearly, and free of charge. We voluntarily provide a range of accessible communication formats to support customers who may be blind, partially sighted, deaf, hearing impaired, or who otherwise require information in an alternative format.

Accessible Printed and Physical Formats

Through RNIB, we can provide customer communications and safety information in a variety of accessible formats, including:

- Braille
- Modified large print (enhanced font size, high contrast layout)
- Tactile or simplified printed materials, where appropriate

These formats are supplied free of charge and can be provided for any written communication upon request.

Website Accessibility – ReachDeck Tools

Our website is equipped with the ReachDeck accessibility suite, which offers a range of features to support customers with visual, auditory, cognitive, language, or literacy needs. These include:

- Read aloud functionality for all on screen text
- Translation of content into multiple languages
- Picture dictionary to support comprehension
- The option to download MP3 audio files of website content
- Screen masking for customers with visual stress or reading difficulties
- Zoom controls and page simplification for easier navigation

These features ensure that customers can independently access key information at any time.

Alternative Communication Channels

We also support customers who prefer or require non-verbal contact by offering:

- Email based customer support for those who cannot or prefer not to use the telephone
- Alternative contact methods for customers with hearing or speech impairments
- Written follow up to verbal communications to support clarity, comprehension, and accessibility
- Our Commitment to Inclusive Communication

Kinecx Energy is committed to ensuring that every customer can access the information they need, in a way that works for them. We will always make reasonable adjustments and tailor our communication approach where required. Customers who need information in an alternative format are encouraged to contact our Customer Care Team, who will be happy to help.

Additional Services for Customers in Vulnerable Circumstances

Kinecx Energy provides a range of free and accessible services for customers who may require extra support because of age, disability, chronic illness, communication needs, or any circumstance represented in the Utility Regulator’s vulnerability definition. These services are designed to ensure that all customers can use our network safely and comfortably, and that they receive the assistance they need during any interaction with us.

Additional Services Offered by Kinecx Energy

Kinecx Energy offers the following services to support customers in vulnerable circumstances:

1. Support During Emergencies

- Priority support for customers with additional needs during planned interruptions or emergency situations.

- Where reasonably practicable, we provide temporary heating or cooking equipment for eligible customers, (those who are chronically sick, disabled or of pensionable age and on the supplier's Customer Care Register) when gas needs to be disconnected to avert danger.
- Additional welfare monitoring during prolonged disruptions.

2. Accessible Communication Formats

- Free access to Braille, large print, audio and Easy Read materials.
- Access to interpreters, including British Sign Language, where needed.
- Alternative communication methods for customers with hearing or speech impairments, including email or other agreed methods.

3. Special Consideration Identifier (SCI) Process

We maintain a simple, GDPR compliant internal process for identifying customers who may benefit from extra support during interactions with our engineers or customer service teams. This includes support for customers who:

- Need extra time
- Have mobility or physical limitations
- Have hearing or sight impairments
- Experience language barriers
- Have communication or cognitive difficulties

This ensures that staff are aware of customer needs and can adapt their approach accordingly.

4. Warm Handovers to Specialist Support Organisations

Kinecx Energy has formal warm handover partnerships with:

- Advice NI
- Age NI

With the customer's consent, we can directly connect them to these organisations for additional support such as welfare advice, debt or income guidance, and age-related services.

5. Enhanced Support During Home Visits

- Engineers provide clear, tailored explanations and take additional time to support customers with specific needs.
- Safeguarding and welfare escalation procedures are followed where concerns arise.
- Staff can provide CCR leaflets and encourage customers to register with their supplier if they may benefit from extra support.

6. Signposting to External Support

We provide information on organisations specialising in disability, ageing, mental health, fuel poverty, and financial hardship through our website, customer communications and leaflets.

Our Commitment

Kinecx Energy is committed to supporting customers who may be vulnerable, ensuring they can access the information and assistance they need at all times. We will continue to review and enhance the services we provide in line with the Utility Regulator's Code of Practice.

Partnerships to Support Consumers Experiencing Affordability Difficulties

For vulnerable consumers who are experiencing affordability difficulties with their energy bills, we can refer to you a consumer body who can assist you with a benefit entitlement check facility.

Kinecx Energy has partnerships in place with two trusted consumer bodies and can refer consumers who are experiencing affordability difficulties with their energy bills to these agencies for benefit entitlement checks, money and debt guidance, and practical support tailored to their circumstances.

The following partnerships are applicable to this measure of the Code of Practice:

Advice NI

Advice NI offers free, independent, and confidential support with:

- Benefit entitlement checks
- Money and debt advice
- Budgeting support
- Support accessing wider financial assistance

Kinecx Energy has a formal warm handover partnership with Advice NI, enabling us, where the customer consents, to connect vulnerable consumers directly with an adviser who can provide the support they need.

Age NI

For older customers, Age NI provides:

- Welfare and benefits checks
- Support with pension related entitlements
- Guidance on financial wellbeing and independent living

Kinecx Energy also has a formal warm handover partnership with Age NI, ensuring that older customers experiencing affordability pressures can access expert, age-appropriate support.

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Support for Customers in Vulnerable Circumstances

We conduct research and engage with consumers in vulnerable circumstances to help us understand how effective our processes are for vulnerable customers and to identify any ways we can improve.

Kinecx Energy is committed to continually improving the support we provide to customers in vulnerable circumstances. In line with the Code of Practice requirement to conduct research at least every two years, we will be carrying out our first full programme of research and engagement with vulnerable consumers during 2026.

This research will help us:

- Understand how well our current processes and services are meeting the needs of vulnerable customers
- Identify any gaps or areas for improvement
- Ensure that our approach remains customer focused, inclusive, and aligned with best practice

Once the research is complete, we will publish a full report outlining the findings, customer insights and the actions we will take in response. This report will be submitted to the Utility Regulator and made publicly available on the Kinecx Energy website.

Additional Information

Kinecx Energy is committed to continually strengthening the support we provide to customers in vulnerable circumstances. Beyond the specific measures required under the Code of Practice, we are taking forward a number of broader initiatives designed to enhance customer protection, improve accessibility, and ensure our services remain responsive to the needs of all consumers.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

We regularly review our internal processes, staff training, and customer feedback to ensure that vulnerability considerations remain embedded across our operations. As part of this, we continue to develop the role of our cross-departmental Vulnerability Champion Team, who support the integration of vulnerability awareness across Engineering, Customer Care, Marketing, Regulation, Finance and our Senior Management Team.

Focus on Early Identification and Support

To help us identify and support customers who may require additional assistance, our teams remain trained and alert to vulnerability indicators. Whether through customer calls, email correspondence, or home visits, we aim to recognise needs early and ensure customers receive appropriate signposting, information, and support.

Strengthening Partnerships

We recognise the value of working in partnership with trusted organisations who specialise in supporting consumers in vulnerable circumstances. We will continue to explore opportunities to expand our partnership network to ensure customers have access to the most relevant and effective support services available.

Preparing for Future Needs

As the energy system evolves, and Northern Ireland progresses with the transition to net zero, we understand that new forms of vulnerability may emerge. Kinecx Energy will continue to review and adapt our services to ensure that no customer is left behind and that our processes remain fit for

