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Smarter world: What are the opportunities for engagement and empowerment?

ESAN Conference – March 2018
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About Project Inspire

Aims

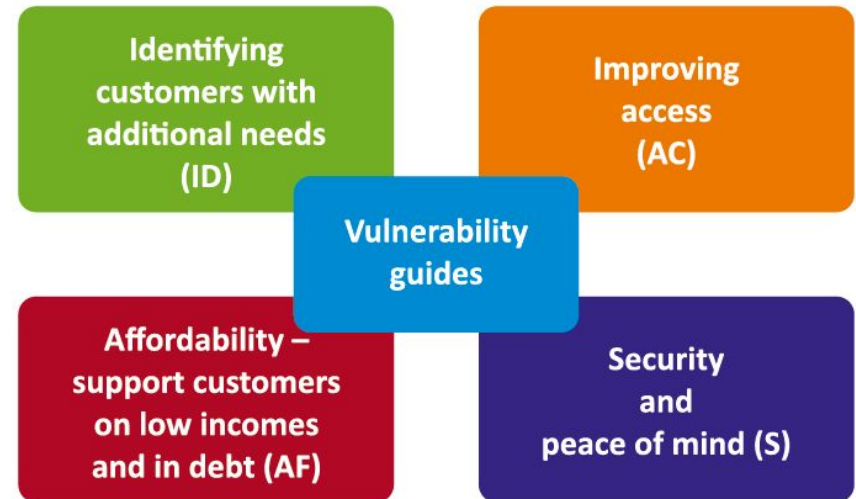To improve service delivery and quality of life for energy customers in vulnerable situations
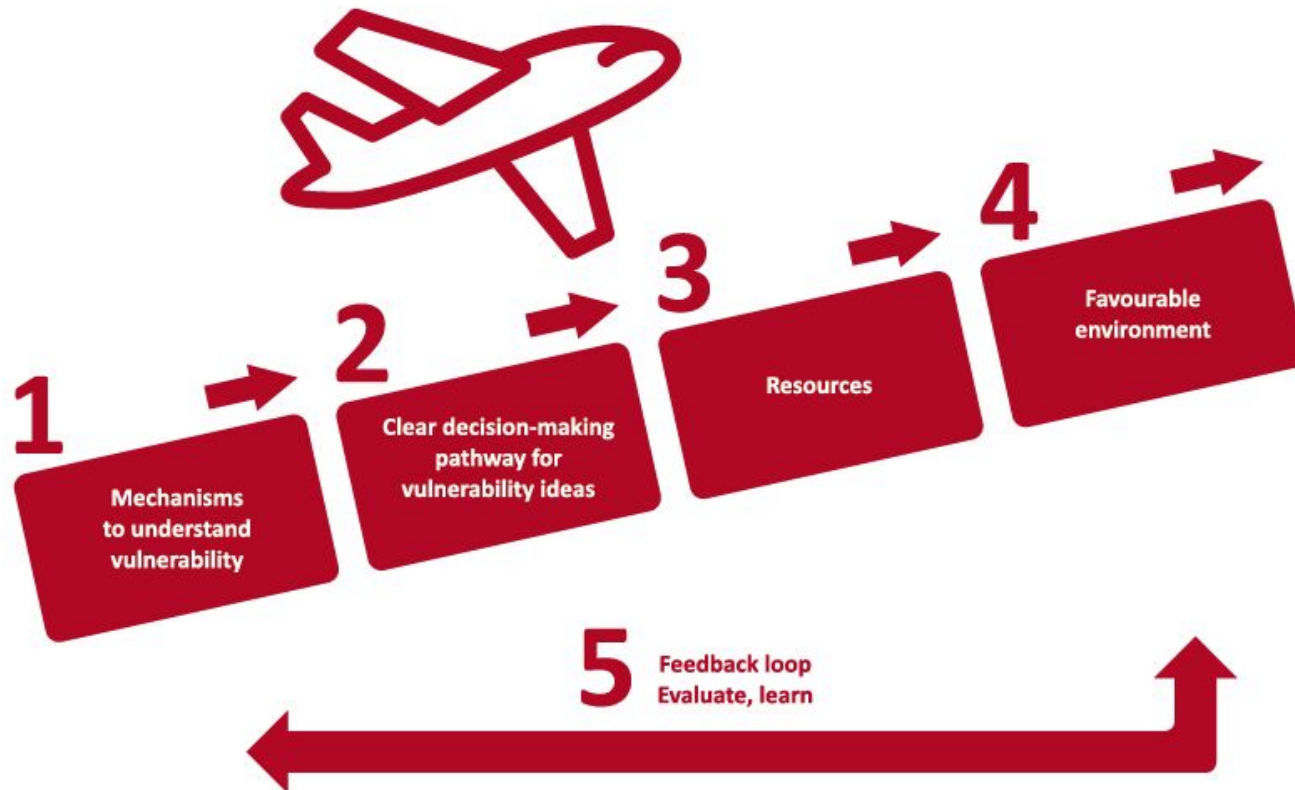

How

- Identify, share and promote examples of effective innovative practice so as to raise standards
- Explore barriers and enablers to vulnerability innovation
- Horizon scanning – opportunities and challenges in the future to help customers with additional needs and on low incomes

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5 key outputs from the report

1. **Four Guides** to show-case standard, good and innovative practice.

2. **A set of 18 recommendations**, which taken together form a basis for a new framework to catalyse effective innovation for energy customers in vulnerable situations.

3. A high-level overview of the current **regulatory framework** as it applies to innovation for vulnerable customers.

4. A **practical look at how smart innovation** can better serve vulnerable customers, both today and tomorrow.

Identifying customers with additional needs (ID)

Improving access (AC)

Vulnerability guides

Affordability – support customers on low incomes and in debt (AF)

Security and peace of mind (S)

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5. Vulnerability Innovation Flight Path

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The opportunities

Include but not limited to:

- Improved access to mainstream services

- More efficient energy/water management and budgeting

- Improved safety and peace of mind

- Easier switching/and more informed price comparison

Some of the innovations are designed to empower vulnerable customers themselves. Others empower carers, support agencies or *all* consumers to help those with additional needs.

Examples

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New York Banking Ratings Index (NYBRI)

- **More effective online comparison tools**

- **Compares 19 largest banks** in New York State by awarding points to each bank based on how well they meet consumer needs in **20 customer-focused categories.**

- The NYBRI weighs each of these categories equally and the banks are given a total score of 100, listing them from highest to lowest.

- Can *customize* a ranking based on their own preferences – adjusting the weight given to a particular category.

- Categories include things like fees outside **ATMs, overdraft practices, credit card fees, loan acceptance rates for different nationalities**.

- Can also rate products

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Rate it!

- **New kinds of online communities strengthening the consumer voice**

- Scope's Extra Costs Commission - 49% of disabled people feel they are lacking some of the information they need when buying online or in-store and over 90% favour the idea of an online community where disabled

- Pilot stage that allows disabled people to review products, including energy products.

- Project aims to: reach 500,000 disabled users and build greater industry awareness of the disabled consumer market.

- Reviews will serve to build retailer and manufacturers' understanding of disabled customers' needs and experiences.

- Developed by RICA, Leicestershire Centre for Integrated Living and Enabled Design. Peer review Which?, Scope, Business Disability Forum and Ability Net

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Oracle's Opower

- More tailored advice and support
- Publically available data + customer data + behavioural science feedback = 2%+ energy savings

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Flipper and Switchee - automation

Automated switching e.g. Flipper, Myia, Switchcraft

Home energy management e.g. Switchee smart thermostat for social housing:

- Customer energy use can be cut by **up to 15%**

- Data fed back to housing associations and local authorities to help them monitor the state of their housing stock and deliver better outcomes for their tenants. E.g. prevent mould, identify poor insulation and underheating.
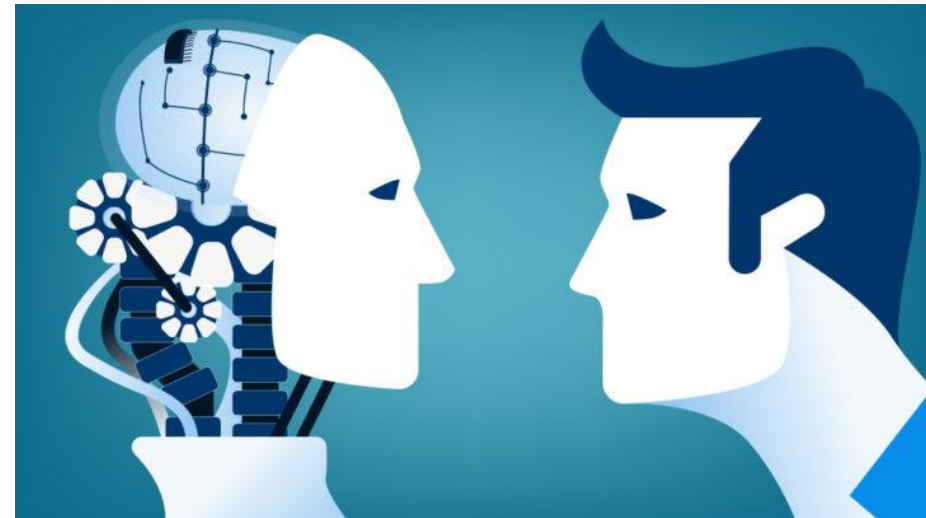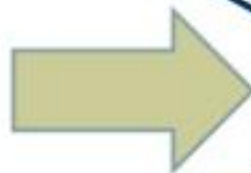

Not without their challenges

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RoboBraille

- Converts documents into a wide range of formats e.g. audio books, digital large print, Braille

.doc, .docx
.htm, .html
.xml
.txt. .asc
.rtf
.pdf (all types)
.epub, .mobi
.tif, gif, .bmp
.jpg, .j2k, .jp2, .jpx
.pcx, .dcx
.djv

Accessible docs

Braille

Daisy

mp3

ebook

Braille artwork

- Developed by Sensus ApS and The National Danish Resource Centre for Blind and Partially Sighted Children and Youth

- Currently used by blind people, partially sighted, those with dyslexia, poor language skills, cognitive disabilities, motor deficiencies, learning disorders
- Addresses consumer problems related to inaccessible printed information 1)Timeliness 2) Reliance on others 3) Invasion of Privacy 4) Cost

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Real opportunities but…

*"For customers with certain disabilities – if they have the money the technology will facilitate a more comfortable life and better service – the difficulty is – who gets left behind? Technology is definitely an opportunity **but the opportunity is not consistent and not for all***."*

Industry representative.

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Recommendations incl.

a) **Products and services should be inclusively designed** and tested with customers with additional needs early on in development.

b) Government **should consider a customer accessibility or inclusivity** standard as part of its work on Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan.

c) **Open up anonymised datasets** in a timely, secure, privacy friendly way to facilitate the identification of vulnerability and innovation in this space.

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Thanks to our Project Group