



Making a difference  
Investing in the communities  
where we live and work





# Making a difference:

## Investing in the communities where we live and work

As Britain's leading supplier of energy and related services, it's essential we act responsibly in everything we do. Our commitment to doing what's right in the communities we serve is at the heart of our business.



With our resources and nearly 30,000 people, we're uniquely placed to help tackle some of the challenges that face the 11 million homes we supply with energy and services. For example, almost a third of privately rented homes do not meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. Over 4 million UK households are in fuel poverty. And at the same time, the UK is short on the skills needed to power the homes of the future.

Many organisations across the country are doing a fantastic job in addressing some of these challenges. This brochure outlines the ways in which we aim to make a difference, through collaborating with some of these expert partners.

### A helping hand

We want to help people who need extra support to keep their homes warm and working. In 2015, we invested £8.5 million in energy grants through the British Gas Energy Trust to help people living in fuel poverty. In 2016 we're continuing to build on our successful partnership with Shelter. In their 50th anniversary year, we are working together to help shape new standards for homes in the 21st century.

### Building Britain's skills

The UK is facing a real skills shortage, and youth unemployment remains a challenge. We're playing our part through our leading apprenticeship scheme and working with Movement to Work to deliver work experience programmes for unemployed young people. And our national schools programme – Generation Green – has inspired over 50,000 young people to learn about energy in 2015.

### In local communities

Our people live and work in communities across Britain, so we have an opportunity to make a difference nationwide. That's why we support our teams to volunteer locally. In 2016 we ran our first ever Summer Volunteering Challenge, including a new set of volunteering opportunities that enable our people to put their skills to great use in their communities.

Thank you to all of our partners, and our people, for their continued support. I'm excited to see what more we can achieve together in 2016 and beyond.

Best regards

Mark Hodges, CEO, British Gas

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We pride ourselves on treating people fairly and always ensuring the safety of all our operations. You can find out more about how we're doing at [centrica.com/responsibility](http://centrica.com/responsibility)

## Better homes for Britain

We're working with housing and homelessness charity Shelter to help improve standards in privately rented homes across Britain.

We've been working with Shelter since 2012 to help improve standards in the private rented sector – a sector that's almost doubled in size in the last decade. There are now more than 11 million private renters in England alone, as rising house prices mean fewer people are able to afford a home of their own. And social housing stock continues to dwindle too.

Property conditions in the private rented sector are worse than in any other. Almost a third of privately rented homes do not meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard, while almost a fifth contain a serious 'danger to health' hazard.

### We've been campaigning for change

We've been campaigning for change which will benefit people living in privately rented homes. With our support Shelter commissioned research with YouGov, which questioned both renting adults and landlords. It was the largest survey of its kind, and with the information it gave us we've campaigned to make significant changes to the laws around the private rented sector.

**212,000\***

renters in England and Wales will benefit from a change in the law that makes it harder for landlords to evict a tenant for asking for improvements to the condition of a property

**3.5 million‡**

renters in England, Scotland and Wales are expected to benefit from our campaign to make sure private landlords carry out electrical safety checks every five years

**25,000\*\***

renters in Scotland will benefit from our campaign to make sure landlords fit carbon monoxide alarms in their properties

**307,000\*\***

renters in England will benefit from regulations that mean landlords have to fit carbon monoxide alarms in any room with a solid fuel appliance

\*Source: YouGov survey December 2013, 4,544 renters in England, online, weighted  
 ‡Source: YouGov survey of 1,062 Private landlords in England, Scotland & Wales, online, July 2015, Survey of English Housing 2014-15 and Private Landlord Survey, 2010, both DCLG, Scotland.Gov, Welsh Housing Statistics  
 \*\*Source: English Housing Survey and YouGov survey of 1,064 landlords, December 2013



### We help fund Shelter's debt and energy advice services

Shelter has access to funding from the British Gas Energy Trust to train all their advisors on fuel poverty and energy debt, so they can assist clients with some of the challenges they face. They can also refer clients to specialist advisors who can provide tailored, free and impartial advice on how to get back on top of their finances, to stay out of debt and manage their energy usage more effectively. Funding has also allowed Shelter to develop specific website pages on energy efficiency advice, which to date have had 40,000 visits. Over 300 of Shelter's clients have now had their debt cleared through the Trust, totalling over £190,000 in grants since the beginning of the partnership.

#### Both our employees and our customers are passionate fundraisers for Shelter's cause

Last year we announced that we'd raised over £1 million to help Shelter fight bad housing and homelessness, hitting our original fundraising target a year early. To celebrate this, we challenged people to spot the hidden hashtag in a film and for every tweet we donated £1 to Shelter. 16,554 people got involved with #TweetforShelter, raising an extra £20,000.



In 2016, with Shelter, we've also launched the Great Home Debate which aims to find out from the public, including our customers and employees, what 'home' means in Britain today. Now, as we look to the future, we want people to join the debate so we can help shape new standards for homes in the 21st Century.



**Over £1 million**

The amount raised by our people for our national charity partner Shelter



**33,303**

The number of families facing housing problems helped by the money our employees raised for Shelter



# Helping to tackle fuel poverty

We want to help people who need extra support to keep their homes warm. So we fund the British Gas Energy Trust, which gives people advice and grants to pay off their debts. We're also working with partners at a local level to invest in innovative projects that make a real difference to communities and families.

## The British Gas Energy Trust is an independent charity

We set up the British Gas Energy Trust in 2004 to support people who are living in fuel poverty or struggling to pay their debts – whether they're our customers or not. Since then, we've invested over £85 million in the Trust, which has used the funds to help over 175,000 people who need it most.

The Trust gives out grants and debt advice. It also funds 50 specialist energy debt advisors in voluntary organisations across the UK, plus a further 20 advisors working within the health sector, who provide free and impartial advice. The Trust supports debt awareness and prevention projects too, so people are less likely to run into problems in the first place.



### In 2015 the Trust provided:

- £3 million funding for energy advisors
- £8.5 million in energy grants to 11,928 people
- £2 million for new boilers and household white goods to 3,000 people

In the same year, it also commissioned a report by Oxford Economics to measure the impact it was having on society as a whole. They found that for every £1 spent on the Trust, the social benefit is £2.10. For grants that specifically funded advisors, for each £1 spent, society benefited by £5.50 – demonstrating the importance of holistic advice. Of those surveyed:

- 90% said the grants made a positive difference to their mental health
- 65% said the grants made a positive difference to their physical health
- 71% said it has positively impacted on housing stability
- 76% can manage money better

### There are wider economic benefits over the ten years of operation:

- £54.3m health benefits through reduced stress
- £25.5m local government broken tenancy cost savings
- £11.7m in health treatment NHS savings

To find out more about the British Gas Energy Trust visit [britishgasenergytrust.org.uk](http://britishgasenergytrust.org.uk)



**£11.7 million**

The savings to the NHS as a result of the Trust's work since 2004



**Over 175,000**

The number of people helped through the Trust since 2004



**Over £85 million**

The amount British Gas has donated to the Trust since 2004

Meet Len. He's a volunteer in the local community, living in St Helens. When the hot water and heating in his home stopped working and his kitchen wall got damp, with no spare money to put things right, he didn't know who to talk to. So a friend put him in touch with Citizens Advice St Helens, who helped him get a grant from the British Gas Energy Trust to cover the cost of a new boiler, and to get a local firm to fix the damp wall.



**£5.50**

For every £1 spent by the Trust in funding an advisor, society benefited by £5.50



The proportion of grant recipients surveyed said the grants made a positive difference to their health



**Over 4 million**

The number of UK households living in fuel poverty, which means they're unable to afford to live in a warm, dry home. 44% of those households live in properties with the lowest energy ratings (E, F or G).

# Community action on energy

We want to help people across the UK to be more energy-savvy so they can keep their homes warm and working for less. We do this by working with partners at a local level to invest in innovative projects that make a real difference to communities and families.

We've invested £1.2 million in the Community Action Partnership, a two year programme to work with partners at a local level to increase affordable warmth through energy efficiency and by tackling fuel poverty.

The definition of fuel poverty changes depending on if you're in England, Scotland or Wales, but ultimately it boils down to not being able to afford to heat your home. We've invested £1.2 million in the Community Action Partnership, a two year programme with National Energy Action (NEA) to tackle fuel poverty at a local level.

## We support the Community Action Awards

Through the Community Action Awards, with NEA and the Department of Energy and Climate Change, we've awarded grants to community projects in England and Wales which demonstrated best practice and innovative solutions in the field of fuel poverty and energy efficiency. The 2014-16 award scheme directly reached around 1.5 million people and involved more than 170 partners.

For example, an award was made to the Viridis Liverpool partnership and the grant helped them to develop a certified 'Fuel Poverty Coordinator Training Programme' pilot. The project will continue to train frontline staff in cross sector energy advice to help residents cut energy costs and reduce incidents of fuel poverty in the region.

### By working together with local authorities, and other key partners, we've:

- Helped communities establish their own fuel poverty strategies
- Built referral networks with local healthcare professionals
- Trained energy champions and frontline advisors
- Given people the opportunity to learn about energy efficiency through fun, interactive games
- And we've collected all our learnings and resources into a Community Action on Fuel Poverty website for fuel poverty practitioners, [fuelpovertyresource.org.uk](http://fuelpovertyresource.org.uk)

### A report into the impacts of the Community Action Partnership has shown that:

- 93% of professionals and volunteers felt their knowledge of the relationship between fuel poverty and energy efficiency had improved
- 98% of professionals and frontline advisors felt that the partnership had enabled them to identify new ways to build fuel poverty and energy efficiency services into their existing work
- 83% of the general public who received advice said they would use the information to try to save energy and keep warm at home



**1,650 trained**

The number of frontline community workers trained over two years



The proportion of professionals and volunteers who felt their knowledge had improved



Credit: Hexham Courant

### Community Energy Agents help rural communities use energy smarter

We've partnered with organisations across the country who are working with people in need of extra help. For example, we know there are many rural households in the north east of England who struggle to stay warm in winter. So we've worked with NEA and Community Action Northumberland (CAN) to deliver a Community Energy Agents project in the region.

Our support has provided specialist training to volunteer energy agents to help residents become more energy efficient and reduce the cost of their bills. We've also provided 6,000 free energy monitors for the agents to distribute, so households can see how much electricity they are using in real time, in pounds and pence.

Chairman of Stocksfield Community Association Norman Hooks, above, looks at the energy monitors with Paul Vickers, vice-chairman of Broomley and Stocksfield Parish Council, and Beth Gascoigne, Stocksfield Community Centre manager.

Christine Nicholls, Community Development Officer at CAN, said "Through our partnership with NEA and British Gas, we've been able to address fuel poverty at a grassroots level by encouraging members of the public to share knowledge on energy efficient practices among their friends and family."

"We address fuel poverty at a grassroots level by encouraging members of the public to share knowledge on energy efficient practices among their friends and family."

**Christine Nicholls**, Community Development Officer at CAN



**£1.2 million**

The amount we've invested in the Community Action Partnership over two years



**Over 182,000 people**

The number of people reached since the partnership began in 2014



# Supporting people in vulnerable circumstances

We want to be one of the best companies at recognising people in vulnerable circumstances and making sure they have access to the services they need.



People can find themselves in vulnerable circumstances for a number of reasons. Vulnerability goes beyond age, health and wealth. It's often short term and unpredictable, for example because of bereavement or becoming unemployed. People living with a disability or long-term health condition may need ongoing help too.

## How we help those most in need

We have teams dedicated to helping customers who need extra support - from providing help such as bills in alternative formats, to checking that customers are getting all the benefits they're entitled to.

We also give advice on energy efficiency and see if customers qualify for financial support, from British Gas Energy Trust grants to the Warm Home Discount scheme. If customers are in debt, our teams work with them to try and sort out a debt repayment plan or put them in touch with organisations like StepChange Debt Charity. Here customers with more serious problems can get expert advice to help get their lives back on track.

### We take doing what's right seriously across the business

We're regularly training our people to be more aware of customers who need extra help. We're always looking for ways to work differently, or use technology to help make people's lives simpler too. For example, in 2015 and 2016 for customers who don't use a lot of gas, and are in financial hardship, we refunded their standing charge.



**26,000 customers**

The number of customers in financial hardship that received a standing charge rebate from us in 2015 and 2016



**700,000 customers**

The number of customers helped with Warm Home Discount payments in the 2015-16 scheme



## Dementia Friends

By 2020 there will be 1 million people in the UK living with dementia, some of whom are our customers, our people and our loved ones. This is why it's really important that we understand more about the disease, and most importantly how we can support those living with it.

In 2016, we've started rolling out the Dementia Friends programme to our employees across Centrica. The biggest ever initiative to change people's perceptions of dementia, it aims to transform the way the nation thinks, acts and talks about the disease.

To become a Dementia Friend our people have either participated in face-to-face information sessions, or have watched a series of in-depth videos. These highlight five key messages about dementia – helping to increase understanding of how we can better support people living with the disease.

Employees can also take a volunteering day to train to become Dementia Friends Champions, so they can deliver Dementia Friends information sessions to colleagues, friends and family.



**1,500 of our people**

Have become Dementia Friends in the first six months of the rollout



**Over 1.9 million**

The number of vulnerable households we helped last year



**Over £220 million**

The amount we spent helping vulnerable people in 2015



# Supporting a diverse workforce

We want our workforce to be as diverse as our customer base, and the communities we serve. So we can draw on unique skills to continue to support the changing needs of our customers.



There have been real improvements in the labour market in recent years, but we also know things haven't got better for everyone. For example, the population of those young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) remains stubbornly high, at around 865,000.

That's why, through being involved with the Movement to Work campaign in 2014, we set out to create a bespoke training course that responded to the unique needs of young people in this situation.

In 2014-15 we delivered 438 training places, with 50% of those taking part securing permanent employment when their course ended – either with us or elsewhere. At the start of this year, we set out our commitment to provide a further 600 places by the end of 2017. We recently published a report with our learnings so that more companies can support young people into a great career.

### Caring for those who care

We support those who provide care to their loved ones. Across Centrica, our parent company, we run a Carers Network with 1,000 members who help and support each other, and guide us in the things we should be doing.

### Forward thinking on families

We take a family friendly approach to work. So just before Shared Parental Leave was established, we set up a Parents Network to try to understand more about what we could do to support our people who have children. The network is employee led. It hosts webinars, offers peer to peer support and is fully supported by senior management, who are committed to ensuring our people enjoy a great work-life balance. We also have a service to help arrange emergency childcare and school holiday cover. Just one of the reasons why we're featured in the 2016 [WorkingMums.co.uk](http://WorkingMums.co.uk) best practice report.



**438 training places**

The number of training places we delivered in 2014-15



**1000 members**

The number of members that make up our Carers Network

Huzaifa Abowath, 25, from Leicester, applied for the Movement to Work programme with British Gas at its services contact centre in Leicester. Like many young people, Huzaifa struggled to get a job that would lead to a long-term career. He said: "I applied for jobs daily but I rarely got a response back. I had a mixed career history after leaving school, so I knew that my lack of relevant experience was definitely an issue, but I also felt like people were making unfair assumptions about how committed I was to actually finding a job.

"Getting the place on the programme gave me an instant boost. I finally felt like I was being given a chance by somebody. I became more confident and that really had an impact on my job, especially talking with customers."

Huzaifa says he's in a much happier place now: "Completing the Movement to Work programme is the best thing that I've done. I've made my family proud and I have experience on my CV now as well as the apprenticeship."

"Getting the place on the programme gave me an instant boost. I finally felt like I was being given a chance by somebody."

**Huzaifa Abowath**, former Movement to Work trainee at British Gas



## Investing in our apprentices

We're already training more than 1,200 apprentices through six dedicated training academies across the country. OFSTED rate our academies 'outstanding'. Our apprenticeship schemes are popular – they have a 93% achievement and retention rate against a national average of 71.7%.



### We support our people to develop their skills by running programmes like The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE)

In 2016 we're celebrating ten years in partnership with the DofE, as well as the charity's Diamond Anniversary. During this time we've supported over 2,300 of our apprentices to achieve their Gold Award and a further 1.9 million young people to do their DofE.

Our apprentices have gained skills in teamwork, communication and leadership, as well as improving their physical fitness and confidence. They have also contributed a fantastic 104,072 hours to local communities through volunteering and social action.

Matthew Bateman from British Gas said, "The DofE develops the skills we look for in our employees – skills like initiative and a determination to learn and progress. It also helps our new recruits to relate to our customers and their lives through the time they spend volunteering in the community, which is vitally important in a customer focused business like ours."



"The DofE develops the skills we look for in our employees like initiative and a determination to learn and progress."

**Matthew Bateman**  
UK Field Operations



Matt Vanns has worked for British Gas for seven years, beginning his career with the company as an engineering apprentice. Today he manages a team of engineers in the South East of England. As part of his apprenticeship, Matt achieved his Gold Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award.

"The two years of my life in which I did my Gold Award showed me better ways to communicate with people. I became more confident and decisive. Through taking the lead in my team on our expedition, I discovered what I was good at and that I enjoyed leadership. I love working within a team and encouraging my colleagues to push themselves. I met people from completely different walks of life, and have become a more patient and understanding person as a result.

"I now manage 20 engineers between the age of 18 and 60. And I've no doubt the DofE has helped me find, uncover and develop my skills to achieve this."

"The DofE has given me real leadership and teamwork skills enabling me to progress in my career."

**Matt Vanns**  
Team Manager, British Gas





## We're supporting young people build their work ready skills through volunteering

We've seen the benefits our apprentices and young recruits get from volunteering. And we're committed to helping many more young people across the country benefit too.

### Here's what we're doing

#### We're the Headline Diamond Partner for the Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award Skills for Work campaign

To mark ten years in partnership with the DofE, we've signed up to be the Headline Diamond Partner for the charity's Skills for Work campaign. In this special year, we've increased our support for the DofE to help them achieve their goal to get 2 million more young people – 400,000 from disadvantaged backgrounds – starting their DofE by 2020.

To kick things off, we have recruited ten of our former apprentices as Skills for Work Ambassadors, whose job it is to tour the nation promoting the DofE programme at events and in communications.

We also hosted HRH The Earl of Wessex, a DofE Trustee and Gold Award holder, at our Leicester Academy where he met with local schools, businesses and leading organisations advocating on behalf of young people.

#### We're spreading the word about the benefits of volunteering through our communications, people and recruitment practices

In the lead up to 2016 A-level results week, we identified through research that 94% of business leaders say their organisation can get great results from employees who have volunteered. Yet 60% of young people think businesses only care about academic grades.

To help address this issue we are sending volunteers into schools to promote the fact that businesses like ours value a young person's volunteering experience. We're also asking our new recruits to tell us about their volunteering experience when they're applying to join our business.

#### We're a Business Pioneer of the #iwill campaign

We're a leading corporate supporter of the campaign to get more young people involved in youth social action and volunteering.

Find out more at [iwill.org.uk](http://iwill.org.uk)





# Inspiring the energy innovators of the future

We're helping young people develop the skills they'll need to become the innovators of the future, and protect the environment too.



### Over 50,000 young people inspired about energy in 2015

Through exciting experiments and classroom lessons, our curriculum linked resources help young people understand different types of energy, where it comes from and how we can reduce the amount we use.

### 40 schools transformed

Since 2010 we've installed a tailored package of sustainable technologies – an 'energy makeover' – in 40 schools. Not only does this save the school energy and money, the children can see renewable power at work first hand.

### 260 schools set up with solar panels

We've set up a community energy fund to invest in energy for the future. Through this fund, 260 schools have had solar panels installed, which means they can generate their own electricity - saving money and cutting their carbon footprint.



**3,000 tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup>**

Our investment in schools is saving approximately 3,000 tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup> each year - that's the same as an aeroplane flying 650 times around the world



### Ysgol Hiraddug School

Ysgol Hiraddug school in Denbighshire, North Wales, won a Generation Green makeover, which has helped the school to make savings of around £5,000 a year and has inspired the children to think innovatively about energy.

Head teacher, Gary Hulson said "Changes were made to the boilers to make them more efficient in how they burned oil and the pipes were also insulated. Fifty solar panels were put on the roof and we were given a monitoring display screen so that the children can keep an eye on the savings being made – the children are fascinated by it.

"There's been lots of spin-offs from it in that the children are now more aware of energy saving mechanisms themselves and can enforce them at home.

"They've also spread the energy saving message throughout the school by designing posters and putting stickers on light switches urging people not to waste electricity. What we've saved in energy bills has allowed us to spend more money on practical equipment for the children."

Find out more at [generationgreen.co.uk](http://generationgreen.co.uk)



**20,000 teachers**

The number of teachers registered to receive our free learning resources



**£18 million**

The amount we've invested in sustainable technology in schools since 2010



**376,000 children**

The number of children inspired to think more innovatively about energy through our educational resources and workshops to date



## Giving our time and resources to support local causes

All our employees get two paid days leave to volunteer every year. And we're on a mission to get as many of them out volunteering, making a difference in their local communities, as possible.

### Sharing our skills

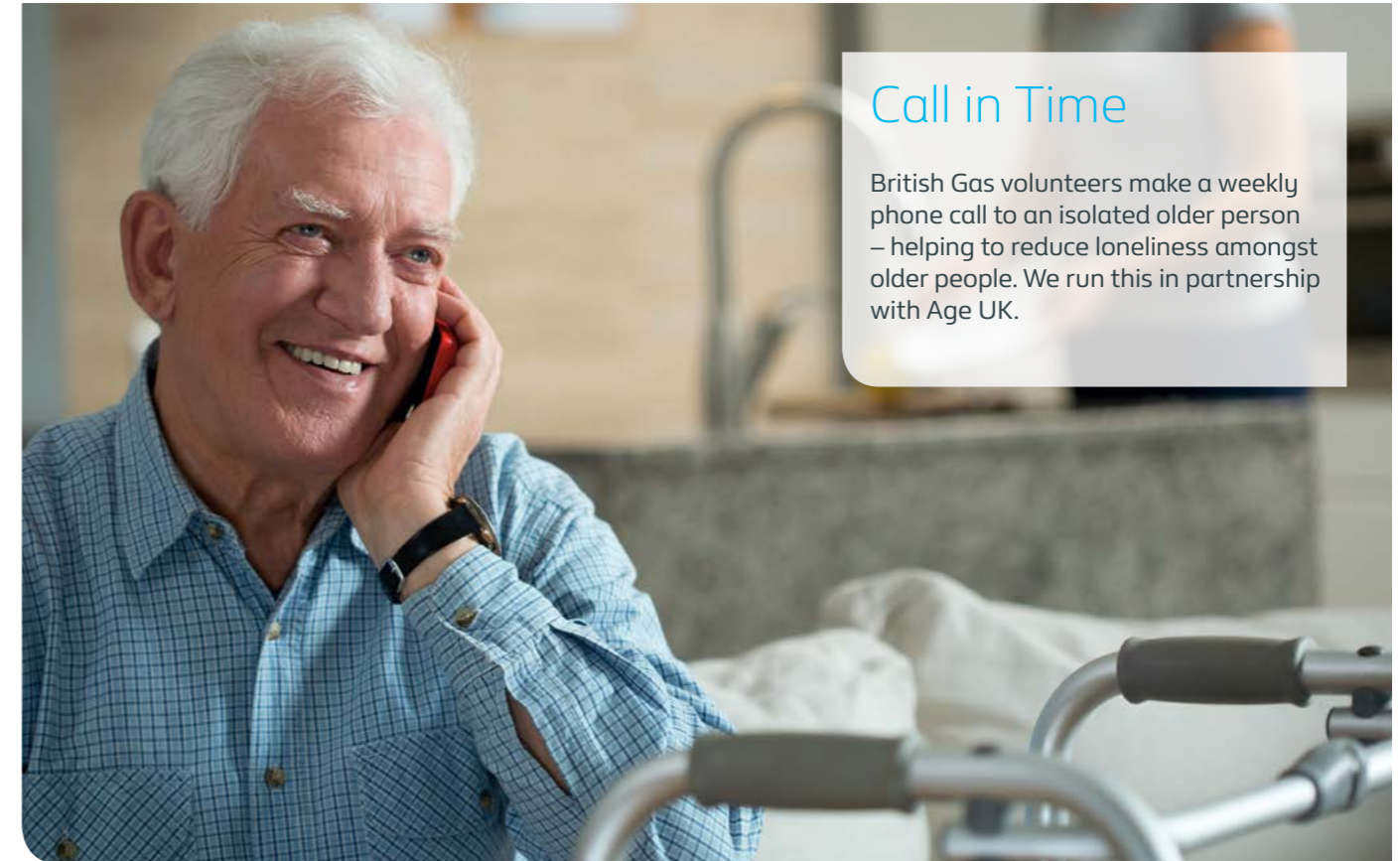
With nearly 30,000 employees, we are uniquely placed to support local communities across the UK. Our people are also passionate about getting involved in matters that are close to their heart. That's why we have an online volunteering portal full of opportunities for them to sign up to.

More recently, we've been working hard to give our people an opportunity to share their skills and help tackle key issues in their local communities. For that reason, we've developed four new volunteering programmes - 'Call in Time', 'Careers Lab', 'Energy Education' and 'Energy Gameshow'.



**34,785 hours**

2,846 of our people volunteered 34,785 hours in 2015



### Call in Time

British Gas volunteers make a weekly phone call to an isolated older person – helping to reduce loneliness amongst older people. We run this in partnership with Age UK.

### Careers Lab

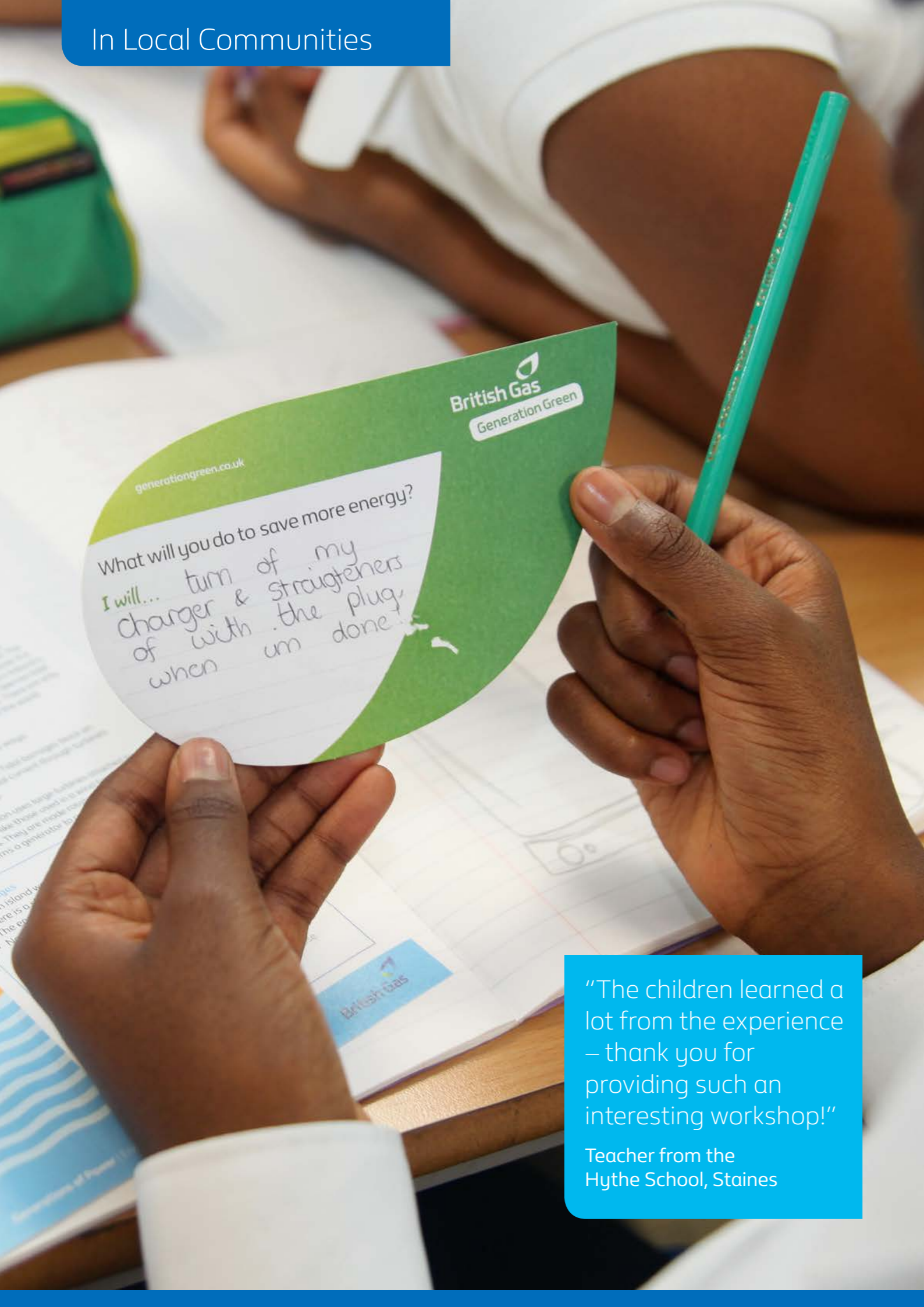
Did you know that if young people have at least five interactions with business role models during their secondary school life, they are five times less likely to become Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

That's why we're supporting Careers Lab - an initiative which involves British Gas volunteers delivering careers workshops in secondary schools. Our volunteers help young people to develop the skills they need for a brighter future by sharing their knowledge and experience of the world of work to inspire a young person's future career.

Kevin Hocking is a Service Manager in Devon and Cornwall. He regularly volunteers in his spare time, most recently delivering a Careers Lab session with his team at Penair School in Truro as part of our Summer Volunteering Challenge. He said "It felt good to see the students so committed and keen to learn about our careers, and to explain to them how our careers had evolved through the years and how theirs could do the same."







“The children learned a lot from the experience – thank you for providing such an interesting workshop!”

Teacher from the Hythe School, Staines

### Energy Education

Our people help young people to think innovatively about the energy they use by delivering energy workshops in primary schools. In these workshops, they're helping to inspire the next generation of energy innovators in a fun and engaging way.

Recently, UK Service & Repair Director Dave Young and his team ran an Energy Education class with Year Five and Six pupils at Kippax North Primary School in Leeds.

Afterwards Dave said “Engagement from the children has been fantastic and they've learned a lot about different energy sources and what energy use in the future may look like. I know from a team point of view, we've really taken a lot from it. This is something which really stretches us as individuals and really adds value to the school.”



### Energy Gameshow

Teams of British Gas people give vulnerable members of the community the knowledge they need to help reduce their energy consumption and cut their bills, through a series of fun games designed to engage and inspire people about energy efficiency.



In 2016, to boost volunteering even further, we've made volunteering the focus of our company employee challenge

- There are 100 days in summer and we're asking our people to pledge just one of those days to share their time and skills to make a difference to a cause they're passionate about
- The challenge is already off to a great start with lots of our passionate and energetic volunteers getting involved across Great Britain



## To find out more

Please email us at [responsibility@britishgas.co.uk](mailto:responsibility@britishgas.co.uk)  
or contact us on Twitter [@britishgasnews](https://twitter.com/britishgasnews)

For more inspirational stories, please visit  
[britishgas.co.uk/responsibility](http://britishgas.co.uk/responsibility)



British Gas were re-awarded the Community Mark for another three years in 2015. This is the highest form of recognition from BiTC for companies that maximise their positive impact on local communities.



Centrica won the 'Championing an Ageing Workforce Award' at the Business in the Community Responsible Business Awards 2015 for the role that our Carers policy and Carers Network play in supporting those of our staff who are providing care to their loved ones.



The British Gas partnership with Shelter won the 'Best Business-Charity Partnership' award at the National Fundraising Awards 2015, for its "transformational results" in improving living conditions in the private rented sector and funding energy debt advisors.