



# GOING BEYOND

Towards the end of last year, the FRB was delighted to be invited to the first ever National Customer Vulnerability Conference. Held at the Law Society in London, the event hosted by Cadent, the UK's largest gas distribution network, brought together leaders from energy companies, utilities, Ofgem, third sector companies such as Scope, Age UK, National Energy Action, Citizens Advice, along with other businesses and representation from the Government.

It is through discussion, debate, and a focus on the real needs of customers living in vulnerable situations, that Cadent intend to create new connections to help tackle some of the key issues that exist. They recognise that many organisations face similar challenges to support all their customers in vulnerable situations, including those in fuel poverty, and have collaborated with others consistently especially to raise the awareness of vulnerability. Cadent's work to date with a number of charities has been well documented and talking to many represented at the conference, it was clear that the ease of communication with those charities has been a big element of those relationships.

We were very humbled to hear the stories of those who have experienced hardship but found so much help from different organisations. One, in particular, really hit home the difference that had been made to someone's life. A young woman (we'll call her Mary) told of her experience from Warm Welcome. The Warm Welcome campaign started as a crisis response to keep people warm through the winter but has blossomed in so much more. There are now more than 4000 Warm Welcome spaces in the UK, thriving networking spaces where anyone can go, not just to get warm, but to have a hot drink, make friendships and become part of a community.

Mary had been in a situation where she needed help and talked about how isolated she had felt finding herself in such a vulnerable position. What she found at Warm Welcome wasn't just a warm place where she could have a nutritious meal, but friends who understood. And as time went on, her warm space became somewhere she could re-build her confidence to go forward to a better place. And as part of growing that confidence, Mary found something smart to wear from the donations given to Warm Welcome, a recent addition to all the other things they offered. And as Mary said to us from the podium, "I look good now, don't I?" A brave lady.

The benefit of Cadent's collaboration with its various charities was very clear, with lessons learnt, ideas being shared and often more joined up solutions being proposed and implemented.

Cadent enters thousands of customers' homes every single day and have trained all their front-line colleagues to be able to spot signs of vulnerability, including living in fuel poverty.



*Warm Welcome week during 20 – 26 January this year aims to raise awareness and promote opportunities to engage more spaces, partners and ambassadors.*