







Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)



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1. A word from our CEO, Mark Horsley



Over the past 12 months we have continued to support our customers and communities who are feeling the impact from the cost-of-living crisis.

Economic events like this do not have a defined end, and whilst inflation is now starting to balance, and energy prices are dropping, energy debt across our network is continuing to increase, alongside the number of customers living in fuel poverty.

Last summer, all GDNs received an increased allowance from the repurposed Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance – for NGN this resulted in an additional c£13m being allocated, to be spent over the final three years of GD2 (until March 2026).

I am extremely proud of the support that NGN has been able to provide with this repurposed allowance – we live and breathe a customer-first culture, always considering what we can do above and beyond our core obligations – this is in our DNA. We have engaged broadly with our stakeholders to ensure that we are investing this allowance to deliver maximum impact, really tackling the needs that our partners were seeing. You can read more about the changes to our [Vulnerability Strategy on page 9](#).

We have also continued to stretch the support that we provide through our unique Customer Support Fund and Community Partnering Fund - these are both 100% shareholder funded. We are the first and only GDN to reallocate allowed revenue (from the unbilled energy workstream), back into our support for customers in most need. This revenue has enhanced the Customer Support Fund, and provided essential support through our Off-Grid Warmth project - [see page 7](#).

We have continued to strengthen how we work with our partners, making certain that we co-create projects that reach deep into the heart of our communities. We listen, reflect and respond to all feedback that we receive through our extensive engagement mechanisms - [see page 17](#). We triangulate this feedback with data sets, for example the Vulnerability Visualisation Tool, to make sure that we invest in the right areas.

We have also worked hard to drive the right balance between supporting the immediate needs of today, and encouraging sustainable projects for the future.

As we look back to 22/23 and ahead to the next 12 months and beyond, it's clear to us that the impact of the cost-of-living crisis will continue to be felt for years to come. We will continue to work tirelessly to alleviate hardship and promote health through safe and warm homes, whilst ensuring that our approach is inclusive and responsive.

Mark Horsley

CEO Northern Gas Networks

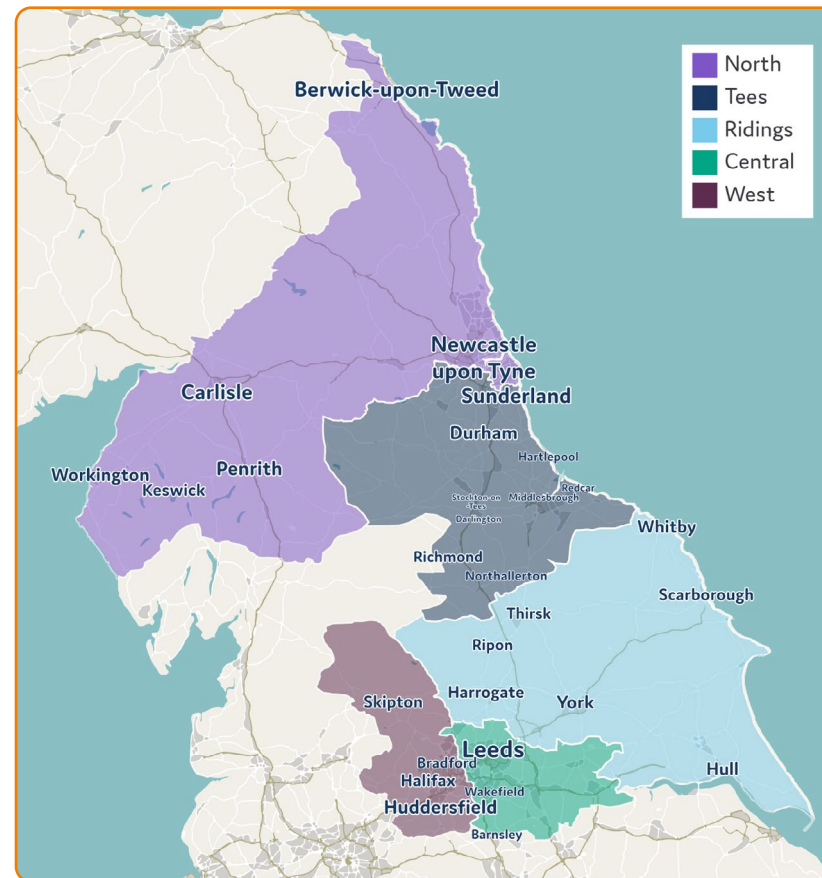
2. Who we are

2.1 About Us

We are Northern Gas Networks (NGN), the gas distributor for the North of England. We keep 2.7 million homes and businesses cooking on gas, through our vast underground pipe network.

We are committed to providing a safe, reliable, and great value service to our customers and stakeholders, whilst developing new technologies to deliver forms of low carbon energy, such as hydrogen, to support a greener future. Supporting our most vulnerable customers underpins everything we do. By thinking differently, listening to our colleagues and stakeholders, working closely with our partners, and considering our communities, we are pushing the boundaries of what a utility company is capable of.

Where we operate



NGN Region

We provide energy for cooking, hot water and heating to 6.8 million people throughout the North of England

Our region spans 25,000km² from the Scottish Borders to South Yorkshire and the Northeast coast to Northern Cumbria

37,000km is the length of pipe that we own – the equivalent distance from Leeds to Australia and back again

2,100 staff – we directly employ around 1,300 people and provide regular work to around 800 contractors

ISO 14001 is the internationally recognised standard for environmental management held by NGN

3. Overview of VCMA

3.1 What it is

The Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) was a newly created fund for the Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs) funding period April 2021 to March 2026. This 5 year period is known as GD2.

For Northern Gas Networks, the initial amount available to spend was approximately £1.3 million per annum. During March/April 2022, as a result of changes to ECO4 funding, it became evident that there would no longer be support for first time central heating. As a result of this, Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES) connections significantly declined, which led to a review by Ofgem in late 2022.

Whilst FPNES will remain open, Ofgem have since repurposed the unspent allowance into the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance. This now means that the overall allowance for GDNs has increased from **£60m to £171m**.

The purpose of this report is to provide an annual update detailing how investment of the VCMA has been progressing, any stakeholder engagement linked to the VCMA, an overview of all projects that have been funded so far and a look ahead to the next year and beyond.

For NGN, the total VCMA allowance increased from **£6.85m to £19.64m** in October 2023. With inflation factored in, the total amount for NGN is £24.7m.



Click here to read the published Ofgem guidance, detailing how the fund can be spent

A minimum of 25% should be spent on collaborative projects with the other GDNs. Detailed in the VCMA guidance is strict criteria for what this can be spent on, and for monitoring and reporting purposes we group the projects into the **4 key themes below**.

All projects must also demonstrate a positive Social Return on Investment (SROI) through a consistent SROI framework.

The 4 key themes:



Fuel poverty and energy affordability

Providing support to reduce fuel poverty and support energy affordability (including energy efficiency advice and income maximisation)



Supporting priority customers

Providing support to priority customers including targeted work for these groups and raising awareness of the Priority Services Register (PSR)



Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness

Raising awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide



Services beyond the meter

Services beyond the meter, including support for the repair/replacement of appliances identified through GDN interventions

3.2 Our Investments

Here is a summary of our VCMA spend to date, and forecast spend for the remaining 2 years of GD2:

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Company Specific VCMA Project costs	£466,254	£1,151,013	£3,780,953	£5,861,289	£6,418,525	£17,678,034
Collaborative VCMA Project costs	£122,332	£658,290	£2,091,659	£2,907,036	£1,325,114	£7,104,431
Total VCMA Project costs	£588,586	£1,809,303	£5,872,612	£8,768,325	£7,743,639	24,782,465

We have increased our level of spend during 2023/24 in line with the repurposed funding and are forecasting to spend the full allowance by the end of March 2026.

Collaborative spend at the end of year three is 35% of our spend to date – guided by our regional stakeholders to ensure that the collaborative projects we support have a strong footprint in the NGN region, and meet the ambitions of our overarching Vulnerability Strategy.

Our spend during year 3 has been focussed on:

- **Health** - effort to increase partnerships in this area, including an ambitious collaborative NEA health project which NGN are leading on
- **Targeted projects** with more in depth support for specific vulnerable groups
- Extending and **scaling up of existing projects** to end of GD2 (many collaborative)
- **Increased resource for vulnerability team** to efficiently manage the increased allowance/projects

We are now leading on collaborative projects that equate to 35% of the total collaborative VCMA allowance.

We currently have 53 live VCMA projects ranging from small amounts of less than £10k (NGN) to £500k per annum (collaborative).

The Collaborative VCMA report will be published in conjunction with individual VCMA reports.

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Live VCMA projects

Sitting alongside the VCMA, we have two unique funds to NGN that serve to complement and strengthen the support that we can provide to those customers in most need.

These are 100% shareholder funded, and together we have committed to invest a minimum of £1m over the 5-year GD2 period.

Community Partnering Fund (CPF)

The Community Partnering Fund has enabled the opportunity for small, local projects to develop further and reach those most vulnerable in their communities. We have maintained our commitment to invest £50k per year in this fund and have targeted various geographic areas within our network. During GD2 the Community Partnering Fund has supported 23 grassroots community projects with grants of up to £10k per organisation, administered through local grant giving bodies.

This fund has enabled NGN to build stronger relationships with small community-based organisations, and we have benefitted from having the insights of these stakeholders during our engagement events. The CPF allows us to test small with our grassroots partnerships, and support them to have the confidence to evolve and grow projects into the VCMA. We are really proud that six of the initiatives funded through CPF have evolved into larger VCMA funded projects. For example, Skills 4 Work was funded through CPF during 22/23 and matured into a VCMA project in 23/24 - [see page 12](#).

Customer Support Fund (CSF - Previously called Hardship Fund)

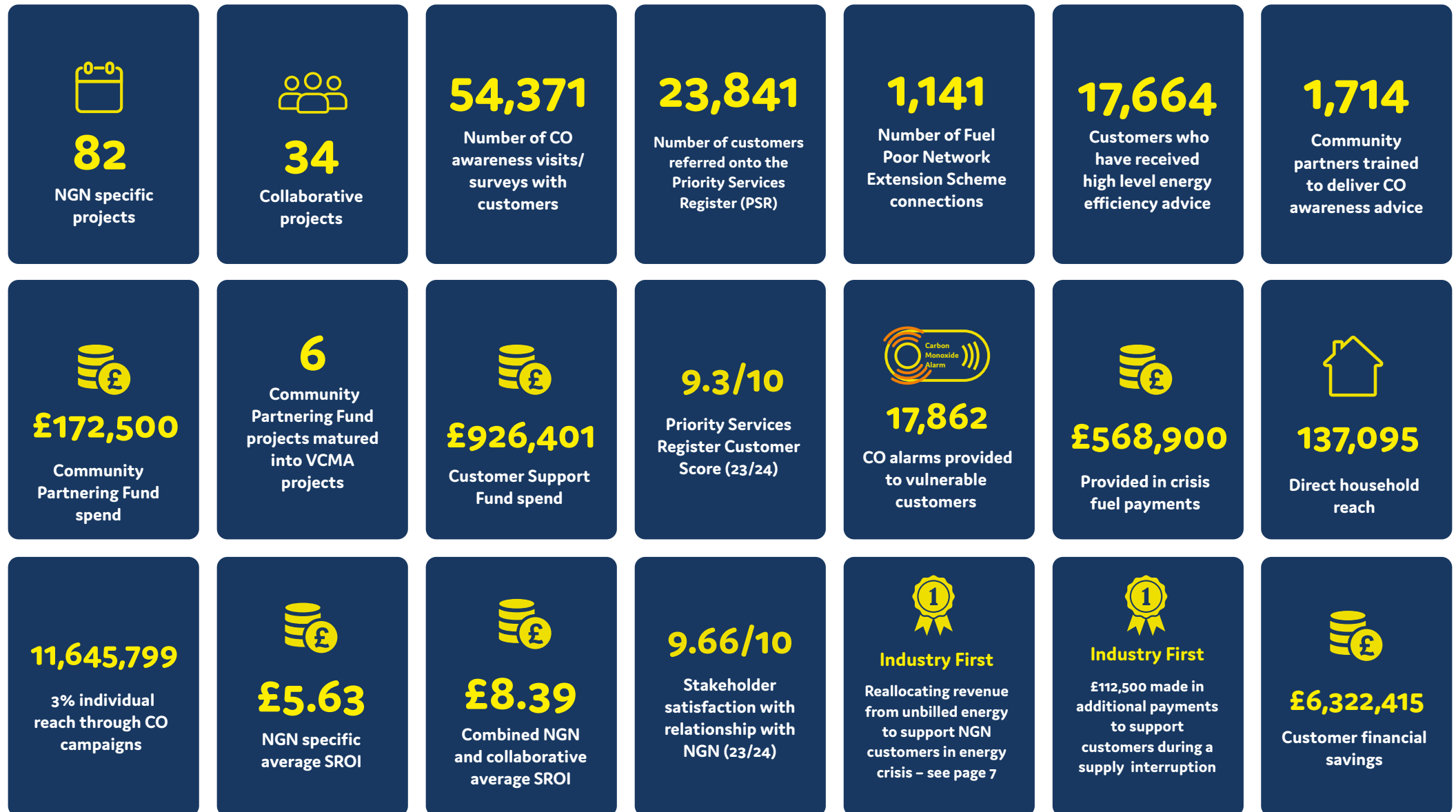
We committed an annual allowance of £150k per year to support our most vulnerable customers, where other funding (such as VCMA) could not be used. We have been strategic in how this fund is used to ensure greatest impact and avoid duplication with other funding mechanisms. Importantly, we have used this fund to provide additional support to VCMA projects, strengthening our ability to offer holistic support. We have continued to be flexible and responsive to the needs of customers across our network.

With the increased allowance, we made the decision to offer an additional payment to customers with a supply interruption between 4-24 hours, extending our Guaranteed Standards of Performance payment to acknowledge the immediate increased financial burden. We have continued this commitment into the remainder of GD2, in line with customer feedback.

In 2023/24 we were the first, and currently only, GDN to ringfence revenue gained from pursuing unbilled energy (Theft of Gas) to help support our customers in extreme crisis. In 23/24 this increased the CSF by c£118k. This commitment will continue for the duration of GD2 and will fund the work to support off-gas, vulnerable households to obtain first time gas central heating through our project, Off-Gas Warmth, in partnership with Communitas Energy. This work has been invaluable in supporting customers who have multiple health risks associated with living in cold homes, where they would otherwise have struggled to stay warm and well.

Although this work supports a small number of households, it has made a significant positive impact on the lives of those who have benefitted, and supports our commitment to prioritising health as a key target area. We are also looking to evaluate carbon savings associated with this work. In 2024/25 the unbilled revenue will uplift the CSF by c£200k.

3.3 Performance Highlights (GD2 to date)



4. Strategy

4.1 Overview of approach

As a result of the repurposed FPNES allowance, we consulted with our key stakeholders to understand how we could adapt our approach, to make sure that we invested the increased VCMA allowance to meet regional and national need. We started to engage in January 2023, and used this feedback to change and refine our approach, launching our revised strategy in June 2023.

We heard that supporting customers and communities in fuel poverty should continue to be the primary focus. However, we also heard that there are complex needs associated with this, that should be considered. Stakeholder feedback importantly identified new and emerging issues, around health and financial hardship.

The six key priority areas identified by our stakeholders are summarised below, along with examples of how we have responded to this feedback.




[Click here to read our revised strategy document](#)

Priority Area	Case study to illustrate NGN response
<p>1. Increased focus on health</p> <p>Must be driven by priorities of NHS to avoid hospitalisation.</p> <p>Projects should align health and high-risk deprivation – building on health projects that use data well.</p> <p>Use data to inform which health categories are most at risk and least able to achieve affordable warmth.</p>	<p>Warm Homes, Healthy Futures</p> <p>We have embarked on leading the most ambitious collaborative VCMA project to date in partnership with National Energy Action (NEA) and all four GDNs. This project aims to connect health professionals and local public health bodies to energy advice and other specialist services. This will enable NEA to support people to live in warm and safe homes and improve health.</p> <p>To gain maximum traction with local health partners and greatest social and health return on investment, the project will use the NHS England Core20Plus5 approach to guide and unlock health sector partnerships. This is an existing framework for action across much of the NHS that closely mirrors VCMA priorities around low-income areas, priority demographics and health conditions related to cold homes. Although this framework has been developed for use in England, NEA believe that the same model can also be applied to target those worst affected by cold homes in Wales and Scotland.</p> <p>The target is to engage with 24,000 unique beneficiaries throughout the life of the project.</p>



Priority Area	Case study to illustrate NGN response
<p>2. Collaboration and linking up partners and funding</p> <p>Targeting specific geographical areas mutually identified with partners as areas of high deprivation/risk but underserved by way of current projects. This could be achieved by joint stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>Outreach programme to get more partners on board, targeting hard to reach areas.</p> <p>Build on existing northern networks, such as Infrastructure North, to maximise reach - see page 18.</p>	<p>Citizens Advice Bradford</p> <p>We have worked closely with other utility partners to ensure that we respond appropriately to meet the needs of customers in high-risk areas across our respective networks. Working in partnership with Northern Powergrid (NPg), we set up a jointly funded project with Citizens Advice Bradford to enable the provision of specialist energy and debt advice to customers in this area. Using a programme of outreach community support, the service reaches a diverse audience of customers which reflects the local demographic; particularly those from ethnic minority backgrounds. This geographical area is known to have some of the highest levels of deprivation but was previously underserved by both utilities.</p> <p>The cross-utility partnership is complementary, with NGN and NPg working together to fund different elements of support provided by Citizens Advice Bradford. This has resulted in a more holistic service provision for customers that might not otherwise have been achieved through an individually funded project.</p>
<p>3. Increasing capacity for support within partner organisations</p> <p>Scaling up to reach more people in fuel poverty within areas of poverty - consider grant funding via larger national charities to reach smaller local groups.</p> <p>Longer term projects funded to increase sustainability/certainty. Consideration of immediate versus long term support.</p> <p>Consistency of service provision across the network in terms of advice and information. It may be necessary to increase partner capacity within key strategic referral networks, to address inconsistencies in support provision through localised referral networks.</p>	<p>Fuel Bank Foundation (FBF)</p> <p>This is a project that started as a small winter fund but was scaled up to a VCMA project and expanded with a further 75 partners over the colder winter months providing longer-term surety as we moved into 2024. These 75 partners were across the North East of England and allowed the FBF to target rural and coastal communities that are often typically overlooked and underserved.</p> <p>To complement their traditional Fuel Bank programme, FBF have also expanded their Heat Fund across the North of England, within the communities that rely on fuels such as Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), biomass, and heating oil. Through this expansion, the Heat Fund will aim to provide support to 100 households who live off the gas network and are reliant on more expensive, unregulated fuel types to stay warm and well at home.</p>



Priority Area	Case study to illustrate NGN response
<p>4. Connecting and responding to different aspects and complexities of vulnerability</p> <p>Targeting support to reach those who may not have access to or knowledge of support available.</p> <p>Those who may not ask for help.</p> <p>Those seeking support for the first time.</p> <p>Young people who may be living independently for the first time and struggling to meet/understand their energy needs/requirements.</p>	<p>Maternity Digital Inclusion and Equity</p> <p>Working with South Tees Hospitals, we set up a Digital Inclusion Project to support people accessing maternity services in the area which is known to have multiple categories of deprivation and health inequalities. The project helps pregnant women to have the skills and confidence to access maternity notes and health information which had recently moved to a digital format, via a smartphone app. This includes information on Carbon Monoxide, the PSR and energy efficiency advice/signposting. There had been concerns that without access to such support, health inequalities could be further exacerbated if women were unable to gain access to their own medical information and important messages about their maternity care. This project directly supports digital inclusion for high-risk groups, via the relationships fostered through this specialist service.</p> <div data-bbox="898 568 1603 660" style="border: 1px solid orange; border-radius: 10px; padding: 10px; text-align: center;">  Click here to watch a video case study </div>
<p>5. Continued support for those in financial hardship</p> <p>Financial hardship is more widespread therefore affecting more people – more people are vulnerable/needing to access support in general (debt advice).</p> <p>New vulnerabilities are emerging and impacting those people who were “just about managing”.</p> <p>Within this, there are some with greater risks/depth/complexity of vulnerability e.g. greater barriers/challenges to accessing support – knowledge of services/access to services/digital exclusion/language or communication barriers.</p> <p>Consider geography – coastal towns and tenure.</p>	<p>Centres for Warmth</p> <p>Taking best practice from Cadent, NGN are now evolving Centres for Warmth (CfW) to meet specific needs within our network area. NGN’s Centre for Warmth concept was developed to enable community centres to do what they do best in the heart of their communities. It acts as a trusted source reaching vulnerable people who may not go elsewhere or know how to access services which could benefit them.</p> <p>A mapping exercise was undertaken to identify target areas, prioritising underserved communities. We considered our NGN Social Indicator Mapping, alongside the now widely used Vulnerability Visualisation Tool, to establish our top 6 priority areas – see Case Study on page 14. The CfW model takes a holistic structured approach, tackling an immediate need to support fuel poor households within a community setting. Centre users benefit from a combination of services, all with the core service provision of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy advice • CO awareness and advice • Income maximisation through benefit entitlement checks and managing debt • Free or reduced cost food/clothing • Fuel top up vouchers • Links to other NGN funded partner information/assistance <p>And in addition to the above, customers will be offered training, information, advice and services bespoke to their individual communities, and in a warm safe space designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve physical and mental health and wellbeing • Increase household income • Help communities better manage their energy consumption



Priority Area	Case study to illustrate NGN response
<p data-bbox="71 240 869 288">6. Scaling up existing projects</p> <p data-bbox="71 288 869 360">Build on successful projects and extend partnership networks into areas of greatest need.</p> <p data-bbox="71 360 869 459">Continue to learn and share from each other. Where a project may have concluded within one region it may be that the approach can be effectively used in another region.</p>	<p data-bbox="869 240 2152 288">Skills 4 Work - A trusted source of information and practical support</p> <p data-bbox="869 288 2152 360">A key component of our strategic approach is to make sure that we scale up successful projects and continue to evolve the way we support our partners to deliver to the best outcomes for our customers.</p> <p data-bbox="869 360 2152 432">Through our Community Partnering Fund, we supported 4 projects in 2022/23. One of the successful applicants was Skills 4 Work (Gateshead) Limited. They delivered workshops and information sessions on the PSR.</p> <p data-bbox="869 432 2152 592">The project was a success and developed into a VCMA project in February 2024. This project will ensure that individuals and families are aware of available support regarding their utility bills, increase registration on the PSR and be more aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning and how this can be tackled. Skills 4 Work is well placed to reach vulnerable young adults who are living independently, some without other support networks, and socially isolated older people who attend their weekly lunch sessions.</p> <p data-bbox="869 592 2152 663">The organisation also uses their social media platforms to engage with a wider audience, ensuring information is cascaded as widely as possible.</p>

4.2 Using data to inform our approach

Alongside stakeholder feedback, lived experience and community insight, the use of data and research is key for NGN to be able to guide and inform projects that we have supported in our region.

These sources include:

- **Annual NGN Customer Perceptions Research**
- **NGN Social Indicator Mapping**
- **Citizens Advice Cost of Living Tracker**
- **Vulnerability Visualisation Tool**

Click on the links below to read more about these sources



Annual NGN Customer Perceptions Research



Citizens Advice Cost of Living Tracker



Vulnerability Visualisation Tool

Working closely with innovation colleagues we have strengthened our offer to customers by using the Network Innovation Allowance to support our VCMA work. The NGN Vulnerability Visualisation Tool (VVT), which is a collaborative project between Northern Gas Networks, Cadent, Northern Powergrid, SSEN and Egnida Innovation has created a single touchpoint for measuring/assessing community vulnerability.

This interactive model maps multiple vulnerabilities from ONS and other sources. From this we can identify gaps in geographical locations and vulnerability themes to identify/target suitable projects.



What makes it special?

- **One central source of truth** - avoids duplication of effort across the industry/better data alignment.
- **Over one hundred datasets and counting** - pulling information about health, education, environment, energy, finance and local services
- **Easy to use and adopt** - overlaying datasets to build a picture of social issues across regions. 3D functionality for quickness/ease of data access

The aim of the tool

It aims to identify where vulnerable customers could be and to create an understanding of the multiple factors that might impact on their lives. There are many data sets built into the tool that are important when considering vulnerability, for example, fuel poverty, IMD, income, digital exclusion, health data and more. This powerful mapping tool helps NGN when looking at new, potential projects... a turbo-powered map of the UK! The tool provides two main sources of data: layers and filters. Layers add points onto the map to show where things are, such as hospitals, schools, road closures etc. Filters create a score for a geographic area to measure the impact of the chosen filter. You can view the filters as either Local Authority boundaries or as postcode areas. Filters are the main function of the Vulnerability Visualisation Tool, creating graded, coloured areas on the map, immediately showing you high-low prevalence of your chosen factor.

How does the Vulnerability Visualisation Tool work?

By overlaying a series of datasets from our growing bank of over 100, there are infinite combinations of data which will each tell a story about customer vulnerability in a given area. For example:

- Where assets, works and incidents are located in areas with medically vulnerable residents
- Where retrofit support would be best targeted and most needed
- Where air quality traffic is bad and there is a higher rate of asthma patients
- Areas where drug related offences are high but local authority spending on treatment of drug misuse is low
- Areas with poor quality of educational and low PAYE income
- People living with dementia in areas prone to power cuts
- Houses with an EPC rating of D or lower in a fuel poor area with a high number of properties not connected to mains gas

What's next?



Looking ahead, we have four main ambitions to further strengthen the Vulnerability Visualisation Tool:

- Embed the VVT in decision making for investments across all our vulnerability project portfolio, including CPF, CSF and business as usual work
- Support our Customers in Vulnerable Situation partners to view and use data in the tool in a secure, GDPR compliant way
- Create a platform for sharing data
- Develop machine learning to help predict where data is missing or unknown or could affect other data

We will continue to use data to inform our approach, to make certain that we are targeting support in line with our overarching vulnerability strategy, and taking account of changes in the social, economic and political landscape.

4.3 Measuring impact

We are continually challenging ourselves to make sure that we fully understand the impact of our VCMA projects, so that we can make informed decisions about what new partnerships we form, projects that we start, and how these can evolve and grow. To help with this, over the last 12 months we have adopted (and adapted) a 3-tier model, first introduced by SGN, to categorise the support that we fund:

- **Tier 1** - Includes projects focused on appliance repair/replacement, in-depth case work and targeting support towards high-risk groups, where there may be complex barriers to accessing or engaging in support
- **Tier 2** - Includes projects focused on direct awareness and lower-level advice
- **Tier 3** - Includes projects focused on awareness campaigns, lighter touch and self-initiated support

By measuring in this way, we have been able to better target our support and also understand impact:

- Collaborative projects have a higher SROI value on average, although NGN SROI values have a more consistent range
- Higher % collaborative spend on tier 1 projects overall
- NGN have consistently been able to reach more people through individual awareness campaigns (tier 3)
- SROI values are more consistent through tier 1 and 2 work
- SROI for tier 3 is generally higher, and these projects target easier to reach customer groups, with broad media campaigns

We will continue to use this approach, alongside quarterly/annual partner reports, actual SROI calculations, case studies and partner spotlight sessions (such as our quarterly Hot Topic Workshops) to understand the impact of our VCMA projects.

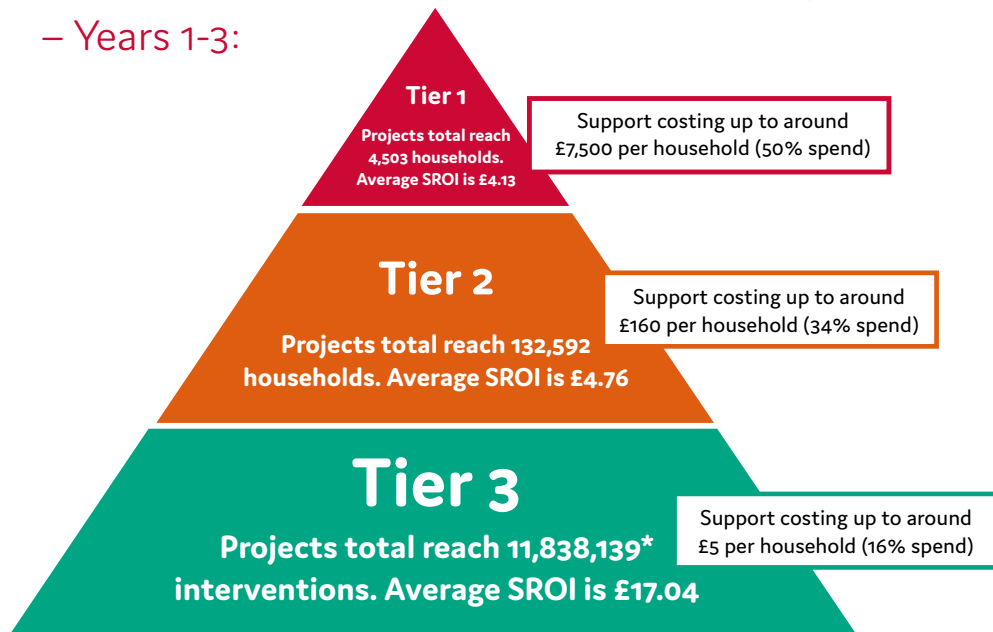
Common Social Return on Investment Toolkit

In March 2023, Sirio was commissioned by the UK's energy networks to develop an industry-wide social value framework. Following months of design, development, refinement and training, the framework was delivered in December 2023. A key driver for the GDNs in commissioning this project was to promote the comparability and consistency of social impact results reported across the industry. Whilst the framework makes considerable steps forward in creating a level playing field for all social value measurement performed across UK energy networks, the highest degree of comparability and consistency can only be achieved by agreeing on a common set of model inputs for specific initiatives. In the context of growing investment in the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VMCA), and Ofgem's desire to introduce impact measurement as an integral part of this scheme's governance, the GDNs have now developed a sector-wide rulebook.

The rulebook standardises the inputs that all GDNs will use to measure the impact of common initiatives and drives the greatest possible level of comparability and consistency whilst greatly simplifying the use of the framework. It takes the Energy Networks Association (ENA) Social Value Framework a step further by assigning specific benefits (inclusive of proxies and discount factors) to pre-selected outcomes (e.g. CO alarm provision, energy efficiency advice provision).

The GDNs can now measure the social impact of their activities in a standardised manner, ensuring equivalent benefits are claimed across activities.

Combined NGN and collaborative VCMA spend – Years 1-3:



*3% from the total reach as agreed with GDNs - this is the likelihood of people that would take action following an intervention

Forecast v Actual Social Return on Investment

Following the development of the common SROI tool, NGN have reviewed a sample of projects from each of the four VCMA themes, to re-evaluate the actual social value against what was originally forecasted for the project. This has helped us to monitor the average social value across our projects through delivery and allowed us to observe ways in which the projects can be improved to maximise the impact of VCMA funding. This includes revising the way in which projects are reported, to ensure that delivery partners are capturing evidence to support the outcomes gained, where possible. For example, it can be particularly difficult to evidence health and wellbeing outcomes, but by supporting partners to do so, we can help them evidence the value of their work for other funders, as well as NGN. This work has also helped us to understand that our NGN's own targeted awareness campaigns have delivered more successfully within our network area than those delivered collaboratively, showing that this is a good investment of our individual VCMA allowance. We will continue to reassess projects in this way up to the end of GD2.

All reassessments have demonstrated an increase in social value from the original forecast. Some examples of re-evaluated projects are shown below:

CO Awareness	Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability	Supporting Priority Customers
<p>Community Energy and CO Awareness Project (Highfield Coop)</p> <p>Raising awareness around the dangers of Carbon Monoxide in ethnic minority communities</p> <p>13% increase in SROI from forecast</p>	<p>Energy Max (Stockton and District Advice and Information Service)</p> <p>Reducing energy costs, providing income maximisation support and improving health and wellbeing</p> <p>56% increase in SROI from forecast</p>	<p>The Carents Room Phase 1 (Strata Nostra)</p> <p>An online resource and engagement platform providing advice and support to carers of elderly parents (Carents)</p> <p>11% increase in SROI from forecast</p>



4.4 Stakeholder engagement 2023/24

Listening to the needs of our customers and stakeholders is essential to understanding how we can provide the right support, at the right time, and in the right way. Since 2019 we've held regular workshops with our stakeholders, on the subject of Customers in Vulnerable Situations (CIVS).

This ensures that we are well informed to address the needs of customers across our network and through collaborative projects.

Our most recent stakeholder engagement throughout 2023 has informed us that financial hardship is still a key area of focus, alongside the health impacts associated with, or exacerbated by, living in cold and damp homes. Stakeholders also told us that increasing capacity for support within services would be key to addressing the immediate and longer-term impacts of fuel poverty and energy affordability.

The VCMA projects we support are tailored to the specific needs of the communities within our region and align with our Vulnerability Strategy. The strategy continues to be reviewed through regular engagement with our partners and stakeholders, to ensure the most efficient and effective project delivery. We meet with our key stakeholders and continue to review our priorities, to ensure that we align with their expectations, but also with the ever-changing landscape. By using our wide range of engagement mechanisms and continually inviting feedback, we can support key VCMA decisions.

Sitting alongside the enhanced engagement we undertook in light of the increased VCMA allowance, we have continued with our regular engagement mechanisms, and even brought some new ones on-line in 23/24 - [see page 18](#).

“

“It feels like you really ‘get’ vulnerability. Not everybody does”

“

“Lots of engagement - different approaches - feels personal”

“

“The quality partnership. It feels like you value our input. You don't tell us what the answer should be. You don't make us jump through hoops”

CIVS Annual Strategic Workshop – 5th April 2023



Our annual strategic workshops are focussed on themes which are directed by our stakeholders. We invited stakeholders to join us for an extended session, focusing on Customers in Vulnerable Situations to take a retrospective look back at 2022/23, as well as set our key priorities for the next 12 months.

Stakeholders were asked to prioritise topics for discussion during 2023/24. From the information that stakeholders gave us, their priority areas for this year were:

- 1. Spending allowances well - health focus – 12th September 2023**
- 2. Staying warm and healthy at home – 21st November 2023**
- 3. Meeting demand – capacity and resilience – 6th February 2024**

From the annual workshop feedback in relation to the 3 topics above, NGN were able to prioritise the subsequent quarterly workshop hot topics.

NGN also continued to engage with strategic partners through our monthly Community Partner Roundtable sessions. We use these to talk about big issues that we need to tackle, and to keep track of VCMA projects with our strategic partners.

We also continued with the Citizen's Panel and Young Innovators Council. We have used these routes throughout the last year to talk about tricky issues, to get views directly from our customers and future bill payers.

This year we introduced the Partner Networking Call for our VCMA partners to network and share best practice with one another. Finally, we continued to develop our quarterly vulnerability newsletter. This is sent to all stakeholders, with current news/updates from the team and our partners.

[See Appendix 2](#) for a summary of all our 2023/4 Customers In Vulnerable Situations engagement.

Stakeholder Engagement Framework:

New Partner Networking Call	Monthly	This is an opportunity for NGN partners to regularly network, share project ideas and best practice. A different partner hosts the call each month and showcases their project to the rest of the group
Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG)	Bi-monthly	Includes deep dive sessions around vulnerability themes. Updates group on VCMA progress and opportunity to challenge and review against performance and delivery
Enhanced Strategic Partner Roundtable	Quarterly	Meeting with NGN's Strategic Partners to monitor and review progress of VCMA projects. Ofgem metrics reviewed, and lessons learnt, future opportunities are also discussed
Infrastructure North	Quarterly	Collaboration across utility partners in the north and Yorkshire – consists of Northern Powergrid, Yorkshire Water and Northumbrian Water
Utilities Together	Quarterly	Involves collaboration across all utilities in Cumbria / Northwest of England. Partners are NGN, Cadent, Electricity Northwest and United Utilities
CIVS Newsletter	Quarterly	Updates for stakeholders on VCMA projects and other funding streams. The newsletter also includes business updates and future engagement activities

4.5 Governance

NGN has a well-established independent VCMA Governance Group to review regional projects. The panel is made up of colleagues from Water Companies, Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) and Citizens Advice (CA), currently meeting every month. Project proposals are shared in advance of the meetings. The project review process involves addressing the following:

- **Does the project proposal meet VCMA eligibility criteria?**
- **Does the proposal align with NGN's current Customers in Vulnerable Situations Strategy?**
- **Cost per beneficiary?**
- **What is the SROI value?**

We provide feedback for organisations on projects which are rejected and in some cases a follow up action plan is drafted, to work with the partner to identify gaps in their proposal.

We acknowledge that the increased VCMA funding provides an opportunity for this panel to be broadened and review meetings have become more frequent. We will also use this forum to seek challenge and sanction on NGN's participation within GDN collaborative projects.

In addition to the VCMA Governance Group, we also have additional external and internal assurance on our overall VCMA Strategy, including:

- **ISO 22458** – Consumer Vulnerability Kitemark (evolved from BSI 18477, which NGN has held since 2015) - awarded in 2023
- **Business in the Community** – Responsible Business Tracker. Assessed against this standard since 2020. Engagement with community partners recognised as best practice
- **Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG) and Social Issues Subgroup.** VCMA strategy v delivery is a key topic area for challenge and review. This is discussed quarterly through deep dive sessions with the social issues subgroup, feeding into the main quarterly ISG strategic meeting
- **NGN Board.** VCMA strategy delivery is detailed in monthly management reports, and any changes in approach/strategic direction are discussed



5. Our 4 key themes

The 4 key themes:



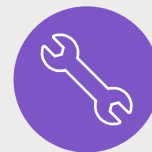
**Fuel poverty
and energy
affordability**



**Supporting
priority
customers**



**Carbon
monoxide
(CO) awareness**



**Services
beyond
the meter**

5.1 Fuel poverty and energy affordability



In the past year, the landscape in which we are supporting our vulnerable customers has changed dramatically. Following the pandemic, vulnerable households faced new hardships brought on by the energy and cost-of-living crises. Up and down the country, household budgets were being stretched to unsustainable levels, while many people were being pushed into fuel poverty for the first time.

Acutely aware of the increasing scale of need across the communities we serve, we engaged our stakeholders to help us shape our collaborative and individual programmes. This ensures we're able to provide meaningful impact at a time when our vulnerable customers need our help the most.

“People on the lowest incomes have already been the hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis. Record levels of inflation (which have been even higher for essential goods such as food) have made it even more difficult for many people in deep and very deep poverty to afford basic essentials for their families, and prices continue to rise. Without more support to help low-income families to cover these essential costs, we may see a growing number of people becoming destitute.”

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, UK Poverty 2024
<https://www.jrf.org.uk/pdf/15211>

Key stats 2023/24:

£2,043,080

Invested in 2023/24
– NGN only projects

£14.01

Average SROI benefit
to every £1 invested

Total GD2 forecasted
spend - for both NGN
and collaborative
projects

£10,856,080
– this is 44% of
our overall VCMA
allowance

£4,476,352

Forecasted spend year
4 – for both NGN and
collaborative projects

£2,555,715

Forecasted spend year
5 - for both NGN and
collaborative projects

Progress to date





This year we categorised our VCMA projects into 3 tiers, most of the projects within this theme fall into tier 1 projects.

These projects include in-depth case work and targeting support towards high-risk groups, where there may be complex barriers to accessing or engaging in support. By 2026, we aim to provide in depth support to around 35,758 customers through tier 1 projects.

We have achieved 56% to date against our five-year target.

5.1.1 NGN specific projects







Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Community Action Northumberland (CAN) Click here to read more	Foodbanks CAN are working with two food banks, providing slow cooker recipe cards along with the food needed to cook the recipe and the slow cooker. The recipe cards also contain information on energy support and carbon monoxide safety.	Northumberland	2021-2024	£1.31	£15,000.00	 In progress – being extended for the remainder of GD2
Community Action Northumberland (CAN) Click here to read more	Slow cooker roadshow This project will look into spending the 6 weeks of summer driving to rurally isolated settlements and delivering energy support, carbon monoxide information and expanding on the diversity and efficiency of slow cooker as well as nutritional benefits.	Northumberland	2021-2024	£3.34	£6,000.00	 In progress – being extended for the remainder of GD2
Groundwork Yorkshire Limited Click here to read more	Green Doctor - Fuel Poverty Training Course Tackling fuel poverty and the lack of knowledge around fuel poverty. Training will be given to frontline key workers to help deliver the key messages and support people in or at risk of falling into fuel poverty.	Network wide	2021-2024	£6.33	£23,100.00	 In progress – being extended for the remainder of GD2
Groundwork Yorkshire Limited Click here to read more	Green Doctor – Energy matters Reducing energy costs, increasing energy efficiency and improving health and wellbeing.	Network wide	2021-2024	£1.02	£305,537.50	 In progress – being extended for the remainder of GD2





NGN specific projects



Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Highfield CO-OP Click here to read more	Community Energy Café Creating a pop-up energy café, where members of the community can attend providing an opportunity to raise awareness of fuel poverty, provide energy advice to vulnerable people, who are unemployed and claiming benefits.	Bradford	2021-2024	£4.52	£6,000.00	 In progress – being extended for the remainder of GD2
Highfield CO-OP Click here to read more	Vulnerability Film Festivals - Using Film To Identify Vulnerable Communities Running a film festival to work closely with different cultures and vulnerable communities to provide advice around fuel and energy in the home.	Bradford	2021-2024	£3.83	£8,250.00	 In progress – being extended for the remainder of GD2
Yorkshire Energy Doctor CIC Click here to read more	Community Energy Ambassadors Supporting vulnerable residents by using trusted social networks within communities, to cascade information and to enable local action to apply for funding/grants and fuel switching.	North Yorkshire	2021-2023	£2.33	£45,600.00	 Completed
Yorkshire Energy Doctor CIC Click here to read more	Young People with Energy Reaching young people aged 16-25 who have responsibilities for paying gas and electricity bills in their home and educating them around energy use, ways to reduce their costs and stay safe.	North Yorkshire	2021-2024	£1.10	£30,000.00	 Completed





NGN specific projects



Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Community Action Northumberland (CAN) Click here to read more	Warm Hubs Toolkit Creating a Warm Hub Toolkit, which can be used by any organisation, to ensure that a consistent model, with appropriate rules and governance (to ensure compliance to the model), can be adopted for any locality.	Network wide	2022-2025	£4.88	£17,300.00	 In progress
Groundwork Yorkshire Limited Click here to read more	Young people with Energy Engaging with young people to improve their knowledge and understanding of energy use and energy bills.	Northeast – Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland	2022-2024	£2.60	£20,000.00	 In progress – being extended for 2023/24
Stockton and District Advice and Information Service Click here to read more	Energy Max Project Providing specialist welfare benefits, energy costs advice and support for people who have received energy advice from community-based agencies in the region.	Stockton	2022-2025	£3.48	£64,899.00	 In progress
Groundwork Yorkshire Limited and Aware Technologies Click here to read more	Awaretag Forming a partnership between Groundwork Yorkshire's Green Doctor service and Aware Technologies. This collaboration will bring together fuel poverty, income maximisation, and energy efficiency support.	Leeds	2022-2024	£260.93	£149,000.00	 Completed





NGN specific projects



Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Community Action Northumberland (CAN) Click here to read more	Warm Hub National Co-ordinator Role Warm Hubs Coordinator will assist in the opening of new Warm Hubs across the country and keeping the toolkit website up to date and running smoothly.	Network wide	2022-2024	£2.10	£60,769.23	 In progress
Yorkshire Energy Doctor CIC Click here to read more	Community Energy Ambassadors extension Supporting vulnerable residents by using trusted social networks within communities, to cascade information and to enable local action to apply for funding/grants and fuel switching.	North Yorkshire	2022-2024	£2.33	£22,800.00	 Completed
Content Soup Click here to read more	Energy Efficiency Campaign Increasing engagement with traditionally underserved individuals and communities within the NGN region and identify the best methods of reaching these groups, in particular fuel poor customers.	Network Wide	2023-2026	£8.72	£20,833.00	 In progress
Community Action Northumberland (CAN) Click here to read more	Holistic Sustainable Community Buildings Project Providing more energy efficient and sustainable community buildings/village halls by not only providing an energy audit but by supporting funding applications to install renewable technologies.	Northumberland	2023-2024	£16.13	£15,900.00	 In progress





NGN specific projects



Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Community Action Northumberland (CAN) Click here to read more	Energy Support for the Unemployed in Northumberland Providing high quality energy advice and support services to vulnerable people living on low incomes in rural Northumberland.	Northumberland	2023-2024	£3.63	£18,700.00	 In progress
Citizens Advice Bradford Click here to read more	Income Maximisation Project Addressing financial hardship in areas of high deprivation within the Bradford Metropolitan District by employing a specialist welfare and advice service, providing benefit entitlement checks, supporting benefit claims, debt advice and debt write off.	Bradford	2024 -2026	£1.77	£110,000.00	 In progress
Communitas Energy CIC Click here to read more	Fuel Poverty Advisory Service Providing a one-stop support service for vulnerable and low-income customers contacting NGN and/or other selected organisations, to be referred for specialist, impartial, 'keep it simple' home heating assessment and support to install a funded air source heat pump heating system.	Network Wide	2024 -2025	£1.78	£129,327.00	 In progress
Fuel Bank Foundation Click here to read more	Further expand Fuel Bank across Northern England Expanding with a further 75 partners over the colder winter months providing longer-term surety as we move into 2024. Targeted towards underserved rural and coastal areas across the NGN network.	Network Wide	2024 -2025	£3.87	£434,227.00	 In progress





NGN specific projects



Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Citizens Advice Northumberland Click here to read more	A holistic approach to energy, debt and welfare advice to address the cost-of-living crisis Intervening at the earliest point to support households to make short and long-term changes to their energy consumption behaviour, we hope to lessen the risk of crisis situations occurring and improve their overall quality of life, health and wellbeing.	Northumberland	2024-2026	£1.77	£225,239.00	 In progress
Noah's Ark Click here to read more	Breaking the Food Poverty Cycle: Building Emotional and Financial Resilience for Food Bank Users Supporting customers who are using local foodbanks and living in food poverty and reducing the number of people accessing food banks through a process of income maximisation, debt advice, financial capability training, temporary food support and mental health support.	West Yorkshire	2024 -2026	£7.20	£65,581.50	 In progress
Redcar Baptist Church Click here to read more	Redcar Baptist Church - Centre for Warmth Providing a safe, warm and welcoming environment 5 days a week for all members of the community to receive advice and support, attend interest groups and access affordable food through their Community Grocery shop. Moving people from vulnerability to greater independence.	Redcar	2024 -2026	£9.67	£99,214.00	 In progress
Everyday Enable Click here to read more	Income maximisation and awareness Raising awareness amongst both individuals in the community and professionals about the welfare benefit system, and what help and support is available to those who are vulnerable. The support available includes help to claim benefits.	North Yorkshire	2024 -2025	£6.34	£45,000.00	 In progress





NGN specific projects



Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Groundwork Yorkshire Limited Click here to read more	Groundwork's Energy Management Services (GEMS) extension Providing an energy management service to community/charitable organisations, who are based in buildings that have poor thermal energy efficiency and high running costs.	Northumberland	2024-2026	£32.55	£31,600.00	In progress
The Hope Foundation Limited Click here to read more	Hope Foundation - Centre for Warmth Providing support and services as part of our community helping to relieve poverty, raise aspirations and help people participate and have the support they need to improve their life chances.	South Tees	2024 -2026	£8.71	£194,599.00	In progress
South Tyneside Homes Click here to read more	Energy Support Officer Working with customers that need it most to help them save money and make smarter energy choices	South Tyneside	2023 -2025	£4.22	£52,000.00	In progress
Yorkshire Energy Doctor CIC Click here to read more	Energy Ambassador extension Supporting vulnerable residents by using trusted social networks within communities, to cascade information and to enable local action to apply for funding/grants and fuel switching.	Yorkshire	2024 -2026	£2.33	£22,800.00	In progress





NGN specific projects



Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Local Services 2 you Ltd Click here to read more	Fuelling Fair Futures - Centre for Warmth Working with people who need support at their own pace with an emphasis on supporting them to make positive changes to become more resilient.	Kirklees	2024-2026	£10.12	£79,771.00	 In progress
Northeast Windhill Community Association Click here to read more	Windhill - Centre for Warmth Focusing on supporting families in crisis (the term “families” referring to people of all ages and abilities from babies through to the elderly). Aiming to provide office-based friendly conversations, breaking down barriers, reducing anxieties, building relationships and trust for people to speak openly about their needs in a confidential safe way.	Bradford	2024 -2026	£12.55	£85,000.00	 In progress
Bilton Hall Community Trust Click here to read more	Building Stronger Community Links - Centre for Warmth Empowering individuals and organisations: Providing resources, training and support to help individuals and partner organisations achieve their goals and make a positive impact on the community.	South Tyneside	2024 -2026	£6.27	£81,328.00	 In progress
Khidmat Centres Click here to read more	Nourish and Thrive: Empowering Communities for Sustainable Living - Centre for Warmth Supporting individuals and families around a culture shift and introducing more ownership around energy efficiency.	Bradford	2024 -2026	£10.55	£96,609.12	 In progress



Collaborative projects



Lead GDN	Partner organisations	Project title and description	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend	Status
SGN Click here to read more	Cadent, MyBnk, Northern Gas Networks, SGN and Wales & West Utilities	MyBnk Through partnership we can leverage this expertise to deliver material to primary age young people as part of their financial education programme from MyBnk.	2022-2025	£15.53	43,568.01	In progress
Cadent Click here to read more	Cadent, National Energy Action, Northern Gas Networks, SGN and Wales & West Utilities	Collaborative Warm and Safe Homes (WASH) and Wise Group Project National Extension 2023 – 2025 Providing vital support to households who live in fuel poverty and are in vulnerable situations.	2023 -2025	£3.20	£72,843.21	In progress
Cadent Click here to read more	Cadent Gas Limited, Citizens Advice – Carlisle and Eden, Cumbria Action for Sustainability and Sia Partners, Groundwork West Midlands, National Energy Action, Northern Gas Networks, Pennysmart CIC, YES Energy Solutions	Warm Homes Network - Fuel-poverty partner ecosystem 2023/24 (Birmingham and Cumbria pilots) Increasing the understanding on the needs of fuel poor households and improving its awareness on the barriers facing organisations when working to support fuel poor households, and approaches to overcome them.	2024 -2026	£1.70	£231,676.20	In progress
NGN Click here to read more	Cadent, National Energy Action, Northern Gas Networks, SGN and Wales & West Utilities	Warm Homes, Healthy Futures Connecting with health professionals and local public health bodies to energy advice and other specialist services, to support people to live in warm and safe homes and improve health.	2024 -2026	£2.66	£1,418,787.70	In progress
SGN Click here to read more	Cadent, Fuel Bank Foundation, Northern Gas Networks, SGN and Wales & West Utilities	Fuel Bank Foundation – Fuel Crisis Support – extension Directly provided by the Fuel Bank Foundation existing and new organisations requiring support for financially vulnerable households will have a pathway to access immediate or next day emergency fuel funds and the provision of additional support services to address long term debt and poverty.	2024 -2026	£5.95	£115,565.42	In progress



5.1.2 Centres for Warmth

NGN visited one of Cadent's Centres for Warmth projects back in October 2023 and wanted to adopt their approach within our region.

NGN committed to opening the first six centres by the end of March 2024. In order to identify these centres, a mapping exercise was undertaken (looking at areas with the greatest need). We used the following data and information to shortlist a number of centres and took advice from Cadent who have over 150 centres up and running already.

NGN's Centre for Warmth concept was developed to enable community centres to do what they do best in the heart of their communities. It acts as a trusted source reaching vulnerable people who may not go elsewhere or know how to access services which may benefit them. All include the following:

- Energy advice
- CO awareness and advice
- Income maximisation through benefit entitlement checks and managing debt
- Free or reduced cost food/clothing
- Fuel top up vouchers
- Links to other NGN funded partner information/ assistance

In addition to aforementioned, customers will be offered training, information, advice and services completely bespoke to their individual communities. All this is provided in a warm safe space designed to:

- Improve physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Increase household income
- Help communities better manage their energy consumption.

Mapping research from Les Newby (June 2022) was reviewed to identify areas in most need.

Local authority areas ranked on concentration of age, health and wellbeing vulnerabilities (number 1 being worst affected)

1. Fuel poverty rank

Hull	1
Scarborough	2
Bradford	3
Leeds	4
Kirklees	5
Calderdale	6
Wakefield	7
Newcastle	8
Middlesbrough	9
Richmondshire	10

2. Long term health problem or disability

Sunderland	1
County Durham	2
South Tyneside	3
Hartlepool	4
Redcar & Cleveland	5
Gateshead	6
Wakefield	7
Middlesbrough	8
Scarborough	9
North Tyneside	10

3. % age 65+

Ryedale	1
Scarborough	2
Craven	3
Hambleton	4
Eden	5
East Riding	6
Northumberland	7
Allerdale	8
Richmondshire	9
Harrogate	10

Local authority areas ranked on concentration of unemployment, skills and low wages (number 1 being worst affected)

4. Median annual wages

Northumberland	1
South Tyneside	2
Scarborough	3
Redcar & Cleveland	4
Kirklees	5
East Riding	6
Hartlepool	7
Richmondshire	8
Allerdale	9
Selby	10

5. Benefits claimant count

Bradford	1
Hull	2
Middlesbrough	3
South Tyneside	4
Hartlepool	5
Sunderland	6
Newcastle	7
Leeds	8
Gateshead	9
Kirklees	10

6. % with no qualifications

Bradford	1
Hull	2
Newcastle	3
Sunderland	4
Gateshead	5
South Tyneside	6
Kirklees	7
Calderdale	8
Redcar & Cleveland	9
Middlesbrough	10

We overlaid each of the 6 categories to see which areas were identified more than once. We omitted Cumbria due to the Collaborative Warm Homes Network project with Cadent, and Northumberland due to Warm Hubs that are run by Community Action Northumberland (CAN). Warm Hubs were initially developed in collaboration with CAN and NGN back in 2016, and are now sustainable and trademarked.

In order to narrow down the first 6 Centre for Warmth target areas we overlapped our research data with the Vulnerability Visualisation Tool. Redcar was initially identified as one of the areas with the highest levels of deprivation within NGN's network. This is where we focused our efforts on opening the first Centre for Warmth.

The research also provided us with 5 further areas to concentrate on:

BRADFORD

KIRKLEES

SOUTH TYNESIDE

MIDDLESBROUGH

SCARBOROUGH

Online searches were carried out for active community centres/hubs within these five locations. NGN Customer Care Officers (CCOs) and Area Managers were also asked to identify areas of need within these locations based on mains replacement work in the area.

Our new Vulnerability Partnerships and Relationship Officer visited Bradford, Kirklees, South Tyneside and Middlesbrough throughout January 2024. Due to this engagement, a further 5 centres were identified as potential Center for Warmth projects. All five have a different theme as they are providing what their communities need:

Area	Centre	Bespoke Theme
Bradford	Windhill	Family crisis centre providing all aspects of assistance such as food, advice, uniforms, other clothing and footwear, furniture and hoping to move families towards sustainable and independent living through education, income maximisation and debt management.
Bradford	Khidmat Centre	Nourish and Thrive: Empowering Communities for Sustainable Living. BAME centre focussing on social inclusion for different gender groups and specialist dementia support which is a taboo subject for many cultures as well as support for young females leaving prison (most of whom have suffered some form of domestic abuse prior to being sentenced).
Kirklees	Chestnut Centre	Fuelling Fair Futures. Very busy centre in one of the most deprived communities in our network. In order for users to get the most from the centre a co-ordinator role is require who can connect the various services together for each family/user. This ensures a holistic approach to assisting people break out of crisis and into independence and sustainable living.
South Tyneside	Bilton Hall	Open 7 days a week due to demand, with over 300 users a week and have a wide range of services on site. Cater to all ages and abilities. Huge emphasis on mental health issues due to increased demand for the service. Have community fridge and fairshare, anything they have left over they send to local hostels etc. The centre has been gifted a 3-acre piece of land which they are planning to grow food on, with the help of the community to provide a resource for local people.
Middlesbrough	Hope Foundation	Provide café and support to community, specific angle of digital inclusion. Provide free recycled and cleaned IT hardware, phones, data and training on how to use it. Have many training opportunities and job matches, craft and hobby groups and try to help the community to help themselves.





Redcar Centre for Warmth:

Redcar Baptist Church was selected through the Redcar Hydrogen Community project. The church is a pivotal area of the community and attracts a diverse range of people. There is a clear link between the issue of fuel and food poverty within this area.

By opening the Centre for Warmth 5 days a week it will enable clients to access affordable food, energy savings as well as debt advice and a range of services that the church has to offer.

The Redcar Hydrogen Community Project was a proposal by NGN to switch approximately 2,000 homes and businesses in Redcar with locally produced hydrogen for heating and cooking.

The project was initially planned to begin in 2025 and was aimed to explore the use of clean-burning hydrogen as an alternative to natural gas. Despite aiming to contribute to the UK's clean energy goals, the trial was cancelled in December 2023 due to the main hydrogen supply not being available.



[Click here to watch a video case study](#)

However, we saw first-hand just how important the Redcar community is to its residents, we continued to support the local community and bring lasting benefits to the area with our Community Partnering Fund and our first Centre for Warmth.

Having spent time listening and hearing about the sheer lack of support in the local area, Redcar Baptist Church has used their Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach to meet the needs they have encountered, with help and support from NGN.

This project addresses the needs of the local community, helps raise awareness of the dangers of Carbon Monoxide (CO) and enables the centre to refer clients onto the Priority Services Register (PSR).



5.1.3 Noah's Ark - Breaking the Food Poverty Cycle. Building Emotional and Financial Resilience for Food Bank Users (project commenced February 2024)



Why we're working together

There is a nationwide agenda to tackle the problems associated with fuel and food poverty. The cost-of-living crisis is fuelling a huge surge in the number of people turning to charities to feed themselves and, in many cases, their children. Around 85% of Britons have noticed an increase in the price of groceries, and over 3,000 people in Calderdale are reliant on monthly food support.

The problems being addressed by this project include:

- Food Poverty
- Financial hardship, debt and low financial resilience
- Poor financial capability (budgeting)
- Mental health and low emotional resilience
- Unemployment
- Carbon Monoxide (CO) awareness

This project supports customers who are using local foodbanks and living in fuel poverty. Noah's Ark aims to reduce the number of people accessing food banks through a process of income maximisation, debt advice, financial capability training, temporary food support and mental health support.



CASE STUDY - Noah's Ark

Noah's Ark met Lisa* at a local foodbank in Brighouse and when they initially talked to her, she denied being in any kind of financial difficulty. At the time Lisa told them she had bi-polar and was also a full-time carer for her husband. She said she was not great at managing her money and could really do with a little help with budgeting. Lisa came on the first Budget Like A Boss!!!! (BLAB!!!!) course they did in Brighouse. Lisa broke down during the course and had to excuse herself. During the break she told them how she'd lied to them, how she was heavily in debt, and her husband didn't know that she was simply living on credit. Noah's Ark reassured Lisa and gave her a referral form to complete, so they could review her finances. She told them that she felt a little better because she was finally doing something to address the problems that she had.



As part of the advice process, Noah's Ark score clients' emotional wellbeing using a clinical outcome measuring tool called CORE-10. Lisa's score was in a deficit of 4.8 (very poor). She had 24 different debts totalling £26,524. Her budget was in a deficit of £296 per month, with most of her income going towards loan repayments. Part of the advice process is maximisation of income and minimisation of expenditure. The first thing they told Lisa was that she was insolvent, she couldn't pay her debts and had no assets she could sell to clear them. Lisa was advised to apply for a Debt Relief Order (DRO), to clear her debts and regain control of her finances.

The support they gave to Lisa included:

- Arranging a DRO for her to clear her debts
- Temporary food support
- Attending the BLAB!!!! and Boss the Cost-of-Living Crisis!!!! workshops
- Providing a Carbon Monoxide (CO) detector for her home
- Referral to the Green Doctor service for help with energy efficiency and support to reduce her energy consumption

On her evaluation Lisa wrote:

"I want to thank you so much. It has helped lift a weight off my mind. I feel almost like I can set new goals and be better at managing my money, and not having a shame shadow following me around. I have also started leaving my house to go out to visit others. I did not realise just how much my debt affected my anxiety and was the source of my paranoia. I have been through a deep learning curve and seen how much money has an effect on mental health and how debt causes you to withdraw and start feeling hopeless."

Project outcomes:

Number of CO awareness surveys completed	21
Direct beneficiaries	45
SROI	£7.20

5.1.4 Yorkshire Energy Doctor – Energy Ambassadors



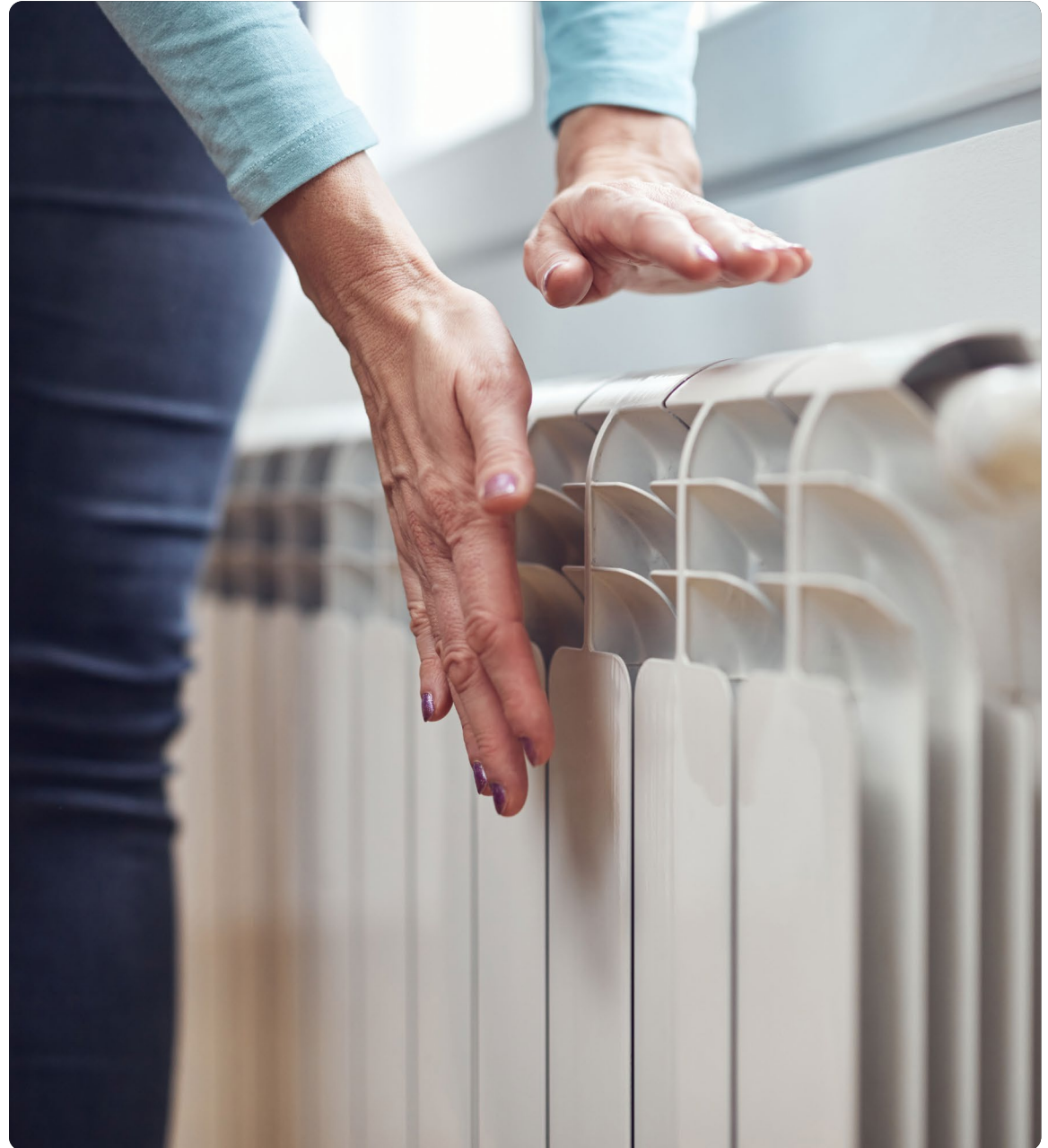
Why we're working together

One of the biggest barriers to engagement advice is distrust and apprehension around any support available that relates to energy.

This may have arisen through experiences of companies cold calling about switching energy supplier or offering 'free' boilers etc. As a result, many people are reluctant to make simple changes, which could result in them enduring the impacts of a cold home or high energy costs. This means that vulnerable households are potentially missing out on ways to:

- a) reduce their worries around energy bills; and
- b) be warmer, safer and more comfortable at home

This project aims to support vulnerable residents by using trusted social networks within communities, to cascade information. This will enable local action to apply for funding/grants and fuel switching, as well as providing important safety information around the dangers of CO.



CASE STUDY - Yorkshire Energy Doctor

This case study shows how the project has enabled us to support Energy Ambassador partner organisations with more complicated cases.

Yorkshire Energy Doctor received the following referral information as a result of one of their Energy Ambassador courses:



"I am hoping you can help with a complicated case. I have tried to unravel it so many times but just keep going in circles and in need of some very experienced eyes.

We live with my parents. A big, stone house that takes a lot of heating. To make matters worse the metering is very complex. We have two meters – both operating dual rates (economy 7) but it has never been clear what meter feeds which part of the system.

They are pensioners and we have very low income – so we are desperate to try and make sense of what we have, ensure we are getting all the payments, and the right tariff.

Help!"

Yorkshire Energy Doctor response:

This is one of two recent cases we had referred to us, both of which involved complex ('restricted') electricity meters.

These are older style set-ups where residents have off-peak electricity tariffs. However, in comparison to Economy 7 meters where there is just a day and nighttime reading, the complex metering set-ups have 4 readings, either all on one meter or across 2 meters. Ofgem reviewed these tariffs 3 years ago and, as a result, a lot of customers have been left worse off.

In the case above, we reviewed the bills and found that the tariff had been amended last year but for the wrong meters.

We managed to resolve this issue and ensured that the meter that supplies general household appliances was on a single rate tariff and the meter that was linked to the storage heaters was on Economy 7 rates.

The energy supplier backdated the tariffs and it generated a saving to the household of £3,447.

Project outcomes for year 3:

Number of people signed up to the PSR	267
Number of CO awareness surveys completed	266
Direct beneficiaries	4541
Customer savings	£56,152
SROI	£2.33

THEME 2

5.2 Supporting priority customers



Some of our customers need more help than others to stay safe and warm at home. By registering eligible households on the Priority Services Register (PSR), we are able to make sure the most vulnerable members of our community are known to their utility companies and proactively offered support.

Some communities find it more challenging to access help without trusted support and are more impacted by living in a cold and unsafe home.

NGN initially identified five broad categories of priority needs for customers who would benefit most from energy industry initiatives to stay safe and warm.

These were:

1. Financial hardship
2. Physical challenges, inclusive of communication issues, physical space
3. Mental wellbeing
4. Rural vulnerability
5. Temporary vulnerability

As a result of research carried out, commissioned by NGN, the 5 main categories have since evolved into 10 categories.

These are:

1. Physical challenges, inclusive of communication issues, physical space
2. Mental wellbeing
3. Financial hardship
4. Temporary vulnerability
5. Socio demographic
6. Household composition
7. Rural vulnerability
8. Accessibility including language
9. Medical dependence on energy
10. Cultural

Key stats 2023/24:

£1,384,264

Invested in 2023/24
– NGN only projects

£7.59

Average SROI benefit
to every £1 invested

£2,701,599

Forecasted spend year
4 – for both NGN and
collaborative projects

£2,423,924

Forecasted spend
year 5 - for both NGN
and collaborative
projects

Total GD2
forecasted spend
- for both NGN
and collaborative
projects

£7,443,508

– this is 30% of
our overall VCMA
allowance

For NGN to have the greatest impact on these 10 priority areas, we need to develop projects, with partners, that align with the research. Our partners have extensive first-hand expertise in supporting these specific communities through grassroots organisations.

By working with our partners, we ensure priority vulnerability groups within our network can access support in the way that best works for them. Our partners deliver tailored and practical help to minimise energy costs, as well as support to access benefits, debt advice and go above and beyond their day-to-day role to help vulnerable customers.

In establishing collaborative projects with national third-sector organisations and other GDNs, we are able to widen our support to more customers, beyond

our geographical footprint.





As a result, this year NGN have led on the Carents Room project which aims to reach 1 million potential Carents in the UK. There are currently an estimated 5 million Carents nationally. Carents are the largest group of unpaid carers, and this number is growing rapidly in the face of our ageing population. The Carents Room is an interactive, online website for Carents to access anywhere in the UK and receive instant online support. During the remainder of GD2, NGN and Cadent have committed to extending this project and Phase 2 will begin at the start of year 4.



[Click here to watch a video of the Carents Room](#)

5.2.1 NGN specific projects






Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
DIAL Leeds Click here to read more	Energy Confident Supporting people with physical and sensory impairments, learning disabilities and / or long-term conditions including mental health issues to confidently work through their issues and concerns on a one-to-one basis.	Leeds	2021-2024	£3.24	£22,211.20	 In progress – being extended for the remainder of GD2
Highfield CO-OP Click here to read more	Visual Impairment Energy Project Working closely with vulnerable communities to raise awareness of fuel poverty and CO poisoning, specifically with visually impaired customers.	Bradford & Airedale	2021-2024	£4.38	£4,750.00	 In progress – being extended for the remainder of GD2
Highfield CO-OP Click here to read more	Community STEM Events Increasing interest in STEM related careers among vulnerable groups by portraying science, technology, engineering, and maths in an interesting light, so that it will give rise to an impulse to explore.	Bradford	2021-2024	£10.36	£7,250.00	 In progress – being extended for the remainder of GD2
Highfield CO-OP Click here to read more	Mental Health Film and Conversations Project Showing films at various venues within the Bradford district, to help those with mental health challenges, to understand the dangers of CO and to support them in accessing information around energy saving tips and ideas. The films will help to start conversations around fuel poverty and CO and to find solutions on how to deal with fuel poverty for people with mental health needs.	Bradford	2021-2024	£4.26	£7,250.00	 In progress –being extended for the remainder of GD2





NGN specific projects







Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Yorkshire Energy Doctor CIC Click here to read more	Heating for Health Reducing the number of individuals with a long-term health condition who are living in fuel poverty in North Yorkshire. This will be achieved by providing fuel poverty training to health professionals, who work with some of the most vulnerable residents in local communities.	North Yorkshire	2021-2024	£1.53	£60,000.00	 In progress – being extended for the remainder of GD2
Northern Gas Networks Click here to read more	NGN VCMA Project Co-ordinator Responsible for coordinating the delivery of a range of VCMA projects and will facilitate a single point of contact for partners and internal colleagues alike.	Network wide	2021-2026	£3.62	£104,004.80	 In progress
Northern Gas Networks Click here to read more	NGN VCMA Vulnerability Trainer Raising awareness and provide training to increase skills and knowledge associated with customers living in vulnerable circumstances.	Network wide	2021-2026	£4.86	£106,588.90	 In progress
Middlesbrough Environment City Click here to read more	Warm Homes Healthy Children Working alongside Yorkshire Energy Doctor to embed knowledge and information around energy advice, the Priority Services Register (PSR), CO, and other sources of support, into the consciousness of all family support services and their communications.	Middlesbrough and Redcar	2022-2024	£7.51	£23,000.00	 In progress





NGN specific projects



Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Groundwork Yorkshire Limited Click here to read more	Noah's Ark Forming a partnership between Groundwork Yorkshire's Green Doctor service and Noah's Ark. This collaboration will bring together fuel poverty support, income maximisation, mental health support and training.	West Yorkshire	2022-2024	£2.95	£152,000.00	 In progress
Age UK North Tyneside Click here to read more	Information and Advice Role Offering information and advice to over 6,000 customers across the region each year through Age UK North Tyneside's information and advice team who help to maximise income and reduce outgoings, as well as ensuring our customers are living in a safe, healthy environment.	North Tyneside	2022-2024	£15.20	£42,000.00	 In progress
Hope 4 U Ltd Click here to read more	NHS Support Service Working with Airedale NHS Foundation Trust and Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust maternity units, supporting parents with managing budgets, benefit checks and income maximisation, housing issues, signing up to the PSR, saving on utility costs and explaining further grant options.	Airedale & Bradford	2022-2024	£13.34	£82,000.00	 In progress - being extended for the remainder of GD2
Northern Gas Networks Click here to read more	Back-office staff costs Responsible for overseeing the development of projects and ensuring the projects are compliant with procurement standards etc.	Network wide	2021-2026	n/a	£2,643.14	 In progress





NGN specific projects



Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Northern Cancer Voices Click here to read more	Engagement, involvement and awareness Improving the experience of cancer patients by increasing patient participation in their communities and strengthening the network of patient and carer groups in the region whilst promoting awareness of NGN services.	Tees	2024-2024	£7.78	£60,000.00	 Completed
South Tees NHS Foundation Trust Click here to read more	Maternity Digital Inclusion and Equity Providing women with a smart device free of charge, which meets the appropriate standards to access the maternity app and appropriate digital information.	South Tees	2024-2026	£9.49	£277,271.59	 In progress
South Tees NHS Foundation Trust Click here to read more	Enhanced Maternity Care Providing enhanced care to the most vulnerable women and families in our community, with a focus on perinatal mental health and parent-infant bonding.	South Tees	2024-2025	£5.81	£206,822.00	 In progress
Middlesbrough Environment City & NHS Click here to read more	NHS - Tees Valley Heating on Prescription Pilot Utilising funding to support those living in disadvantaged groups with the respiratory condition COPD and support them to warm their home in winter, plus support with making positive changes to their heating infrastructure to prevent exacerbation of their condition.	South Tees	2024-2025	£1.68	£558,765.00	 In progress





NGN specific projects



Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Skills 4 Work Gateshead Click here to read more	A trusted source of information and practical support Offering a unique approach to their warm spaces as they are run by the young people and community volunteers who are supported by their trained staff.	Gateshead	2024-2025	£25.37	£23,038.00	 In progress
Northern Gas Networks Click here to read more	VCMA Project Coordinator 2023 Responsible for coordinating the delivery of a range of VCMA projects and will facilitate a single point of contact for partners and internal colleagues alike.	Network Wide	2023-2026	TBC	£15,407.81	 In progress
Northern Gas Networks Click here to read more	VCMA Vulnerability Partnerships and Relationships Officer Responsible for developing relationships with partners and generating new VCMA projects. The role will require an understanding of the development of partnership working with Local Authorities, housing providers, energy sector partners, community sector and charities.	Network Wide	2023-2026	TBC	£16,593.27	 In progress
Northern Gas Networks Click here to read more	Centre for Warmth Project Coordinator Responsible for coordinating the delivery of a range of Centre for Warmth projects and will facilitate a single point of contact for partners and internal colleagues alike.	Network Wide	2024-2026	TBC	£4,093.70	 In progress



Collaborative projects






Lead GDN	Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend	Status
NGN Click here to read more	Stratra Nostra, EIC, UK Power Networks and Cadent	The Carents Room An interactive website for Carents (carers for parents) to access anywhere in the UK and receive instant onlin support.	2022-2023	£8.74	£99,812.56	 Completed
SGN Click here to read more	Marie Curie, SGN, Cadent, Northern Gas Networks, Wales & West Utilities	Marie Curie Identifying and support terminally ill people and their families that are suffering from fuel poverty with dedicated support and advice.	2022 -2025	£12.16	£205,801.07	 In progress
SGN Click here to read more	Maggie Keswick Jencks Cancer Caring Centres Trust ("Maggie's"), SGN, Cadent, Northern Gas Networks, Wales & West Utilities	The Maggie's Centres Safe and Warm Project Identifying customer needs and providing joined up support services for those who benefit from energy safeguarding services. Working together with Maggie's to engage with people living with cancer. Maggie's and engage with people living with cancer.	2022 -2025	£3.70	£21,204	 In progress
SGN Click here to read more	Age UK, SGN, Cadent, Northern Gas Networks, Wales & West Utilities	Age UK Supporting people in vulnerable situations by providing energy safeguarding services to older people who are in or at risk of fuel poverty.	2023 -2025	£8.38	£80,651.74	 In progress



Collaborative projects



Lead GDN	Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend	Status
WWU Click here to read more	Kidney Care UK, Wales & West Utilities, Northern Gas Networks, SGN and Cadent	Safe and Warm: Providing a Critical Lifeline to Dialysis Patients Across the UK Enabling patients to access all the benefits and welfare support they are entitled to. Patients will also benefit from access to specialist money and energy advice, framed within the context of the specific challenges faced by kidney patients.	2024-2026	£9.63	£386,076.88	 In progress
Cadent Click here to read more	Parsley Box, Latcham, Wales & West Utilities, Northern Gas Networks, SGN and Cadent	Parsley Box Providing information relating to energy efficiency and the risks associated with self-disconnections. Customers will be signposted to partners	2023 -2024	£20.90	£2,397.93	 Completed
NGN Click here to read more	Stratra Nostra, EIC, UK Power Networks and Cadent	Carents Room - project extension An interactive website for Carents (carers for parents) to access anywhere in the UK and receive instant online support.	2023 -2024	£8.74	£86,800.00	 In progress



5.2.2 Age UK North Tyneside - Information and Advice Role



Why we're working together

North Tyneside's overall population has grown by 4.1% and Age UK North Tyneside have seen an increase of 21.3% in their 65 and older age group.

They have seen a significant increase in the need for pensionable age people requiring help and support due to the current cost of living crisis, as well as helping older people who are socially isolated and lonely.

The project is available to all North Tyneside residents over the age of 50 who require help and support with income and the cost of living. This helps to address social isolation and loneliness through referrals into the wellbeing centres and social activity events.

The project aims to engage 250 customers (minimum) per month, where they take the opportunity to have guided conversations to establish their needs and offer help and support. This will help customers over the poverty line and live healthy lives, in a safe and warm home. Age UK North Tyneside aim to re-claim over £1m in unclaimed benefits for their customers.



CASE STUDY - Age UK North Tyneside

70 year old Rose* contacted Age UK North Tyneside in August 2023 after her husband passed away. She was his carer for several years, as well as looking after her adult daughter who had lifelong physical and cognitive disabilities. The death of her husband had a devastating impact on her mental health and her financial situation. She no longer qualified for Guarantee Pension Credit, the pension service had informed her there had been an overpayment of her benefit and asked for it to be paid back. This had a knock-on effect on her Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. She found she also owed money back to the local authority. It also meant Rose would lose her eligibility for the Cost-of-Living payments worth £900 for 2023-24. Rose was becoming extremely anxious about how she was going to be able to afford to pay her debts which were now at £1,000, as well as paying rent and keeping a safe, warm home for her disabled daughter. Even though it was summertime, she was still needing to put her heating on for her daughter's health. She had already started to borrow money from her other children, to make ends meet after paying for her husband's funeral.



An Information and Advice Coordinator attended a home visit, she went through a guided conversation with Rose, consisting of a healthy home chat and providing energy-saving information. The advisor registered Rose and her daughter on the Priority Services Register. A full benefit check was completed, which revealed that Rose was in receipt of her full entitlement to benefits. However, Rose's disabled daughter was in receipt of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) disability benefit, and no-one was claiming Carer's Allowance. A further benefit calculation was made, which showed that if Rose applied for Carer's Allowance, she would qualify for the underlying entitlement. The extra Carer Premium generated, would then lead to a new entitlement for Guarantee Pension Credit. The advisor submitted an online claim for Carer's Allowance, once this was awarded, she then applied for Guarantee Pension Credit.

Rose was advised to contact the pension service and her local authority, to explain her situation and inform them her new benefit claims had been submitted.

Her benefit repayments were put on hold to allow time for her to get her finances in order. This took the pressure off and allowed some breathing time, meaning Rose felt more in control and less anxious. Once Guarantee Pension Credit was in place again, the total benefit overpayment was reduced to just under £100. This is because the advisor had requested the application be backdated 3 months. With her benefit being reinstated, Rose also qualified for the Cost-of-Living payments again. The fire service also visited the home and replaced the old smoke alarms. Rose now feels she will be able to keep her home safe and warm for herself and her vulnerable daughter. "The relief of having all the worry and stress lifted is priceless!"

Project outcomes:

Number of people signed up to the PSR	79
Number of CO awareness surveys completed	519
Direct beneficiaries	940
Indirect beneficiaries	4647
Customer savings	£1,900,359
SROI	£15.91

5.2.3 Groundwork – Noah's Ark



**GREEN
DOCTOR**

Why we're working together

The overall aim of this project is to engage with customers within the Calderdale region, to help tackle the issues of fuel poverty and mental health. Subjects such as understanding of energy use, energy bills, income maximisation and CO safety are addressed through this project.



CASE STUDY - Groundwork – Noah’s Ark

MB* was referred to Noah’s Ark by the Jobcentre for help with a food parcel. He’d recently lost his job and was finding it impossible to manage his finances. He had a history of poor mental health which had been massively exacerbated due to his money and debt problems. Groundwork spoke with him on the phone at first (to establish what support they could give him) and asked him to complete a referral form. Part of the referral process is to evaluate the client’s mental health, by the use of a client outcome measuring tool called CORE-10. This creates a clinical score with regards to someone’s emotional wellbeing. MB’s score was in the “very high” range, indicating excessive levels of stress, anxiety and depressive illness.



Groundwork also asks clients to tell them how their debt and money problems are making them feel. MB said:

“Very depressed, continuous worrying and feeling of no way out of it. I lack sleep a lot because of it. That’s affected me at work.”

He told us his money and debt issues were a factor of him losing his job.

When Groundwork carried out checks, they found that MB was in over £16,500 of debt (including £8,700 priority debt) and was insolvent: he had no means of paying. His debts included the following priority bills:

- £700 – rent arrears
- £2,900 – gas and electric arrears
- £4,291 – Council Tax arrears
- £831 – water arrears

The solution to his money and debt problems was very straightforward, MB needed:

- Application for a Debt Relief Order (DRO)
- To attend a budgeting course
- Short-term food support
- Help to reduce his energy costs

A Green Doctor provided support via a home visit, where they identified that there were no extractor fans and a broken window. His housing provider was contacted regarding these issues. Groundwork were able to install draught-proofing, provide a blanket, thermal mug and issued 2 x £49 fuel vouchers, as his prepayment meter was on emergency credit mode. They also advised about moisture management, dampness and were able to provide him with a clothes dryer to prevent excess moisture due to drying clothes directly on radiators.

The ongoing work with Noah’s Ark has enabled the Green Doctor to focus on giving tailored energy advice, talk about CO risks, the PSR and how to reduce energy consumption, whilst being able to keep warm. Noah’s Ark arranged a DRO for MB. This immediately brought all recovery action to an end. In 12 months, his debts will be gone forever. This brought massive relief to MB and immediately improved his mood and general mental health.

Overall, MB said that he felt much happier, that he could look forward to the future knowing he was debt free. His confidence levels were much improved, and he hoped to be back into employment in the near future.

Project outcomes:

Number of direct beneficiaries to date	127
Number of people signed up to the Priority Services Register	2
Number of new jobs created	2
Number of people trained	16

Number of people in the following categories, who have directly benefitted from this project:

People with physical disabilities	12
People with mental health conditions	25
People facing poverty or financial hardship	127
People in education	52
SROI	£2.95

5.2.4 Yorkshire Energy Doctor CIC – Heating for Health



Why we're working together

The project aims to reduce the number of individuals with a long-term health condition, who are living in fuel poverty in North Yorkshire. This is achieved by providing fuel poverty training to health professionals, who work with some of the most vulnerable residents in local communities. It also encourages referrals into Warm and Well North Yorkshire – a single point of contact for health professionals. Awareness sessions are also delivered in health-related community settings, to further identify and advise vulnerable individuals e.g., via flu jab clinics, mental health support groups, patient participation groups. A package of one-to-one advice and support to those households in a vulnerable situation is provided.



CASE STUDY - Yorkshire Energy Doctor CIC

Rebecca* contacted YED on a word-of-mouth recommendation, from another client we had also supported through this project. She was very distressed with huge ongoing problems she was having with her current and previous energy suppliers since 2021 and was upset that they weren't looking after her as a vulnerable client. One of her debts had been passed on to a debt recovery agency, but she wasn't sure of the amount, or which supplier it was from. All this stress was at a time when Rebecca was recovering from an emergency operation for bowel cancer and was also awaiting a date for further surgery. She was on a low income and received Pension Credit. She required a hospital bed and had carers going in daily. The property had electric night storage heaters, but Rebecca had switched to alternative ceramic heaters, due to worries about the cost. She had cut back on everything she could. Her smart meter was not communicating, and the supplier kept asking for meter readings, which she physically could not manage to do. She said she felt 'ashamed' that her IT skills had declined after the pandemic, and was upset that she couldn't sort things out and make someone understand the situation.



This was a very complex case to navigate with issues involving two different energy suppliers. The support started in May and was only resolved in October. For both companies, Rebecca gave Yorkshire Energy Doctor authorisation to speak on her behalf, so they could try to sort out the problems.

Yorkshire Energy Doctor response:

Energy supplier 1

We established that there was an outstanding bill of £343.78 to pay from February 2022, which had been passed onto debt collectors. There had been numerous historical billing problems and the supplier had offered a goodwill payment of £60 for these. We did not feel this was sufficient and, after some backwards and forwards communications, we managed to negotiate the balance down to £150, which Rebecca accepted and paid off.

*Name changed to protect the individual's identity.
Image posed by model.

Energy supplier 2

When we first contacted the second energy supplier, they advised that there was a debit balance of £2,273 on Rebecca's account. This seemed extremely high for the time period involved. We went through all the bills and discovered a number of issues, noticing random, large increase in meter readings and the Economy 7 tariff/night usage was not registering correctly. We raised a complaint with the supplier however, after it was not resolved to our satisfaction, we went to the Energy Ombudsman on Rebecca's behalf. They upheld our complaint, which resulted in the energy supplier correcting the opening meter reading and tariff. This reduced the outstanding balance from £2,273 to £638, with an additional goodwill gesture of £120.

We then liaised with the supplier to:

- Get a monthly direct debit set-up
- Switch to paper bills – the account was previously set to 'online only' which was not accessible to the client
- Updated the PSR details
- Requested quarterly meter readings to keep the bills up to date, whilst they look to resolve the problem with the smart meter communication

Finally, we signposted Rebecca to Macmillan to see if they could help with a grant towards the arrears.

Project outcomes:

Number of people signed up to the PSR	139
Number of CO awareness surveys completed	86
Direct beneficiaries	531
Indirect beneficiaries	44
Customer savings	£63,714.00
SROI	£1.53

THEME 3

5.3 Carbon Monoxide (CO) awareness



We have a long-established GDN and stakeholder Carbon Monoxide (CO) working group. For many years this group has been focused on gathering data and insights that enables us to design effective awareness campaigns. More recently, we've targeted our campaigns at key groups within communities that are known to have the lowest CO awareness levels.

There is a clear link between fuel poverty and CO poisoning. Our stakeholders told us some of the main impacts were associated with an increase in fuel and food poverty. The Cost-of-Living and energy crises, have exacerbated this.

The maintenance and replacement of essential gas appliances may be less of a priority for these groups, therefore significantly increasing the risk of CO poisoning. Stakeholders have said there needs to be more focus on CO awareness, so customers understand the risks posed by not having appliances repaired or serviced. Many of our customers that are living in vulnerable situations, are unable to afford to purchase CO alarms and are often struggling to pay for basic essentials. NGN have committed to providing free CO alarms to vulnerable customers across our network, throughout GD2.

NGN also target awareness campaigns on the basis of needs identified within our CO and PSR research. We also work with other GDNs to share best practice to optimise the impact of these campaigns. This year we have introduced a new Social Media Manager role within NGN which has allowed us to identify internal and external campaigns and maximise our CO awareness reach. There has previously been a relatively small amount of funding

available to invest in paid-for advertising, however the uplifted allowance has allowed us to really increase our regional campaigns reach significantly. We have noted that NGN specific campaigns have had a greater reach than the collaborative summer and winter campaigns this year. The reasons for this are:

- NGN targets all routes, including traditional media such as news online
- NGN uses specific regional data and safety driven messaging, targeted at capturing media interest, and linked to high-risk groups
- NGN uses specific language to appropriately target specific audiences
- Collaborative campaigns typically consist of general advice regarding signs, symptoms and CO safety awareness. Also includes social media, public advertising, and radio advertising

CO stats 2023/24:

£262,854

Invested in 2023/24
– NGN only projects

£8.52

Average SROI benefit
to every £1 invested

Total GD2
forecasted spend
– for both NGN
and collaborative
projects

£4,164,812

– this is 17% of
our overall VCMA
allowance

£1,330,518

Forecasted spend year
4 – for both NGN and
collaborative projects

£1,364,394

Forecasted spend
year 5 – for both NGN
and collaborative
projects







Progress to date

- Customers reached through Carbon Monoxide (CO) awareness initiatives – 3% agreed proportion (customers likely to take actions as a result of the increased awareness) – In year 3 our total reach was **10,665,683** and our overall GD2 reach is currently – **11,649,149**
- Number of CO awareness visits/surveys with customers – Target for GD2 is 50,000 – we are currently exceeding our target; during 2023/24 we carried out **18,410** visits/surveys and our total to date is – **54,371**
- Average score before CO awareness visit – **6.71**
- Average score after CO awareness visit – **8.59**
- Average 'before' score has this year increased by 2.6%. This has been driven by more frequent CO media campaigns



5.3.1 NGN specific projects



Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Highfield Food Cooperative Click here to read more	Community Energy and Carbon Monoxide Awareness Project Providing information on energy saving advice, government grants, schemes on energy saving, and CO awareness.	Bradford	2021-2024	£33.67	£3,750.00	 In progress – being extended for 2023/24
Hull and East Yorkshire Children’s University Click here to read more	Reading Van – bringing reading to the community Increasing children’s chances of a successful life and career and providing Carbon Monoxide awareness sessions with schools.	Hull and East Riding	2021-2024	£1.20	£44,366.98	 Completed
Lake District Foundation Click here to read more	Carbon Monoxide (CO) and Environmental Impact Awareness in Cumbria Campaign This project aims to educate the importance of gas safety and the dangers associated with Carbon Monoxide via the CO awareness survey.	Cumbria	2021-2024	£2.19	£57,180.00	 In progress –being extended for 2023/24
Harvey & Hugo Ltd Click here to read more	Engaging with Vulnerable Customers PR project Increasing CO awareness and engagement targeted at hotspot areas as analysed by customer research.	Network wide	2021-2024	£1.64	£59,593.80	 In progress –being extended for 2023/24





NGN specific projects













Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Northern Gas Networks and Safelincs Click here to read more	VCMA CO Alarms Distributing CO alarms to customers in vulnerable situations across the NGN network.	Network wide	2022-2026	£12.00	£19,780.00	 In progress
Yorkshire Coast Sight Support Click here to read more	Breathing Safe, Keeping Warm This project will raise awareness of the dangers of Carbon Monoxide and will provide living safe and well tips.	Yorkshire	2022-2025	£7.71	£19,800.00	 In progress
Cleveland Fire Authority Click here to read more	Stay Safe and Warm Identifying households without CO alarms, rectify the issue as a priority, then refer landlords to local authority teams where appropriate.	Teesside	2022-2025	£6.56	£18,088.50	 In progress





NGN specific projects






Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Content Soup	<p>Comms CO campaigns</p> <p>Increasing awareness and understanding about what a customer should do if they smell gas or suspect Carbon Monoxide.</p> <p> Click here to read more</p>	Network wide	2023-2026	£8.72	£50,000.00	 In progress
Ponderosa		Network wide	2023-2023	£1.64	£950.00	 Completed
Propack Direct Mail Ltd		Network wide	2023-2023	£8.72	£18,060.00	 Completed
Propack Direct Mail Ltd		Network wide	2023-2023	£8.72	£16,266.00	 Completed
Content Soup Ltd		Network wide	2023-2023	£8.72	£9,407.00	 Completed
Language Line Solutions		Network wide	2023-2023	£8.72	£520.00	 Completed
Content Soup CO Cost of living campaign additional costs		Network wide	2023-2024	£8.72	£650.00	 Completed
Mailbox Direct Ltd – content soup campaign		Network wide	2023-2024	£8.72	£16,266.00	 In progress
Northern Gas Networks		Network wide	2023-2024	£8.72	£32,474.43	 In progress



Collaborative projects







Lead GDN	Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend	Status
SGN	Cadent Gas, NGN, SGN, The Scout Association, and WWU Click here to read more	The Scouts Carbon Monoxide Awareness Programme Educating, engaging and empowering up to 360,000 young people, increasing their understanding of the dangers and ways in which they can prevent harm for themselves and others from CO.	2021-2024	£1.81	£34,699.20	 In progress
SGN and WWU	Cadent, Campus Group, Heavenly, Northern Gas Networks, SGN and Wales & West Utilities Click here to read more	Game Over CO Awareness Project Reaching young people, aged 16-25 with CO awareness messaging, through the proven route of the Game Over creative campaign, run by Heavenly Media.	2022 -2023	£8.45	£34,769.93	 Completed
SGN	Cadent , Northern Gas Networks, Scope, SGN, and Wales & West Utilities Click here to read more	SCOPE Disabled Community CO Research Working closely with Scope to co-design a mixed method three-stage disabled community CO research programme. This aims to utilise the Scope research panel to ensure we gain robust data and insight that can be used to inform future projects.	2023 -2023	£1.82	£3,536.30	 Completed



Collaborative projects






Lead GDN	Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend	Status
NGN	Cadent, Egnida Innovation Ltd, NGN, WWU and SGN Click here to read more	Raising CO Awareness using Augmented Reality Increasing levels of Carbon Monoxide awareness within the university student population, by creating a targeted campaign. The campaign entertaining enough to compete for young people's attention and also incentivises them to engage with CO awareness training.	2023-2024	£3.51	£20,000.00	 In progress
SGN	Northern Gas Networks, The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, SGN and Wales & West Utilities Click here to read more	Citizens Advice National - Energy Safeguarding and CO Safety Partnerships 3yr extension Delivering in partnership with Citizens Advice, this project aims to support vulnerable households with a single point of contact for independent and bespoke support, to keep a safe and warm home for less.	2023 -2026	£5.54	£639,753.05	 In progress
SGN	Cadent, Gas Safe Charity, Northern Gas Networks, SGN and Wales & West Utilities Click here to read more	Think CO App development Providing an enduring, convenient, easy-to-access, up-to-date, and simple to use resource, that will provide CO safety information and advice.	2023 -2026	£0.51	£4,949.09	 In progress
Cadent	Cadent, Eleven Miles Limited, Northern Gas Networks, SGN and Wales & West Utilities Click here to read more	Collaborative GDN Winter and Summer Awareness Campaigns Raising awareness by using mass reaching channels to launch with a memorable device; priming audiences to look out for Carbon Monoxide concerns.	2023 -2026	£120.42	£115,565.00	 In progress



Collaborative projects



Lead GDN	Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend	Status
SGN	Bonanza Creative, NGN, SGN and Wales & West Utilities Click here to read more	Bonanza Creative - Carbon Monoxide Education - Year 3-5 Educating, engaging and empowering over 14,000 young people. Increasing their understanding of the dangers and ways in which they can prevent harm from CO, for themselves and others.	2023-2026	£2.35	£155,876.03	 In progress
WWU	Cadent, Heavenly, Northern Gas Networks, SGN and Wales & West Utilities Click here to read more	Game Over phase 2 – Heavenly Reaching young people, aged 16-25 with CO awareness messaging, through the proven route of the Game Over creative campaign, run by Heavenly.	2023 -2023	£12.84	£11,557.00	 Completed
Cadent	Cadent, Improving Performance in Practice (IPIP) Limited, Northern Gas Networks, SGN and Wales & West Utilities Click here to read more	Preventing Harm from Environmental Exposure to Carbon Monoxide (PHECO) - E-Learning for Health This project will develop a generic learning module to help a broad range of health and social care staff better understand the harm caused by exposure to Carbon Monoxide.	2024 -2026	£18.63	£22,062.26	 In progress



5.3.2 Content Soup – CO and PSR Awareness Campaigns



Why we're working together

Although NGN is in constant communication with customers via a range of different channels, we know that for some of our audience, including some of our vulnerable customer groups, we need to make additional targeted efforts to reach them with awareness messages.

NGN knows that more can be done to educate, proactively engage and support customers in vulnerable situations and help them to better access our services. Content Soup, an integrated communications agency specialising in PR and strategic campaigns, was appointed to deliver our NGN specific campaign and address this challenge.

The objectives of this initiative were:

- To increase awareness and understanding about what a customer should do if they smell gas or suspect Carbon Monoxide
- To increase PSR awareness and referrals
- To create a better understanding of where customers can access energy saving advice to reduce energy usage, save money and deliver health benefits, with a focus on fuel poor households
- To increase engagement with underserved individuals and communities within the NGN region and identify the best methods of reaching these groups, in particular fuel poor customers



CASE STUDY - Content Soup

NGN research data from January 2024, revealed a rise in suspected or confirmed CO cases across all of our region since 2021. Content Soup designed a specific Carbon Monoxide (CO) awareness campaign that was delivered in early 2024. This campaign used localised data that customers could relate to on a regional basis, to engage at a local level. The campaign highlighted a potential link between the rise in CO cases and the cost-of-living crisis, urging customers to prioritise home safety, despite financial challenges, and outlined practical advice to protect people from the dangers of CO.

In total, organic and social media ads, including an influencer campaign, achieved a reach of 936,785 and generated 2,748 social media engagements, including website click throughs.

Campaign approach

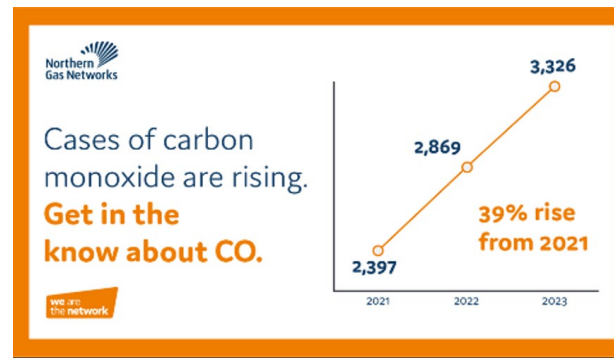
The campaign included a variety of engagement activities including widespread radio adverts across the NGN region, pre-recorded radio interviews, a press release and media outreach (including quotes and live radio interviews with an NGN spokesperson), an influencer campaign and a social media campaign.

This multi-channel, targeted approach focussed on regionality and enabled us to achieve significant reach due to the bespoke messaging that resonated with customers on a local level.

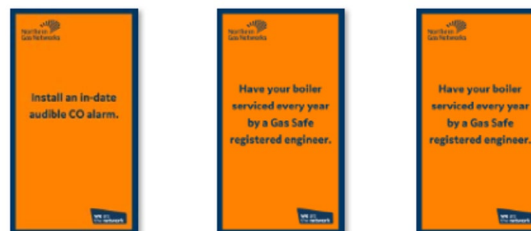
Different from the approach used in our collaborative national campaign, which encompasses broader awareness messaging, we were thrilled to be able to achieve higher engagement levels through our bespoke campaign, tailoring messages to relate to customers in our own region.

With the help of NGN's Design Team, a suite of content was created that brought the campaign to life visually on social media, including:

Infographics to show the rise in CO cases



Infographics to show the rise in CO cases



Project outcomes:

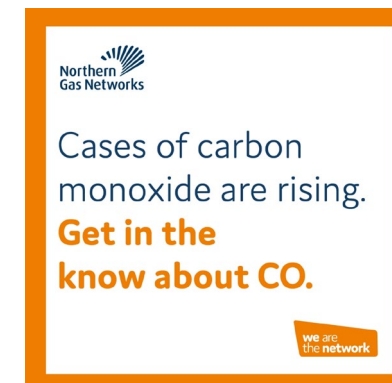
Total reach - at 3%

4,719,282

Number of CO alarms provided to vulnerable households:

958

Infographics to show the rise in CO cases



5.4 Services beyond the meter



As a gas network, we're committed to keeping our customers safe and warm. We recognise that for some customers, it's not possible to maintain a safe and warm home without extra help from us. With direct support, we're able to help vulnerable households as we go about our operational activities.

If our engineers identify a safety issue with appliances or internal pipework beyond the meter, while they are attending a gas emergency or upgrading our networks, we may have to condemn the appliance or isolate the gas supply.

Vulnerable households may not be able to afford the unexpected expense of a Gas Safe registered engineer to visit their home, or replace their appliance. This means they can go for long periods without adequate heating, hot water or cooking facilities.

While we ensure all households are left with temporary cooking and heating appliances, these can be extremely costly for households to run and are not solving the long-term need to stay safe and warm at home.

If a vulnerable customer cannot afford the repair or replacement of pipework or an essential gas appliance, we arrange for a Gas Safe registered engineer to visit and carry out the required repair, replacement or service.

Sometimes this will be one of our own upskilled engineers and sometimes we use a partner organisation to carry out this work. Gas Safe registered engineers can also carry out enhanced CMDDA1 checks to identify the source of a Carbon Monoxide leak. The faulty appliance can then be isolated, and the gas supply restored to the rest of the household.

This year NGN employed two Services beyond the meter Technical Leads. These dedicated operational roles support the delivery of Services beyond the meter (SBtM) VCMA project within NGN's geographical footprint.

The aim of these roles is to support the delivery of NGN's Customers in Vulnerable Situations Strategy, VCMA Strategy and associated commitments for GD2.

The roles will embed new processes relating to our GD2 commitments of never leaving a customer vulnerable, following an NGN visit. They primarily deliver on projects where NGN upskill and utilise our direct labour employees, to undertake work on appliances and downstream installations.

Key stats 2023/24:

£90,754

Invested in 2023/24
– NGN only projects

£1.57

Average SROI benefit
to every £1 invested

£1,065,273

Forecasted spend year
4 – for both NGN and
collaborative projects

£596,699

Forecasted spend
year 5 - for both NGN
and collaborative
projects

Total GD2
forecasted spend
- for both NGN
and collaborative
projects

£2,320,574

– this is 9% of
our overall VCMA
allowance

Progress to date

- **45 jobs complete**
- **21 engineers trained**
- **Savings to customers**
- **£36,000 based on
engineer's time, materials
and the job itself**

5.4.1 NGN specific projects






Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend – up until 31st March 2024	Status
Northern Gas Networks Click here to read more	Customer Care Advisor – MECC This role is vital to support the continuity of Making Every Contact Count (MECC) when NGN personally interact with a customer. This service is required when a First Call Operative Engineer from NGN, disconnects an appliance or isolates a gas supply to a customer's home, when they have been identified as living in vulnerable circumstances.	Network wide	2022-2026	£1.57	£57,422.11	 In progress
Northern Gas Networks Click here to read more	Services beyond the meter Technical Leads 2 dedicated roles are required to support the delivery of services beyond the meter (SBtM). The aim of these roles will be to support NGN strategies and to embed new processes relating to our GD2 commitments.	Network wide	2024-2026	TBC	£34,663.40	 In progress
Northern Gas Networks Click here to read more	Vulnerability Economic Evaluation Analyst A dedicated role is required to implement best-practice economic evaluation methodologies, models, and metrics to support investment decision-making. This role will also enable NGN to quantify the value impact of NGN's Customers in Vulnerable Situations Strategy, VCMA Strategy and associated commitments for GD2, by carrying out Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) and SROI assessments for projects funded. The role will also oversee the SROI of new VCMA projects being introduced over the coming years, for the remainder of GD2.	Network wide	2023-2026	TBC	£21,052.85	 In progress



Collaborative projects



Lead GDN	Lead partner organisation	Project title and description	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total NGN committed spend	Status
Cadent	NSPCC, Cadent Gas Limited, Northern Gas Networks, SGN and Wales and West Utilities Click here to read more	NSPCC Collaborative GDN Project This project aims to raise awareness of the NSPCC helpline and share techniques on how to spot potential child mistreatment through delivering "It's Your Call" training to GDN staff and contractors.	2023-2025	£5.01	£74,888.63	 In progress
Cadent	Groundwork, Northern Gas Networks and Cadent Gas Limited Click here to read more	Cadent and NGN collaborative One Number programme 2023-2025 The Cadent and NGN Collaborative One Number Programme 2023 - 2025 project builds on a company specific pilot delivered on Cadent's networks between April 2021 and December 2022. This collaborative project uses the same model and learning from the Cadent pilot to deliver support to customers in vulnerable situations living in the Eastern, North London, Northwest, West Midlands, and NGN networks. The project commenced in January 2023 and will run for a period of two years until January 2025.	2023 -2025	£2.75	£1,015,265	 In progress
Cadent	Cadent and Northern Gas Networks Click here to read more	Services beyond the meter Offering customers in vulnerable situations a way to keep themselves safe, warm, and independent.	2023 -2026	£0.71	£121,919.28	 In progress



5.4.2 Cadent and NGN - One Number

Northern Gas Networks

**Services beyond
the meter**

Why we're working together

The Cadent and NGN Collaborative One Number project offers GDN engineers the ability to refer vulnerable households to a single source of support. Households will be identified through GDN emergency and planned work visits and are able to be referred for a range of advice and gas appliance services.

Vulnerable households can be disproportionately affected by gas emergencies due to an increased likelihood of experiencing financial hardship. Customers living in financial hardship may not have the levels of disposable income necessary to regularly service their gas appliances, leading to an increased risk of breakdown or failure.

The project allows Cadent and NGN to maximise every interaction with vulnerable households that they visit through planned and emergency works.



CASE STUDY - One Number

Mr and Mrs S* - The residents are owner occupiers and had called 0800 111 999 to report a smell of gas. NGN attended immediately and found the leak to be on pipework within the back boiler system. The engineer had to isolate the supply due to the poor condition of the system. The residents were concerned about being left without heating and hot water and were extremely worried about how they would afford the repairs. They also had a disabled son living at home.

The NGN engineer explained the support that we were able to provide through the One Number project, and with permissions, made the referral through to Groundwork.

Following referral, the customer was assessed to be eligible for assistance, and the work was completed. Mr and Mrs S had a new boiler system installed, and also received energy efficiency support to make sure they understood how to keep energy bills as low as possible.



Mr and Mrs S said:

“I have felt supported throughout the process. I was a little unsure that all this work could be done for free but was reassured by Groundwork that this project is the best solution for me, with my low income and disabled child. The contractor was clean, friendly and understood the need for minimal disruption and mess with my child’s condition.”

“We now have a reliable and efficient way to heat our home and the hot water never runs out.”

The lack of maintenance on an open flued back boiler can lead to CO related incidents. The Customer now has a brand new ‘A RATED’ combination boiler with a manufacturer’s 10-year warranty, meaning they are now able to have a safe, reliable, and efficient means of heating their home and hot water. Compliant to current industry standards including building regulations, and the latest energy efficiency advice from our delivery partners, this isn’t just about today, it’s about helping make changes for the long-term.



6. Look ahead to 2024/25

6.1 Overview of approach





Support for customers experiencing financial hardship has been a key focus through VCMA funding throughout GD2. Feedback from partners and stakeholders suggests that this problem is continuing to impact households and may still be worsening. This means that we will likely see increasing numbers of customers in vulnerable situations requiring access to good, quality advice, in order to address their needs. At our recent NGN CIVS workshop, one partner told us, "Funding needs to be increased, potentially issues we are seeing now are not at the peak yet. Fuel poverty issues are complex, and it will take many years to stabilise."

Ofgem's own figures have recently evidenced that energy debt has reached historic levels at £3 billion, with a growing risk of 'bad debt' - Ofgem December 2023 <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/energy-regulator-sets-out-proposals-help-ensure-customers-risk-getting-debt-are-better-supported>

Citizens Advice express concerns that "repayment plans for electricity debts by prepay customers already last an average of 5 years" - Citizens Advice, January 2024 <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/policy/publications/shock-proof-breaking-the-cycle-of-winter-energy-crises/>

NGN do not currently expect bills to return to pre-2020 levels before the end of the decade, at the earliest. - Cornwall Insight, May 2023 <https://www.cornwall-insight.com/press/cornwall-insight-release-final-forecast-for-july-price-cap/>

The remaining VCMA allowance available at the end of 2023/24 is £16.6 million. To reflect what we are hearing, we are allocating VCMA spend across the four categories as detailed below. The majority of spend is being prioritised on projects that support fuel poverty and energy affordability.

Project theme	NGN VCMA spend allocation	
 Fuel poverty and energy affordability	43%	Scaling up of successful projects to ensure wider impact of services (mixture of crisis and longer-term support) - majority tier 1 and 2
 Supporting priority customers	31%	Targeted effort to reach underserved communities and vulnerability groups (higher cost to serve but high value/impact for the individual) - majority tier 1 and 2
 Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness	16%	Scaling up CO awareness and distribution of CO alarms – tier 3
 Services beyond the meter	11%	Scaling up existing programmes, including dedicated roles – tier 1

We will also be focussing on supporting projects that target our most underserved and in-need NGN communities – this is reflected in the proportion of spend split across our three-tier model, and specifically the increased investments we are making in NGN only projects:

Collaborative	Year 1	Yea 2	Yea 3	Year 4 (forecast)	Year 5 (forecast)
Total project spend	£388k	£2.1m	£3.2m	£2.7m	£2.6m
Tier 1	65%	66%	69%	51%	53%
Tier 2	9%	23%	17%	20%	17%
Tier 3	26%	11%	14%	29%	30%

NGN Only	Year 1	Yea 2	Yea 3	Year 4 (forecast)	Year 5 (forecast)
Total project spend	£438k	£511k	£785k	£5.5m	£4.6m
Tier 1	5%	0%	22%	50%	47%
Tier 2	84%	35%	64%	49%	52%
Tier 3	11%	65%	14%	1%	1%

Of the available £16.6 million for years 4 and 5, £14.4 has already been allocated to specific projects. In order to have maximum impact with the remaining £2.2 million, we have agreed with partners to take the following action:

- Work with partners on known gaps in themes and geography to co-create projects that address specific needs - these are faith groups, ethnic minorities, farming and geographically remote communities, and of younger people. In addition to this we will target underserved geographical areas including Hull, Bradford, Scarborough and east coast areas, Sunderland and rural/coastal areas in Cumbria and County Durham
- Use targeted tender events to partner with the suppliers to deliver the services we specifically require (via gaps identified)
- Year 4-5 spend will have a greater focus on NGN only projects, targeting underserved areas and groups as detailed above

We are forecasting to spend the full allowance, with a split of 67% NGN and 33% collaborative

Looking ahead to GD3 (April 26 to March 31) we are already taking steps to understand what we should be doing, if our strategic direction should change. If this is the case we will consider how we should evolve our relationship with our partner organisations. Some steps we are already taking are:

- To work closely with our refreshed Strategic Partner framework to understand and evolve our strategy for GD3
- To focus on the long-term sustainability of existing projects and how we can support partners to help them achieve this. We feel that it is important to support project sustainability, to avoid the impact of a 'cliff edge' in funding availability at the end of GD2. We've been considering how we can further support this for our existing partners. For some projects we are funding support to enable business development roles and upskilling of staff, to ensure impact and sustainability beyond the end of VCMA funding.

Programme of 24/25 engagement to support VCMA delivery

Date	Workshop topic
18th July 2024 - 9:30am to 3:30pm	GDN VCMA Showcase event - online
TBC (Autumn 2024)	NGN Annual Open Day
10th September 2024, 10am to 12pm	CIVS Hot Topic Workshop 1 - online
12th September 2024 - 9:30am to 1pm	NGN Annual Stakeholder Conference - Thorpe Park, Leeds, LS15 8TU (in person)
12th November 2024, 10am to 12pm	CIVS Hot Topic Workshop 2 – online
18th February 2025, 10am to 12pm	CIVS Hot Topic Workshop 3 - online
April 2025 - TBC	Annual Strategic Review and Planning Workshop

7. Appendices

Appendix 1

Key Performance Outputs 23/24



[Click here to read appendix 1](#)

Appendix 2

Stakeholder Engagement
Overview 23/24



[Click here to read appendix 2](#)

Appendix 3

VCMA Detailed Project Table



[Click here to read appendix 3](#)

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