



VCMA

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance

GDN Collaborative Annual Report 2023/24





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How to use our interactive report

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Welcome

We are pleased to introduce our third annual collaborative report which marks the first three years of our regulatory period known as RIIO-GD2, running from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2024. This report highlights how we have worked together as a group of Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs), delivering projects in partnership with trusted organisations through the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA).

The GDNs are also publishing company specific annual reports which complement and should be read alongside this report. These reports will highlight localised projects across each GDN's geographical footprint.

In addition, we will be hosting our annual **VCMA Showcase** event virtually on 18 July 2024, bringing our partnerships to life through lived experiences. We will hear directly from key stakeholders, our partners, our customer facing colleagues, and those who have been supported.

Throughout this report, we will demonstrate how we work together to identify customer need, create partnerships, and measure the outcomes and impacts of our projects.

Despite seeing a reduction in energy prices this year, the cost-of-living crisis continues to disproportionately impact the most vulnerable in our communities, with many people still facing financial hardship, struggling to pay their energy bills and being forced to make almost impossible decisions around eating or heating their homes safely. Fuel poverty or being at risk of fuel poverty contributes to cold related ill health, which drives inequalities in health outcomes and increases the use of the NHS. With that in mind, this year's report has a strong focus on the correlation between health and the effects of living in a cold damp home, which is a key theme that has been highlighted by our stakeholders.

Through case studies and partnership working, this report will demonstrate how we've adapted our approach and built new relationships to support those most in need. As well as enhancing existing partnerships through sharing of best practice, evaluation and learning, our collective aim is to keep people safe and warm in their own homes.

We are extremely proud to work together, and through feedback and case studies highlighting the real impact of the support provided, we are seeing life-changing outcomes for our customers and communities.



Who we are and what we do

Cadent, Northern Gas Networks (NGN), SGN and Wales & West Utilities (WWU) make up the four Gas Distribution Networks who look after the gas infrastructure across England, Scotland and Wales.

We operate the **National Gas Emergency service (0800 111 999)** and respond to gas emergencies. We connect new homes and businesses to our networks and maintain and repair the infrastructure, replacing old metal pipes to new plastic ones for the communities we serve, for them to receive a safe and reliable gas supply for generations to come.



223,000 km
of gas pipes



22 million
households & businesses
supplied with gas



50 million
people served

We operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, to keep the gas flowing and help keep our communities safe and warm in their own homes. Whilst our responsibility ends at the gas meter, we do all we can to go above and beyond for our customers.

Whilst each GDN provides localised support to meet regional needs and demand, we all work together to support customers in vulnerable situations and the most disadvantaged communities across our networks. This includes proactively identifying and registering those who require additional support onto the Priority Services Registers (PSR). We work with the wider energy and water sectors to maximise the support available to customers in vulnerable situations in the event of a gas, electricity, or water interruption, or emergency situation.

As socially responsible businesses, we also provide additional services to customers and communities, either directly or through a network of partnerships and trusted intermediaries. Our businesses provide more detail of our commitments to supporting those who are most in need and how we utilise feedback from key stakeholders, to ensure our services remain accessible and fit for purpose.

What we've achieved

April 2021 - March 2024 (RIIO-GD2 to date)

We are proud that all gas networks have achieved and maintained either the British Standard 18477 Kitemark or the new ISO 22458 for inclusive service and consumer vulnerability. This external verification demonstrates our commitment to going above and beyond for our vulnerable customers, sharing best practice and learning to shape business processes. Additionally, we make sure our priority customers feel supported when they are impacted by our works. Their experiences are measured through Customer Satisfaction surveys (CSAT), where they receive an emergency, planned work or connections intervention.



This enables us to strive for continuous improvement.

PSR CSAT Scores 2023/24



Key Achievements RIIO-GD2 to March 2024

£49.8m
invested supporting
organisations through
the VCMA

Funded
9,370
FPNES
connections

Signed
163,518
customers up
to the PSR

Helped
3.1 million
homes with fuel poverty
and energy efficiency
support services

Reached
7.8 million
households with
carbon monoxide (CO)
messaging

Issued
263,642
CO alarms



Overview of VCMA Funding

Original Allowance

Through stakeholder engagement for our RIIO-GD2 business plans, it was highlighted that, due to the nature of our works, gas networks are able to gain insights into the challenges being experienced by our customers and communities, on a day-to-day basis.

The VCMA is a 'Use It or Lose It' (UIOLI) funding mechanism, distributed to partnership organisations via the gas networks. This provides partners the opportunity to support those who are most in need, through innovative and eligible projects. VCMA projects are focused on supporting customers in vulnerable situations and increasing the awareness of carbon monoxide (CO), that go above and beyond our business as usual activities.

Eligible programmes must:

- Provide support to customers in vulnerable situations and relate to energy safeguarding, or;
- Provide awareness of the dangers of CO, or;
- Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO.

Reflecting on the first three years of delivery, the collaboration amongst GDNs has been hugely successful and has positively impacted the most disadvantaged communities across a UK-wide footprint. The collaborative element has encouraged sharing of best practice and the continuous reviewing of lessons learnt, to ensure that our portfolio of VCMA projects continues to deliver meaningful and impactful outcomes for our customers. It has also highlighted regional differences across the network areas that cannot be covered by one model.

As a result, and as demonstrated through this annual report and the showcase event, we have adapted our approach accordingly. This has been achieved by working in collaboration with organisations delivering tailored services, with a common goal to achieving affordable warmth and keeping people safe in their homes. Each GDN is allocated a proportion of the allowance based on the numbers of gas consumers served across their network. (Cadent 49%, NGN 12%, SGN 27% and WWU 12%).



Additional Allowance from July 2023

The Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES) is delivered by the GDNs in partnership with other organisations, to help tackle fuel poverty by supporting off-gas, fuel poor households to connect to the gas network. The scheme commenced in 2009 and allowed GDNs to assist with the funding of a new gas connection to an eligible, fuel poor household, if they had secured funding from a third party, for a gas central heating system.

Collectively, we have funded 9,370 connections under the FPNES in RIIO-GD2 to date. However, due to policy changes and reduced funding opportunities, we have seen a significant decline in the number of FPNES connections.

In July 2023, as a result of restricted funding for first-time gas central heating, it became apparent that networks would not be able to achieve their original Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES) targets for GD2, set in April 2021. Following consultation with Ofgem and other key stakeholders, it was agreed that the unspent allowances from this mechanism would be repurposed into the VCMA.

The repurposed allowance has increased the original VCMA funding from £60m to £171m. The additional £111m of funding has been shared amongst GDNs based on the number of gas consumers each network serves. As per the Ofgem VCMA Governance Document and in alignment with the original funding, a minimum of 25% has been ringfenced for collaborative projects with the other GDNs. The additional allowance must be invested primarily in delivering projects which focus on initiatives supporting those in or at risk of fuel poverty.

The additional allowance has been welcomed, enabling the enhancement and expansion of support for our most vulnerable communities. However, developing new relationships as well as building on existing partnerships comes with the responsibility to deliver impactful outcomes over a shorter timescale. Given that the additional funding was almost double the original allowance, we still have to ensure it is utilised by the end of March 2026. We also need to demonstrate that it's been spent well and continues to deliver positive financial and societal benefits to individuals and their families.

The timescales to identify, develop and mobilise larger projects should not be underestimated. We are progressing well in allocating the additional £111m¹ of funding with four new collaborative projects in progress focusing on tackling fuel poverty, totalling around £18m. We look forward to seeing the impact these projects will have. We have included a forward look section within our [case studies on page 20](#).

¹ Allowances in 18/19 prices



Governance in Practice

Ofgem's VCMA Governance Document states that at least 25% of the allowance must be spent on collaborative projects incorporating a national reach, whilst the remaining allowance must be spent on localised projects in each of the individual GDN areas. This equates to £42.9m² of the overall fund and a collaborative project must include at least two GDNs.

GDNs also come together to share best practice and learning through a number of industry working groups which are attended and supported by key stakeholders:

GDN Consumer Vulnerability Working Group:

This group focuses on creating sustainable community projects and partnerships, which will address mutually beneficial outcomes to treat customers fairly, by collaboratively sponsoring both national and regional initiatives. Priorities include how we effectively raise awareness of the PSR, through joint engagement that supports priority customer needs relevant to gas distribution networks. We have recently combined the Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency Working Group (FPEEG) with this one, in light of the FPNES repurposing decision.

VCMA Steering Group:

This meeting takes place monthly. It brings together the VCMA leads, as well as key, external stakeholders. The role of this group is to provide sign-off for collaborative projects, align strategies, monitor outcomes, review budgets and liaise with Ofgem on all things associated with VCMA.

GDN CO Collaboration Working Group:

This group brings together carbon monoxide leads from across all four GDNs, as well as key external stakeholders such as Policy Connect, FireAngel and Gas Safe Register. The aim is to discuss key activities associated with carbon monoxide, including collaborative and individual GDN CO projects, policy updates and changes to any industry standards.

Customer Service & Vulnerability Working Group:

This group brings together electricity Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) and GDNs for the purpose of progressing change, cross-industry improvements, sharing of best practice and discussing collective issues. This group takes the primary lead on industry-wide, customer related topics including, but not limited to, customer service, vulnerability and associated services, consumer engagement and supporting industry crisis-response, where appropriate.

² Allowances in 18/19 prices

Our Collaborative Strategy

Our collaborative strategy is to engage with stakeholders, utilising feedback and undertaking research, to determine what is the greatest need of support required by our customers. This aligns with how we identify customer need resulting in a broad project portfolio, covering a range of demographics from a geographical perspective. We all share this approach when embarking on collaborative projects with trusted organisations and our strategy is defined by four key pillars:



Services Beyond the Meter

Direct operational support provided to customers in vulnerable situations as we go about our work



Carbon Monoxide (CO) Awareness

Programmes to increase awareness of CO, how to stay safe and the impact of CO on different vulnerabilities and age groups



Fuel Poverty & Energy Affordability

Programmes designed to help customers achieve affordable warmth



Supporting Priority Customer Groups

Programmes targeted at PSR-eligible customers and disadvantaged communities

Key drivers which have helped shape our strategy include stakeholder feedback, customer need, commitments made through our business plans and Ofgem governance. We will continue to develop our strategy in line with these key areas.

All collaborative VCMA project proposals are reviewed through our industry working groups and aligned to one of our key strategic pillars and the PSR needs codes. This helps us to identify and react to gaps in support for certain vulnerable groups, with particular focus on those who are under-represented or underserved.

Each network has its own strategy for delivering the VCMA based on localised demand and need, which complements our collaborative approach and thinking.

Identifying, Designing and Delivering

We identify, design and deliver programmes through a five-stage process:





Identifying Customer Need

It is important that we understand who and where our vulnerable customers are, so that we can provide tailored support to those most in need. We understand that there is no standard definition for vulnerability, as often, people are faced with multiple and complex needs, which can be permanent or temporary.

Our stakeholders have been instrumental in securing the VCMA funding, and our Independent Stakeholder Groups have also played a key role in helping shape and inform our strategic approach. Through extensive stakeholder engagement, i.e. workshops and events, stakeholders have demonstrated a strong appetite for us to keep doing more for our customers in vulnerable situations who need additional support, particularly when it comes to tackling fuel poverty.

We rely on stakeholder insight to shape our processes and ways of working, ensuring we can help support the delivery of tailored services, to meet the needs of our vulnerable customers. Working with key stakeholders and having a better understanding of what our customers need, helps us adapt and identify gaps in the communities we are supporting, through our portfolio of VCMA projects.

Reflecting on the last three years, we have learned that customer need has been impacted by factors such as the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis. It is important that we remain agile to meet the needs of our customers at any given time. Taking into account the link between health and the consequences of living in a cold, damp home, we have adapted our approach in Year 3 of delivery. This has resulted in working in partnership with organisations such as National Energy Action (NEA), Carers Trust, Kidney Care UK and Mental Health UK (MHUK). The aim is to alleviate fuel poverty and mitigate the associated risks, particularly for those with specific health conditions who are in need of immediate support.

Our annual showcase event on 18 July 2024 will provide stakeholders with an insight into the wide and varying range of our collaborative VCMA projects. Attendees will have the opportunity to provide feedback on how they think we have performed and if our approach to supporting those most in need is appropriate.

We remain committed to reviewing and embracing feedback from key stakeholders, to help shape our direction of travel and to validate our VCMA project portfolio and target groups.

Stakeholder event summary 2023/24

Event	When	Topic	You said...	We did...
APPCOG	Quarterly	Carbon monoxide awareness and initiatives	Coordinate GDN activities with those of other APPCOG stakeholders	Committed to annual winter and summer campaigns Support to annual CO awareness week Work with health professional to develop IE Hub CO app
NEA conferences and events	Annual programme	Fuel poverty	Links between health and fuel poverty are key	Created significant new project with NEA and health boards across the UK running for two years from 2024
SCOPE Supporter Utilities Members (SUM)	Quarterly	Disability challenges with utilities	Disabled customers use more energy to keep warm and power equipment costing £900 a year more than the average household	Increased our support to the Scope Disability Energy Service through to the end of RIIO-GD2 Supported winter campaign to encourage more households to visit the Scope website for advice on benefits and keeping warm
VCMA GDN Steering group (Citizens Advice and NEA)	6 weeks	GDN strategy, projects and measurements	Cost-of-living crisis impacts on homes with energy and household debt meaning fuel poverty will be a challenge for years to come	Supported the GDN case for the transfer of allowances from the FPNES scheme to the VCMA in 2023 Used feedback to support Ofgem Sector Specific methodology consultation for RIIO-GD3 and development of the GDN business plans justifying keeping a focus on fuel poverty
VCMA showcase	July 2023	VCMA achievements to date and looking ahead	Keep doing the projects you are doing Maximise the available funding as the need is huge Measurement through a common SROI model would give additional assurance	Confirmed £110m of new allowance and worked to allocate to significant projects collaboratively and regionally Worked with the other energy networks to develop a common SROI model and GDN rule books (rolled out May 2024)

Identifying Projects & Partnerships

After we've established what our customers want and need, through feedback, data and research, we explore how we can enhance delivery models with our existing partners or where we've identified a gap. We then look to build new relationships, with organisations who can provide tailored support to address those gaps.

Project proposals are explored through a number of channels, which include:

- Direct applications from a new or existing partner
- Expansion of a GDN company specific project, which can expand and deliver on a national scale
- Gaps identified through stakeholders and/or industry working groups
- Gaps identified through data and research
- Responding to the changing landscape (economic, political and social) at a point in time
- Procurement events.

Each project is subject to a scoping and selection process, which includes internal and external reviews by each participating GDN, eligibility checking, forecasted SROI calculations, legal contracts and Project Eligibility Assessments. We ensure that each partnership organisation we work with shares our passion, goals and ambitions to maximise outcomes for our customers and communities, whilst ensuring identified gaps are being addressed.

Each GDN also has their own internal process which applies to both company specific and collaborative projects.

Delivering Programmes

As the UK's GDNs, we are extremely proud and passionate about supporting those who are most in need. Whilst the timescales to identify and develop these projects are challenging, we acknowledge that the projects must be fit for purpose, to maximise outcomes which deliver meaningful support and impact.

Throughout the delivery of a project, the lead GDN(s) will monitor progress to review what's going well and highlight any challenges which could potentially affect the forecasted outcomes. This is done through a series of monthly touchpoints, quarterly reporting sessions and stage gate meetings. These sessions, and ongoing engagement with our partners, are vital to the success of the project, especially where there are obstacles affecting the delivery.

Our project with Maggie's has been a prime example of this. We have worked with them to tailor the approach and adapt delivery and as a result they are now on track to exceed delivery by the time the project finishes in December 2024.

Despite working collaboratively, we appreciate that not all delivery models meet localised need. A project can be with different partners but look to achieve the same aims and outcomes. A good example of this is our project with Age UK, Age Cymru and Age Scotland where three partnerships were established, all under a collaborative banner, but looked to achieve the same outcomes through slightly different delivery models, due to geographical constraints. The success of this project and the collaborative approach has resulted in the project being extended until March 2026 with an uplifted investment of £1.26m expanding the reach and support services to older people across England, Scotland and Wales. **You can find out more about this project [here](#).**

Similarly, the project could be with the same partner but have different delivery models to meet localised support – the NSPCC is a good example of this. This project originally set out to deliver through three key areas; eLearning, safeguarding and information sessions to raise awareness of CO and fuel poverty support. The intention was to deliver the information session through the wide reach of NSPCC's Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) programme, bringing together local authorities to share best practice and learning to support disadvantaged communities. However, NSPCC are still working with the local authorities in Wales so GPC2 isn't active in WWU's area. NSPCC and WWU have been working together to explore innovative ways which will enable the reach to be achieved, whilst still providing informative sessions through an alternative delivery model. **More information on our collaborative project with the NSPCC can be found [here](#).**

To demonstrate how we've adapted our ways of working to meet customer need, we've outlined the key differences in our approach which has shaped our portfolio of projects through each year of delivery:

Year 1
2021/22

Key Focus: Build relationships and mobilising

GDNs invested time building relationships with potential partners who could support the delivery of projects. We engaged with our stakeholders to determine our direction of travel and started to create our collaborative portfolio of VCMA projects.

Year 2
2022/23

Key Focus: Responding to crisis

Our strategy and approach was revisited in response to the global pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Events that took place during this time had a huge impact on our communities pushing more and more people into fuel poverty. This continues to be the case today.

Year 3
2023/24

Key Focus: Health conditions made worse by living in a cold home

Ofgem discussions on re-purposing unspent FPNES allowances to the VCMA and formalising through Licence Changes in July 2023, enabled greater ambition and opportunities. Our focus has been to co-create projects with partnership organisations, who can help bridge the gap between health and fuel poverty. Whilst some of these projects are still mobilising due to the scale and value invested, they have taken a long time to establish. We have included a future look for these projects in our case studies and are really keen to see the impact these projects have over the first 12 months of delivery.

Measuring Outcomes & Benefits

Through collaborative working and sharing knowledge, we have collectively developed various ways to measure outcomes of projects and the benefits they deliver to the people who have been supported.

This includes:

- Using case studies, feedback and comparing forecasted outcomes with actuals, through the delivery of programmes
- Adapting the delivery to maximise outcomes for customers through the sharing of best practice and lessons learned
- Using stakeholder insight through extensive engagement such as willingness to pay
- Using the Social Return on Investment (SROI) model.

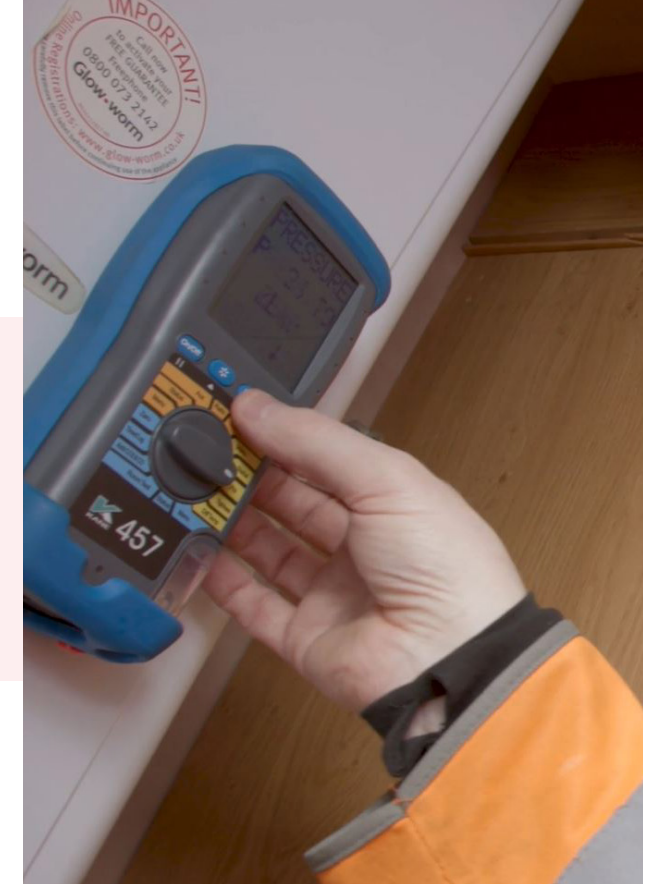
Our customer panels demonstrated a willingness to pay for additional support services, to help support customers in vulnerable situations, tackle fuel poverty and energy affordability, as well as promoting CO safety messaging. It was widely recognised that we should continue to utilise our partners expertise, to deliver projects through the VCMA, given their trusted position in our communities.

SROI assesses the financial and societal benefits to our customers, using a set of defined proxies. As stated in the Ofgem Governance Document, all eligible VCMA projects must generate a positive SROI, meaning that the benefits from the projects should be greater than the investment. Our project portfolio covers a wide range of demographics, and the support is tailored to meet each of their needs.

However, all our projects share a core set of objectives, which is to:

- Maximise household income through a series of checks, including unclaimed benefits, and reduce energy debt
- Provide energy efficiency advice and information
- Promote CO safety messaging
- Raise awareness and sign up to the PSR.

In last year's report, we referenced our individual SROI models and the collaborative work that was being undertaken, to bring together the wider energy sector including GDNs, DNOs and Transmission, to develop a consistent model which could be used by all. A common SROI model has now been built and has been supported by the creation of a GDN Rulebook, which states how and when certain proxies should be applied, to avoid misinterpretation and to simplify the use when evaluating project outcomes. All GDNs are currently rolling out training and use of the common model and they will reassess all new projects through the additional funding later this year.



Financial and societal benefits can include:

- Increased household income through advice – relating to benefits entitlement and debt management
- Reduction in energy bills, resulting in an increased disposable income
- Reduction of stress and improvement to health and wellbeing
- Reduction in GP appointments and hospital admissions – linked to cold homes
- Reduction in the number of incidents and/or fatalities related to CO poisoning.



Review & Learning

Evaluation and learning are key to the successful delivery of new and existing projects and will help shape our future strategies and business plans making sure no one is left behind. Over the last three years, we have delivered numerous projects, and now we are beginning to see the true positive impacts that the support has had on our most vulnerable communities.

Through evaluation of our projects, we have also realised that collaboration isn't a 'one size fits all' approach. Regional differences determine where and what our customer needs are, and these can differentiate across each GDN footprint. We will continue to collaborate through our various industry working groups and learn from each other's successes, to ensure we can meet localised need and demand, whilst all working towards a common set of aims and objectives.

We've now held two annual showcase events, providing stakeholders with a view of our projects and investments, as well as lived experiences. They have also been invited to ask questions and provide feedback with regard to our performance and future direction of travel. We will continue to actively encourage stakeholder feedback through our annual reports and showcase events. Additionally, we welcome thoughts on how we can work with existing and new partners, to ensure a smooth transition to net zero.

We are proactively encouraging collaboration amongst partners, to create onward referral pathways by sharing best practice, learning and exploring further opportunities to work together. The partnerships and support services that have been co-designed will become embedded within each organisation, to ensure they utilise their enhanced skills and knowledge, providing longevity and sustainability, post VCMA funding.



Summary of Collaborative Projects

VCMA Spend Profile & Project Summary

Specifically, in Year 3, we have spent a total of £10.5m on collaborative projects delivering fuel poverty, vulnerable customer and carbon monoxide initiatives to support the most disadvantaged homes and communities. This has contributed to our overall spend of £16.9m on collaborative projects since the VCMA fund was initiated in April 2021.

Ofgem allocated an original allowance of £60m in April 2021, which has now increased to £171m³. With Consumer Price Index (CPIH) applied, the total fund equates to £208.4m⁴. As per the governance, a minimum of at least 25% of the funding must be spent on collaborative projects with at least two GDNs working together to deliver fuel poverty and carbon monoxide awareness initiatives. The additional funding has taken the minimum total collaborative fund to £52.1m⁵.



**Total Year 3
spend:
£10.5m***



**Allocated allowance
at March 2024:
£49.8m***



**Actual spend
to date:
£16.9m***

³ Allowances in 18/19 prices

⁴ Figures are quoted in nominal prices

⁵ Figures are quoted in nominal prices

*nominal prices



The below table demonstrates that we are on track to spend at least the minimum 25% of funding by working together with trusted organisations to go above and beyond for our communities.

Collaborative projects:	38
Minimum collaborative spend:	£42.9m
With CPIH:	£52.1m
Committed spend at March 2024:	£49.8m

We will continue to manage the allowance effectively throughout the remainder of RIIO-GD2, using knowledge and learning to inform our future plans and project portfolio.

Detailed split of spend and committed funding by core theme can be found on the introductory pillar pages⁶.

We've included full details of our collaborative projects in the supporting table at the end of each strategic pillar's case studies.



⁶ [Services Beyond the Meter page 20](#),
[Carbon Monoxide Awareness page 28](#),
[Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability page 38](#),
[Supporting Priority Customer Groups page 52](#)



Services Beyond the Meter

Our 'Services Beyond the Meter' programmes provide direct operational support to the most vulnerable households across our network, who are identified as we go about our work. These support services go above and beyond our business-as-usual activities helping keep people safe and warm.

As a gas distribution network, we are responsible for the gas pipes up to a customer's meter whilst the responsibility of the internal pipework and appliances sits with the customer. When our engineers are called out to a gas emergency, our initial response is to make sure any appliances are made safe if a fault is detected. This can leave customers in vulnerable situations facing financial struggles with unexpected costs such as Gas Safe engineer call-outs. This can often result in people experiencing prolonged periods of time without heating, hot water and cooking facilities and they may not know where to turn for support.

All GDNs have established referral pathways with organisations to ensure vulnerable households aren't left without a gas supply longer than necessary. Despite using different partners to deliver our Services Beyond the Meter programmes we come together to share best practice and share the same aim which is to help keep customers safe and warm in their own homes.

RIIO-GD2

4

Services Beyond the
Meter projects

£7.7m

Investment

400

Appliances Repaired

566

Appliances Replaced

Case Study



Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: Cadent

Participating GDNs: Cadent, NGN, SGN, WWU

Duration: 2 years

Investment: £595,719

Forecasted SROI: £5.01/£1

Status: Ongoing

Key Achievements

Increase Awareness Spotting the Signs of Child Neglect and/or Abuse Training:
18,635

CO Awareness Trainees:
3,610

CO Alarms Requested:
231

NSPCC

NSPCC

NSPCC Collaborative GDN Project

Why we're working together

Every month, gas engineers across the UK are presented with situations where children may be at risk of harm, but they lack the knowledge and confidence of how to report their concerns.

Last year, the NSPCC Helpline responded to 85,000 reports of concerns for a child's welfare from members of the public. At its peak, the number of contacts increased by 48% compared with pre-lockdown levels. The Helpline provides individuals with advice and support, and can act on their behalf if they have concerns about a child who is either being abused or is at risk of abuse.

However, awareness of the NSPCC Helpline in the gas industry is low. It's vital that every employee, wherever they are in the UK, can contact the service to share their concerns. Collective action is required to make sure every child and family has a safe place they call home, and through this collaborative project, we can work together to keep children safe from harm.

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 colleagues and contractors.

How we're working together

We will also support UK families experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, fuel poverty by providing access to expert information on energy efficiency and income maximisation and carbon monoxide risks through the wide reach of the NSPCC's Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) programme and its integration into various services and tools. The NSPCC will also share this information via a separate Wales delivery partner.

In addition to increasing awareness on the carbon monoxide (CO) dangers, signs,

symptoms, and preventative measures it will provide free CO alarms for at risk families supported through the project who are unable to purchase an alarm through their own means.

It will provide 18,635 of our colleagues with access to training to increase their awareness on spotting the signs of child neglect and/or abuse. This will be done via the NSPCC e-learning to recognise and report signs of possible abuse and neglect, giving our colleagues the confidence to report instances of concern which will ultimately provide greater support to children and families across all networks.

Partnership & Community Impact

Sadly 1 in 10 children in the UK have been neglected. Neglect is the most common type of abuse experienced by children and is present in the majority of serious case reviews. Parental stressors such as financial worries are a recognised risk factor for child maltreatment.

Additionally, the effects of fuel poverty have been exacerbated by the cost-of-living and fuel crisis, with families experiencing increased financial hardship due to rises in household essentials such as mortgages, food, energy, and fuel.

Stakeholder Support

Matthew Copeland, National Energy Action Head of Policy and Public Affairs, highlighted some key areas that the GDNs needed to consider prior to launching the project. This included *“developing the NSPCC’s capabilities on fuel poverty”* and a *“need to engage experts to ensure that the project worked as well as it could.”*

However, Matthew commented that: *“Overall it looks like a great project and NSPCC seem well placed to deliver it.”*

A survey to 70 local authorities (involved in the delivery of GCP2 programme) revealed that the majority would find access to information and resources about carbon monoxide awareness and fuel poverty support to be very beneficial for the families they work with.

There was resounding support for the NSPCC/ GDN VCMA project.

“

It is crucial that all of us in society recognise we have a role to play in looking out for those young people for whom home may not always be the safest place. Through the GDNs, we have a unique opportunity to empower thousands of engineers with the knowledge and confidence to speak up when they have concerns about children.

”

Peter Wanless, Chief Executive at NSPCC



Evaluation & Learning

This project offers the GDNs several opportunities for new learning, including:

Information on how receptive customers are to GDN-specific information offered as part of a wider service. The NSPCC will deliver advice on the dangers of CO and fuel poverty through their existing GCP2 programme. GCP2 also assists NSPCC families with other broader services designed to ensure that both parents and children are safe at home. The GDNs will receive feedback on the effectiveness of their messaging alongside other topics – this will influence future RIIO-GD2 projects.

The project will also offer GDNs an insight into the current awareness levels of staff on child neglect and abuse. The project then aims to improve awareness levels through the various methods named above. This may act as a catalyst for GDNs to assess organisational levels of awareness on other types of vulnerability.

Since September 2023, we've rolled out the CO training video, fuel poverty leaflet and CO alarm portal access via our GCP2 neglect programme.



Case Study



Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: Cadent

Participating GDNs: NGN

Duration: 12 Months

Investment: £1,712,000

Forecasted SROI: £1.9/£1

Status: Ongoing

Key Achievements

Appliance Repairs:
400

Appliance Replacements:
566

Received CO Advice:
18,811

CO Alarms provided:
2,044

SBtM

Services Beyond the Meter

The Services Beyond the Meter programme continues to support our customers who could potentially be left in a vulnerable situation.

The programme offers a wide range of support services to keep people warm in their home.

These services are:

- Appliance repairs and replacements
- Carbon monoxide investigations (CMDDA1)
- Gas appliance safety checks and services
- Welfare products for gas outages
- Free energy and carbon monoxide advice.

Certain eligibility applies, such as receipt of qualifying benefits or the maximum household income for families receiving child benefit.

Why we're working together

Cadent and Northern Gas Networks have embarked on a collaborative journey, driven by our shared commitment to enhancing customer experiences through the 'Services Beyond the Meter' programme. This initiative represents a bold step forward for our organizations, as we challenge our frontline engineers to explore innovative ways of supporting our customers, particularly those in vulnerable situations.

Our partnership extends beyond traditional service delivery; it's about learning and growing together. By leveraging our collective expertise and tapping into insights from industry experts, we aim to redefine what it means to keep people warm and safe in their homes. Through this collaborative effort, we're not only addressing immediate needs but also exploring broader opportunities to make a meaningful difference in the lives of our customers.

By aligning our efforts and sharing best practices, we're not just serving our individual customer bases; we're collectively elevating the standard of service for all. This alignment underscores our shared commitment to customer safety and wellbeing, as well as our dedication to providing essential services that keep homes safe and warm. Together, we're not just transforming the way we serve our customers; we're setting a new standard for excellence in the industry.



How we're working together

The partnership allows us to amplify the impact of the 'Services Beyond the Meter' programme. This initiative stands as a testament to our shared dedication to going the extra mile for our customers, ensuring their comfort and safety in their homes. Through this joint effort, we extend our reach beyond traditional services, focusing on appliance repairs, replacements, and proactive gas servicing.

A cornerstone of this programme lies in our commitment to address fuel poverty comprehensively. By collaborating with external partners who specialize in this field, we empower our customers with invaluable resources and support. These partners offer expert guidance on energy efficiency, providing tailored advice to optimize energy usage and minimize costs. Additionally, they assist in maximizing household income and equipping customers with strategies to navigate financial challenges effectively.

Our collaboration extends beyond mere resource-sharing; it is a platform for mutual learning and growth. By sharing insights, operational processes, and best practices, we enhance our collective effectiveness in delivering impactful solutions. Through this synergy, we aim to continuously improve and innovate, driving positive outcomes for our customers and communities.

Together, we're not just providing essential services; we're fostering a culture of care and support. Our combined efforts underscore our unwavering commitment to customer satisfaction and wellbeing. As we navigate the challenges of the energy landscape, our partnership stands as a beacon of resilience and collaboration, dedicated to serving the needs of our customers with excellence and compassion.



Partnership & Community Impact

Both Cadent and Northern Gas Networks are actively engaged in collaborative programmes supported by the VCMA. These initiatives serve as vital links within local communities, fostering cohesion and support amongst community groups. These groups often convene in local community hubs, addressing issues like fuel poverty and the challenges of rising living costs.

Through the Services Beyond the Meter programme, we have established clear referral pathways for individuals within these community networks. This ensures that those seeking assistance can seamlessly access a range of support services beyond their basic energy needs. Whether it's providing advice on carbon monoxide safety, servicing appliances, or conducting gas inspections, our aim is to empower individuals to keep their homes safe and warm.

The integration of the Services Beyond the Meter programme with other approved projects focused within the VCMA is crucial. By consolidating these efforts, we can streamline support mechanisms and provide comprehensive assistance to our customers. This comprehensive approach maximizes the impact of our services, ensuring that individuals and families receive the assistance they need to thrive.

By partnering with local communities and organizations, we not only address immediate challenges but also work towards sustainable solutions for long-term wellbeing. Through these collaborative efforts, we create a network of support that extends beyond utility services, encompassing broader community needs. Together, we strive to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve, promoting safety, warmth, and resilience in every household.

Key Stakeholders Engaged for this Project:

“

This is a great idea as there is circa 140,000 registered engineers on the Gas Safe Register yet there are only circa 2,000 of them that carry the CMDDA1 qualification. Having the ESP (emergency service providers) engineers being able to react to this work, will be a great outcome for consumers in vulnerable situations where a trusted competent engineer can deem what remedial work, if any, is required.

Gas Safe Register, Head of Stakeholder and Large Business Relationships

“

This is great area of work to explore to reduce the impacts of CO on gas consumers. If Cadent engineers can carry out this work, then why wouldn't they as they are the first responders on site.

HSE, Downstream Senior Gas Investigation Policy Officer



Evaluation & Learning

Through our Services Beyond the Meter programme, Cadent and NGN have assisted hundreds of customers in restoring their internal gas supply, ensuring they have a safe and warm home environment or providing essential cooking facilities.

Our servicing work has not only addressed safety concerns but also identified appliances at immediate risk of emitting carbon monoxide if left unchecked. By proactively maintaining and servicing these appliances, our operations teams ensure they remain in safe working order, safeguarding our customers' wellbeing.

Further learnings have been gained throughout delivery of the programme:

- Proving the potential for GDNs to expand support beyond the Gas meter, specifically to assist vulnerable customers, thus broadening the range of aid offered.
- Utilising lessons and successes from this project to replicate effective strategies within our operational processes and potentially extend these practices to benefit the wider industry.
- Strengthening our engineers' training to effectively identify appliances at higher risk of CO emissions, fostering a more proactive approach to mitigating these risks.
- Identifying the most common appliances in vulnerable customers' homes that may pose CO risks, enabling us to take proactive measures when encountering similar appliances elsewhere.
- Improving our workforce's skills to better recognise and respond to customer vulnerabilities, ensuring a more personalised and empathetic service delivery.
- Equipping our workforce with versatile capabilities to handle appliances across various processes, aligning our capacities with the evolving landscape of the energy transition.

These initiatives underscore our commitment to a proactive and adaptable service delivery approach, keeping us at the forefront of the energy industry's ongoing advancements.

Services beyond the meter – collaborative projects

Delivery Partner / Project Title / Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project status	Investment	Forecast SROI	Outcomes
<p>NSPCC – Collaborative Safeguarding and Gas Safety Services</p> <p>To collaborate with the NSPCC to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and their families. This will be done through three sub-projects. The first will tackle carbon monoxide risks and provide fuel poverty support.</p>	Lead GDN: Cadent Supported by: NGN, SGN & WWU	Apr 23 – Mar 25 In progress	£595,719	£5.01/£1	Overall forecasted reach of 18,000
<p>Services Beyond the Meter Year 2</p>	Lead GDN: Cadent Supported by: NGN	Apr 22 – Mar 23 Completed	£585,995	£0.71/£1	702 CO investigations completed, 24 pipework repair jobs completed, 62 engineers upskilled
<p>Services Beyond the Meter</p>	Lead GDN: Cadent Supported by: NGN	Apr 23 – Mar 26 In progress	£1,712,000	£1.90/£1	10,233 conversations and services provided including safety checks, repairs and appliance replacements
<p>One Number</p>	Lead GDN: Cadent Supported by: NGN	Jan 23 – Jan 25 In progress	£4,823,036	£2.75/£1	35 households received gas appliance repairs or replacements 96 advice caseworkers upskilled by NEA and Groundwork UK's specialist teams





Carbon Monoxide Awareness

Our 'Carbon Monoxide Awareness' programmes are designed to help raise awareness of the dangers of CO, remind people how to stay safe and to help communities understand the impact CO can have on different vulnerabilities and age groups.

Raising awareness of the dangers of CO is a key priority for us as a group of gas distribution networks and our ambition is to empower and educate people on how to identify the signs and symptoms of the poisonous gas whilst helping them understand how to protect themselves.

Despite falling energy costs and the cost-of-living crisis still impacting millions of homes across the UK, lower-income households are still experiencing hardship and being forced to make decisions between heating and eating. These financial strains and priorities often result in appliances not being serviced regularly increasing the risk of CO exposure.

We continue to explore opportunities to work with partners and come together in our long-established GDN and stakeholder CO working group to collaborate and develop effective awareness campaigns.

RIIO-GD2

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Carbon Monoxide Awareness projects

£3.6m

Investment to date

7.8 million

People supported with CO messaging

263,642

CO alarms distributed

Case Study



Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: Cadent

Participating GDNs: NGN, SGN, WWU

Duration: January 2024 to April 2026

Investment: £190,850

Forecasted SROI: £18.63/£1

Status: In developing stages/on track

Key Achievements

We expect to educate **46,395** healthcare professionals, reaching a total of **382,934** customers in vulnerable situations and giving a total reach of **429,329**

improving Performance in Practice



Preventing Harm from Environmental Exposure to Carbon Monoxide (PHECO) - E-Learning For Health

Why we're working together

Research has found that awareness of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning amongst health and social care professionals is low. This is a concern when working with those who are most vulnerable, especially those who are pregnant and elderly. Health and social care professionals need not only the knowledge and skills but the resources to support the identification of CO poisoning, as many CO symptoms can be non-specific and mimic other conditions. Even when exposure to CO has been successfully identified, there is a lack of robust pathways and protocols.

There is also a need to ensure that CO related deaths are recorded accurately, through educating coroners on the signs of CO poisoning, as many coroners may not always consider CO as a possible cause or contributing factor due to a lack of knowledge, or consideration of CO poisoning symptoms.

How we're working together

This project is in its initial stages but will develop four modules that will be rolled out via the platform e-learning for health (ELH) which has over two million users. There will be a generic module to help professionals understand the harm caused by exposure to carbon monoxide, how to identify those at risk and how to protect them from harm. Building on this generic learning module we will add further depth by developing three short topic/professional specific learning modules, including pregnancy, care of older people, dementia care and medical examiners.

Partnership & Community Impact

The ELH will equip health and social care professionals with all the key knowledge and skills they require to be able to identify CO poisoning and enable them to have a clear set of pathways and protocols to follow. This will be rolled out across the UK with access to all NHS professionals and other social care professionals.

We will also educate coroners to look out for signs that the cause of death may be related to CO exposure and encourage them to consider whether it could be a potential contribution towards the death, resulting in more accurate reporting.

Once the modules are well established within the ELH platform we will be able to evaluate the impact of the programme including reach and different health professionals making use of the service.

Stakeholder Support

The need for this work has been identified from work previously undertaken including the IPPCO study, Pathways in Pregnancy. This study allowed us to gain information on expired CO levels in pregnant women, with information collected on exposure in their home and insights into pregnant women's knowledge and understanding of the harm and how to protect themselves and their babies. The study found a high number of midwives and pregnant women were unaware of the harm of exposure to CO during pregnancy to themselves and their unborn baby, highlighting the need for such education tools.



Evaluation & Learning

The project is in the initial stages, therefore no learnings have been recorded to evaluate.

Additional Key Achievements

We aim to educate coroners to look out for signs that the cause of death may be related to CO exposure and encourage them to consider whether it could be a potential contribution towards the death, resulting in more accurate reporting.

Learning modules which we will add further depth by developing three short topic/professional specific learning modules including pregnancy, care of older people, dementia care and medical examiners.



Case Study



Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: SGN

Participating GDNs: Cadent, NGN, WWU

Support target: Up to 450,000 over 4.5 years

Duration: October 2021 to March 2026

Investment: £523,400

Forecasted SROI: £3.34

Status: Exceeding target

Key Achievements

Scouting members engaged with CO activities:
178,000

Home Safety Badges Awarded:
31,000

Scouts Association

Carbon monoxide awareness programme

Why we're working together

Whilst young people are one of the demographics most at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, they're also one of the groups least aware of the dangers of CO. Educating and empowering young people around how to be efficient with energy usage is something that they can not only take home, practise and share with their household now, but will also benefit them in the future when they become independent.

Our partnership not only enables us to reduce CO harm amongst large numbers of young people nationally, but we're also able to raise awareness of the silent killer amongst young people who are potentially more likely than their peers to come into contact with CO through camping and other outdoor activities.

Enabled by the additional funding, this year we've worked with The Scouts to broaden the original scope of our partnership beyond CO safety to also now incorporate energy efficiency and fuel poverty awareness.

How we're working together

We've developed an embedded programme of ten CO safety activities, tailored to the differing needs and interests of young people across four Scouting sections – Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers.

Working with Gas Safe Charity and their Think CO team we've also created a bespoke Think CO e-learning package for Scout leaders and adult volunteers to educate them on CO safety, ensure they are keeping their groups safe from the Silent Killer, and empower them to confidently deliver our CO activities.



Building on the success to date, over the next two years we'll be working with Scouts to expand our programme of CO activities, adding at least two new activities per year. We'll also be co-designing and rolling out a programme of eight energy efficiency and fuel poverty activities that will educate young Scouting members, and their households, on how to use their energy more efficiently and affordably.

Partnership & Community Impact

The partnership between Scouts and the four Gas Distribution Networks is instrumental in supporting the Scouts' strategic goals of Programme, People and Perception. We have been able to enhance their carbon monoxide safety guidance and moving forward will be helping the movement to address the current cost-of-living crisis.

Together, we've developed invaluable resources to raise awareness about carbon monoxide safety amongst young people and leaders through our co-designed CO leader training. These resources are available to Scouts 450,000 members and others as they are open sourced for people outside of the scouting movement to benefit from them. Scouts shared our ambition to provide an inclusive learning environment, welcoming children from diverse faiths, learning abilities and socio-economic backgrounds.

Scouts have been actively seeking ways to help educate in saving money and in so doing, improving life chances. The Scouts see our partnership as essential in helping them achieve that goal.

Testimonial

“

The partnership with the Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs) is regularly used as a positive example of how effective collaborations should be. Their ability to work together, embrace new ideas, and adapt continuously to improve should be standard practice, but it often isn't. Since our partnership began, we've faced a pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis, amongst other global and national events. Despite these challenges our strong partnership with the GDNs has ensured that our offer to the Scouts remains robust and effective. Without this way of working, I don't believe our programme and leader support would be as comprehensive or impactful as they are today.

”

Emily Lomasney-Duffy,
Partnership Manager
for Scouts





Stakeholder Support

- Support young people through trusted organisations where safety messages are expected
- Inclusive design principles
- The role of young people in reaching harder to engage communities / families with info
- VCMA Showcase - endorsed

Evaluation & Learning

With the Scouts actively expanding into areas with lower IMD, we identified an opportunity here to expand the scope of our partnership to incorporate a programme of activities on energy efficiency and fuel poverty. We're excited to get to work co-designing these activities and helping Scouts achieve their goal of improving life chances for young people. To help in the co-designing of new activities, as well as support other engagement opportunities that arise through our partnership, we're putting together a GDN Ambassador working group that is to be made up of GDN employees who already volunteer with their local Scout movement. This gives them the ability to feed in and provide recommendations and insight from both a GDN and Scouts perspective, helping to ensure the activities we create are not only educational and accurate, but also fun, engaging and easy for groups to take part in.



Case Study



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE**

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service

Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: SGN

Participating GDNs: WWU

Duration: April 2022 to March 2026

Investment: £140,000 SGN committed 22-26
£14,443 WWU committed 23-24

Forecasted SROI: £7.64

Status: On track

Key Achievements

CO Safety Discussions:
8,100

From This:

Increase in Awareness:
65%

CO alarms fitted this year:
3,454

CO community safety projects

Why we're working together

Whilst different fire and rescue services operate in different regions across Britain, most have established home safety programmes that see them deliver at-home risk prevention for some of the most vulnerable households in our communities.

The home safety programmes, often known as Safe and Well visits, are extremely effective at engaging hard-to-reach and high-risk households, including older people, people with disabilities and people with chronic health conditions.

With these groups being at home more often they are therefore at greater risk of carbon monoxide harm. Although the Safe and Well visits are already funded, funding for resources for carbon monoxide alarms often are not.

Some fire and rescue services operate in more than one GDN network area creating potential challenges in their ability to provide consistent support. This challenge came to light for Dorset and Wiltshire fire and rescue service, who support households in both SGN and WWU footprints.

How we're working together

Both gas networks co-designed a programme with Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service to add carbon monoxide safety assessments into their existing Safe & Well visit programme. We also introduced a new mechanism for the Service to refer residents back to each GDN for additional support, such as Locking Cooker Valve installation.

We're consistently rolling out support across both network areas, SGN and WWU working together to provide both standard and accessible CO alarms that can be installed in vulnerable households throughout Dorset and Wiltshire. We've developed co-branded CO safety leaflets that Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue use during CO safety discussions to leave with customers as needed.

Partnership & Community Impact

Installing potentially life-saving CO alarms is one of the most powerful impacts of this partnership. Since the start of the partnership in 2022, almost 8,000 carbon monoxide (CO) alarms have been fitted into the homes of vulnerable Dorset and Wiltshire residents, with 3,454 of these fitted this year.

Crucially, the programme is providing accessible CO alarms for disabled people as the service had no provision for accessible alarms. By providing 200 hearing-impaired alarms this year, these households now have the most appropriate CO safety device for their needs.

As well as accessible alarms, we're also ensuring the CO safety literature we're sharing with the service is accessible and inclusive. There is a growing community of Afghan refugees that are resettling in the region and to support these families, we've developed tailored resources with key fire and CO safety information for the adults and an activity book for the children. By translating the CO safety information into Pashto and Dari, we're ensuring the families can confidently understand and apply the information.

Stakeholder Support

- Targeted CO engagement with marginalised and vulnerable customers groups
- Integration with a locally trusted organisation adding additional value to an existing service
- VCMA Showcase – endorsed by stakeholders.

Evaluation & Learning

All three partners meet monthly to review performance and discuss opportunities to expand the support provided through our partnership. It was through one of these discussions that we identified the opportunity to provide additional support in the form of Pashto and Dari translated CO safety resources for the Afghan community. This learning has since gone on to be shared with other regional fire and rescue service partners to help them when working with Afghan households.



Testimonial

“

The partnership between DWFRS and SGN is a vital part of supporting the local community. The carbon monoxide detectors provided by SGN and WWU help to keep some of the most vulnerable members of the community safe from CO exposure. DWFRS is pleased to work with SGN and WWU and we hope to continue working in partnership for the long term to keep people safe and well at home.

”

Natalie Waters, Dorset & Wiltshire FRS

CO awareness – collaborative projects

Delivery Partner / Project Title / Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project status	Investment	SROI	Outcomes
<p>Heavenly / Campus – Game Over Carbon Monoxide Young Persons Awareness Campaign</p> <p>To reach young people with carbon monoxide (CO) awareness messaging, through the proven route of the Game Over creative campaign run by Heavenly Media. The campaign maintains longevity of the digital media campaign</p>	<p>Lead GDN(s): SGN & WWU</p> <p>Supported by: Cadent & NGN</p>	<p>Oct 22 – Dec 23</p> <p>Completed</p>	£400,869	£12.84/£1	Directly reached 2,670,599 people through campaign reach, impressions and click through
<p>Policy Connect (APPCOG) – CO Awareness Week – Autumn Campaign</p> <p>Targeted collaborative social media campaign to raise awareness of carbon monoxide (CO)</p>	<p>Lead GDN: WWU</p> <p>Supported by: Cadent, NGN & SGN</p>	<p>Nov 22 – Dec 22</p> <p>Completed</p>	£20,000	£24.86/£1	Directly reached 90,460,299 people through campaign reach, impressions and click through
<p>J Seven Media (AKA Coast Procurement Ltd) – CO Winter Awareness Campaign 2021-22</p> <p>Targeted social media campaign collaboratively to raise awareness of, and increase referrals to, the Priority Service Register (PSR)</p>	<p>Lead GDN: Cadent</p> <p>Supported by: NGN, SGN & WWU</p>	<p>Dec 21 – Feb 22</p> <p>Completed</p>	£383,271	£39.30/£1	Directly reached 30,379,633 people through campaign reach, impressions and click through
<p>Policy Connect (APPCOG) – CO Alarms Save Lives (safe 4 summer)</p> <p>Targeted collaborative social media campaign to raise awareness of carbon monoxide (CO)</p>	<p>Lead GDN: Cadent</p> <p>Supported by: NGN, SGN & WWU</p>	<p>Jul 22 – Aug 22</p> <p>Completed</p>	£50,000	£34.51/£1	Directly reached 64,759,430 people through campaign reach, impressions and click through
<p>Bonanza Creative – Carbon Monoxide Schools Education</p> <p>Targeted collaborative campaign to reach young people in schools, raising awareness of carbon monoxide (CO) through safety sessions</p>	<p>Lead GDN: SGN</p> <p>Supported by: NGN & WWU</p>	<p>Jan 22 – Jul 22</p> <p>Completed</p>	£49,880	£1.56/£1	Directly reached 7,940 people through CO awareness safety sessions
<p>Bonanza Creative – Carbon Monoxide Schools Education Year 2</p> <p>Targeted collaborative campaign to reach young people in schools, raising awareness of carbon monoxide (CO) through safety sessions</p>	<p>Lead GDN: SGN</p> <p>Supported by: Cadent, NGN & WWU</p>	<p>Sep 22 – Mar 26</p> <p>Extended</p>	£575,901	£2.35/£1	Directly reached 18,725 people through CO awareness safety sessions
<p>Scouts – Badge Sponsorship</p> <p>Targeted collaborative project to engage and empower young people, increasing their understanding of the dangers and ways in which they can prevent harm for themselves and others from carbon monoxide (CO)</p>	<p>Lead GDN: SGN</p> <p>Supported by: Cadent, NGN & WWU</p>	<p>Aug 21 – Mar 26</p> <p>Extended</p>	£523,400	£1.86/£1	Directly reached 178,000 scouting members with CO activities. 31,000 home safety badges awarded

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE →



CO awareness – collaborative projects (continued)

Delivery Partner / Project Title / Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project status	Investment	SROI	Outcomes
<p>Improving Performance in Practice (iPiP) – Identifying and Protecting Pregnant Women from CO Exposure</p> <p>Targeted collaborative survey study which directly monitors the home of the pregnant woman, to better understand the prevalence of exposure, how such exposure occurs and providing awareness of carbon monoxide (CO)</p>	<p>Lead GDN: Cadent</p> <p>Supported by: NGN, SGN & WWU</p>	<p>April 21 – Dec 23</p> <p>Completed</p>	£249,974	£0.02/£1	Research report
<p>SP Energy Networks (SPEN) – SPEN Priority Service Register & Carbon Monoxide Awareness Pilot</p> <p>This pilot project operates within two of the four GDN footprints and has been co-designed with SPEN to provide carbon monoxide (CO) awareness and reduce CO harm for our customers</p>	<p>Lead GDN(s): SGN & WWU</p> <p>Supported by: Cadent & NGN</p>	<p>Mar 22 – Jun 22</p> <p>Completed</p>	£2,865	£13.18/£1	Directly reached 1,573 people through CO Awareness
<p>SCOPE – CO Research engaging the Disabled Community</p> <p>Provide support and advice to raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO), and signpost to the Priority Service Register (PSR)</p>	<p>Lead GDN: SGN</p> <p>Supported by: Cadent, NGN & WWU</p>	<p>Jan 23 – Mar 23</p> <p>Completed</p>	£30,600	£1.82/£1	Directly reached 1,266 people through income maximisation, benefit entitlement checks etc
<p>Gas Safe Charity – Think CO App Development</p> <p>Targeted to identify potential carbon monoxide (CO) risks and provide carbon monoxide (CO) safety information to vulnerable households. Helping to increase carbon monoxide (CO) awareness and reduce the risk of carbon monoxide (CO) harm</p>	<p>Lead GDN: SGN</p> <p>Supported by: Cadent, NGN & WWU</p>	<p>Mar 23 – Mar 26</p> <p>In progress</p>	£42,825	£1.10/£1	Overall forecasted reach of 7,500
<p>EGNIDA – Raising CO Awareness using Augmented Reality</p> <p>Targeted collaborative project aimed at university students, increasing their understanding of the dangers and ways in which they can prevent harm for themselves and others from carbon monoxide (CO)</p>	<p>Lead GDN: NGN</p> <p>Supported by: Cadent, SGN & WWU</p>	<p>Oct 23 – Mar 26</p> <p>In progress</p>	£80,000	£3.51/£1	Overall forecasted reach of 20,000
<p>Improving Performance in Practice (iPiP) - Preventing Harm from Environmental Exposure to Carbon Monoxide (PHECO) – E-Learning For Health</p> <p>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 (CO), how to identify those at risk and how to protect them from harm</p>	<p>Lead GDN: Cadent</p> <p>Supported by: NGN, SGN & WWU</p>	<p>Jan 24 – Mar 26</p> <p>In progress</p>	£190,850	£18.63/£1	Overall forecasted reach of 918,870
<p>Eleven Miles – Collaborative GDN Winter & Summer Awareness Campaigns</p> <p>Targeted collaborative social media campaign to raise awareness of Carbon Monoxide (CO) and the Priority Service Register (PSR)</p>	<p>Lead GDN: Cadent</p> <p>Supported by: NGN, SGN & WWU</p>	<p>April 23 – Mar 26</p> <p>In progress</p>	£1,000,000	£120.42/£1	Directly reached 523,871 people through campaigning reach





Fuel Poverty & Energy Affordability

Our 'Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability' programmes are designed to help customers achieve affordable warmth. Through delivery of a tailored suite of accessible support services, they have been designed to help those most in need.

Even though energy costs have gone down, many UK households are still having a tough time paying their energy bills. Whilst the price drop is helpful, bills are still higher than they were before the energy crisis, stretching household budgets thin, and making it harder for people to avoid fuel poverty.

To address the cost-of-living crisis, we've improved existing programmes and built new partnerships, creating initiatives specifically designed to reduce fuel poverty. Seeing the challenges our communities face first-hand, we've customised our approach with partner organisations to ensure that those in greatest need can access personalised support services to maximise their household income.

By providing dedicated personal support, we give households in crisis a reliable point of contact from start to finish through a range of services, resulting in positive outcomes that have been well received.

Few things are more essential than staying warm and safe. However, millions of UK households struggle to afford this due to poor housing, low incomes, and high bills. Ending fuel poverty will require years of urgent, sustained effort and we can only achieve the necessary impact if we work together.

RIIO-GD2

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**Fuel Poverty & Energy
Affordability projects**

£26.7m

Investment to date

258,820

Households reached

Case Study



Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: SGN

Participating GDNs: Cadent, NGN, WWU

Support target: 20,400 households

Duration: January 2022 to March 2026

Investment: £1.5 million over four years

Forecasted SROI: £2.88/£1

Status: Ongoing

Key Achievements

Households supported with energy crisis vouchers:

4,378

Fuel Bank Foundation

Fuel crisis support

Why we're working together

For households on low incomes prepayment meters can be an effective way to manage household costs without accumulating unmanageable debts. However, as fuel prices have doubled in recent years, we've seen an increasing number of prepayment customers struggling to afford to keep their meters topped up, resulting in extreme rationing and when the credit had run out, no energy at all.

This partnership was launched at the start of the cost-of-living crisis, recognising the urgent need within the communities we serve; we initiated a two-year £500,000 collective contribution to support 8,000 households in fuel crisis that winter.

As a result of the enhanced funding available, in December 2023 we committed to extend our partnership with Fuel Bank Foundation to help a further 12,400 households by March 2026.

How we're working together

We're providing same or next-day emergency fuel vouchers for people struggling to top up their prepayment energy meters. The charity works with its network of trusted community partners to get help to those who need it, including local authorities, housing associations, food banks and local debt support charities.

Beyond providing initial emergency support, Fuel Bank Foundation is also providing ongoing assistance to increase financial resilience and avoid dependency on emergency funds. Through working with a network of community partners, the charity is helping vulnerable households with their immediate need as well as providing relevant support, like benefits entitlement checks, to lift these households out of fuel poverty.

Partnership & Community Impact

By working collaboratively, we've increased the charity's capacity to support people in fuel crisis by providing the financial backing to allow existing centres to keep operating, and to allow new centres to open nationwide.

The partnership has enabled enhanced focus on strengthening the support Fuel Bank Foundation provide it's community network by information sharing across the community partners via a new partner newsletter and regular webinars which provided a mechanism to share best practice, success stories, ideas and essential information to crisis support agencies and charities.

Stakeholder Support

This year with a reduced energy price cap, bills were around 7% lower than the previous winter, yet essentials like mortgage or rent payments, food, and clothing all cost far more. In 2023, Fuel Bank Foundation saw the demand for fuel crisis support increase by 85% and in January 2024, they helped over 21,000 people in a single week, spending nearly £1 million a week to keep homes warm.

In 2022, Citizens Advice saw more people who couldn't afford to top up their prepayment meter than the whole of the previous ten years combined – and 2023 was even higher than 2022. 2024 is currently on track for similar numbers to 2023.

Evaluation & Learning

Working with the Fuel Bank Foundation team we're keen to understand the insights behind the network of organisations that are requesting emergency funds, the demographics and customer stories behind the numbers to help with our proactive and targeted approach to tackling fuel poverty before it becomes fuel crisis.

This year more than others we've seen younger people (aged 18 – 35) were most likely to be living in perpetual fuel crisis. As the most likely group to have children at home, their outgoings often far exceed the money coming in. They're also the most likely age group to be 'new' to prepayment meters, struggling to adjust to a new way of planning their energy usage and finances. Key insights include - 15% run out of money to 'top up' daily, 26% were already disconnected from their energy supply when they applied for a voucher, 80% had young children at home and 73% used their voucher to pay off meter debt.



Testimonials

“

The consequences of fuel crisis are dire for our client group and wider society. This partnership has been crucial for us and working together we have provided support to households in fuel crisis across the UK. The partnership with the gas network companies is also providing us with a significant opportunity to jointly ensure our client group are represented as we look ahead to a fair and just energy transition.

”

Matt Cole, Head of Fuel Bank Foundation

“

Thanks for your help to our most vulnerable clients - it is making a huge difference to people's lives. My work would be often impossible in crisis situations. We help tenants with income maximisation, even giving free SIM cards for contact, but no electricity or gas means no communication on top of the basic needs for washing and heating being neglected.

”

Network Delivery Partner

Case Study



Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: Cadent

Participating GDNs: NGN, SGN, WWU

Duration: 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2025

Investment: £731,325.84

Forecasted SROI: Five-year gross present value = £3,012,405.20

Status: Completed the first of two years

Key Achievements

Customers Reached:

4,004

Energy Conversations:

18,597

CO Awareness Conversations:

253

PSR Awareness Conversations:

1,426

Warm & Safe Homes

(WASH - NEA & The Wise Group) 2023 – 2025

Why we're working together

The partnership with NEA and the The Wise Group offers the opportunity to engage customers at scale, and support more than 6,400 households.

The partnership will target households most impacted by fuel poverty, and the decision to work with NEA and the Wise Group allows us to partner with trusted, expert, and widely known organisations. The NEA's partnership with money saving expert Martin Lewis also means that an even greater number of households are aware of, and approach NEA when in crisis.

How we're working together

Through NEA's Warm and Safe Homes (WASH) and The Wise Group's Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) advice lines, we will deliver advice on home energy efficiency, income maximisation, the Priority Services Register (PSR) and access to industry grants.

This advice will also be delivered face-to-face through targeted community events, hosted by specialist advisers, in areas of significant need; the level of need assessed by measures such as fuel poverty rates, index of multiple deprivation, scale of existing services, and presence of customer demographics most impacted by fuel poverty.

NEA and The Wise Group will also offer in-depth case work support to customers experiencing complex issues, such as tariff and switching advice, billing and supplier enquiry resolution, condensation/dampness support, and access to industry grants such as the Warm Homes Discount.

A hardship fund will be available to support our most vulnerable customers and provide invaluable assistance during a time of crisis. This will be used on measures that provide immediate support to households in crisis such as emergency prepayment vouchers, the clearing of energy debt, and credit direct to suppliers.

Stakeholder Support

"The winter will be the single biggest challenge that NEA will have experienced. Our support to households, and our partnerships will be ever more important." Adam Scorer, CEO.

Households are being forced to make impossible decisions with how to spend overstretched incomes and are reaching out to NEA for help. A recent review of NEA's service has shown that cases are becoming more desperate and complex therefore, it is vital NEA is supported by the GDNs to enable a greater response to the increased demand on services.

NEA's advice service is multi-channel, meaning clients can access support through the most convenient medium for them, whether that be by phone, online or in person at a community event. Accessibility and inclusivity are central to delivery of NEA's activities so that all customers can access our services.

More people than ever before are turning to NEA for help to manage unaffordable energy prices; call volumes have increase by a further 20% in the last year despite NEA growing the advice team accordingly. Further expansion of NEA's energy advice service is imperative to respond to the ever-growing number of people seeking support.

Project Impact & Learning

The project will help 5,070 customers in England and Wales and a further 1,400 in Scotland, will be supported through the NEA WASH and The Wise Group's HEAT public facing advice line and face-to-face community events. This support will be split between initial advice to resolve less complex issues either on the telephone or at events, and in-depth case work to support households with more intricate challenges.

400 households will receive immediate hardship fund support with measures such as prepayment vouchers, the clearing of energy debt, and credit direct to suppliers.

This project will provide learning on the types of support that customers will require between 2023 - 2025 versus 2022. In 2022, the advice given by NEA focused on the efficient use of appliances and behaviours, utility tariff services, and PSR registrations. Many industry observers expect the issue of debt to grow in 2023 and beyond, as customers borrowed to maintain a reasonable standard of living in 2022. Project reporting will show any trend changes on the types of support being offered through the project and will highlight the hypothesis of energy debt being an issue for customers in vulnerable situations.



Testimonial

NEA's advice service is a lifeline for many people, the quote below demonstrates the impact the advice and support can offer to people in vulnerable situations:

“

If it wasn't for this service, my husband and I would have been cold, hungry and in arrears with our mortgage. I had no idea how to get any help or benefits, thank you very, very much for all your help and support.

”

WASH beneficiary

Case Study



Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: SGN

Participating GDNs: Cadent, NGN, WWU

Support target: 8,643 students

Duration: March 2022 to August 2025

Investment: £377,000

Forecasted SROI: £15.53

Status: On track

Key Achievements

Young People Reached with Fuel Finance Programme:

3,568

Households Reached:

5,336

MyBnk

Financial education & energy saving in schools

Why we're working together

One in five households with children experienced fuel poverty in 2020 in the UK. At the height of the cost-of-living crisis, a further 300,000 more children were plunged into absolute poverty.

The impact of this is significant on the development and wellbeing of children. Fuel poverty impacts children's growth and development, and there are wider physical and mental health implications of living in a cold home for both children and their parents. Young people, particularly those between the age of 5 – 11 take messages home and share learning with their families.

We aim to provide financially vulnerable young people with skills for life as well as provide a lifeline to support families and friends through shared learning and guidance on where to get much needed help.

How we're working together

Financial education charity MyBnk has extensive experience in delivering successful financial education programmes to primary school children aged nine to 11.

Working together we've co-designed an additional 75-minute module for MyBnk's flagship Primary Money Twist programme called 'fuel finance' covering topics including how to use energy efficiently, tips on how to stay warm for less, carbon monoxide awareness as well as the environmental impacts of energy use.

We're targeting our sessions at schools in areas where data on poverty impacting children is highest. By doing this we're helping families in need today, as well as building children's financial and energy resilience skills to help them avoid fuel poverty in future where the likelihood of lifelong poverty is greatest.



Partnership & Community Impact

Our partnership objectives are to equip young people with lifelong financial literacy skills in areas with higher rates of fuel poverty, educate young people about the dangers of carbon monoxide and empower young people to share information on how to maintain a safe and warm home with their families. Educating young people at primary school age on how to use energy efficiently will stay with them well into adulthood and independent living.

This year fuel finance sessions reached 3,568 young people and their families with take home resources to help them stay safe and warm today and tomorrow.

Stakeholder Support

In 2022/23, the End Child Poverty Coalition reported that the number of children living in poverty increased in 2021/22 to 4.3 million children. That's an average of 30% of children UK wide, broken down for Scotland 24%, England 31% and Wales 28%.

Evaluation & Learning

The multi-generational approach of the primary programme and Fuel Finance has meant that we are not only reaching beneficiaries directly, but also households in, or at risk of, fuel poverty. The partnership has showcased the benefit of developing bespoke programmes that tie into a common theme between organisations and has meant that MyBnk are able to innovate on other opportunities for us to develop bespoke programmes that complement our core purpose.



Testimonials

“

Together we look at the big topics of energy efficiency, affordability, and home safety – helping children and young people to be resilient and manage an ever-changing economic climate. By providing take-home resources, we encourage households to open up the conversations about living costs and managing through difficult times.

”

Leon Ward, CEO MyBnk

“

I really enjoyed the experience of learning stuff that we wouldn't usually do in school. Also, I enjoyed learning about the money we use at home!

”

Fuel Finance programme participant

Case Study



Project at a Glance

Lead GDN:	NGN
Participating GDNs:	Cadent, SGN, WWU
Duration:	2 years
Investment:	£12,198,660.01
Forecasted SROI:	Net SROI of £2.66/£1 and an NPV of £32,849,182.82
Status:	Ongoing

Forecasted Outcomes

Households Directly Supported:
30,400

Households Indirectly Supported:
15,360

National Energy Action (NEA)

Warm Homes Healthy Futures

Warm Homes Healthy Futures is a collaborative VCMA project with NEA and all GDNs, focusing on a nation-wide fuel poverty and health programme. This project is about connecting health professionals and local public health bodies with energy advice and other specialist services to support people to live in warm and safe homes and improve their health. This two-year project addresses the root causes of fuel poverty and was launched at a House of Lords event in March 2024. The first phase of the programme began in May 2024.

Why we're working together

The energy crisis means we are facing a critical challenge across Great Britain. Cold, damp and energy inefficient houses exacerbate people's existing medical conditions, leading to health inequalities. Its overarching goal, is to simultaneously tackle fuel poverty and health inequalities by establishing, coordinating, supporting, and championing strong local energy and health partnerships.

This project was borne out of a great deal of stakeholder engagement and feedback, which urged GDNs to link up more with the health sector, to ensure that people can live in warm, safe homes.

How we're working together

The uplifted VCMA will provide this timely and unique opportunity for the GDNs, the leading fuel poverty charity (NEA), and GB-wide health partners to demonstrate the potential of strong health and housing partnerships, and to encourage further funding to build on the outcomes.

GDNs provided NEA with a list of areas within their networks that have been mapped out. This mapping exercise has enabled NEA to undertake specific targeting of areas where long-term health problems is a significant vulnerability factor for that GDN. GDNs have also identified health representatives within their own network areas, who can be involved in the External Project Advisory Board, which will provide oversight to the project.

The Core20PLUS5 framework will be used to guide the project and unlock health sector partnerships. It is an existing framework for action across much of the NHS, that closely mirrors VCMA priorities around low-income areas, priority demographics and cold homes related health conditions.

Partnership & Community Impact

This project will involve the coordination of several actors with National Energy Action providing a central point of contact and a simple route into networked energy-related advice and support for health partners. A network of advice support will be provided via energy and benefits case workers and community coordinators, with specialist energy advisers co-located with the appropriate local health body, for example, with a health and wellbeing board, local authority public health team or NHS authority. Local energy advice services will be engaged to help and support with delivery via existing networks with training and oversight from NEA and community coordinators will be established to work closely with partners to increase awareness, trust, and engagement with the service. Community coordinators will also establish relationships with adult social care services to provide help to those at greatest risk, with severe health conditions who will require ongoing support through the service to enable them to fully benefit from the provision.

Representatives from Public Health, and Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) in England, and Regional Health Boards in Scotland and Wales will be in place from the outset to engage frontline health professionals with the service and drive referrals.





Stakeholder Support

“

We know that fuel poverty and health inequalities go hand in hand, living in a cold home and struggling on a low income increases the likelihood of worsening health conditions, and increases the risk of early morbidity. Never has the need for an integrated health and fuel poverty advice service been more acute than in response to the recent energy crisis, with prices at a record high people are going cold and hungry. Millions of pounds each year is spent by the NHS treating illnesses that are directly linked to cold, damp and dangerous homes. A well-targeted, scaled up programme of energy and income maximisation advice and support is more vital than ever to support people with health conditions.

”

Rob Howard, Director of Public Health Leicester

Evaluation & Learning

An in-depth social evaluation, gathering quantitative and qualitative data will document the lived experience and real-world impacts of support. Examining - energy vulnerability and health outcomes of engaging with the service.

It will be critical to embed the evaluation of health impacts throughout the delivery of the programme. A key element of the development of the wider project, involves establishing a framework for understanding how we can measure health impacts effectively and meaningfully.



Case Study



Sia Partners

Warm Homes Network – Fuel Poverty Partner Ecosystem 2023/24 Birmingham & Cumbria Pilots

Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: Cadent

Participating GDNs: NGN

Duration: 1 year

Investment: £1,097,312.99

Cadent £865,636.79
NGN £231,676.20
(Cadent Foundation
£35,916.00 – not from
VCMA funding)

Forecasted SROI: £1.70/£1

Status: Ongoing

Key Achievements

Individuals Reached:

947

Fuel Vouchers Provided:

1,200

Why we are working together

The aim is to design and ultimately test the benefits of a new way of working through a partner ecosystem approach. Energy networks have traditionally delivered their fuel poverty initiatives through a single partner. This has resulted in scenarios where the partner has not had the expertise to offer services to serve the needs of all customers’ needs.

Sia Partners are experts in delivering partner ecosystem projects, and this approach creates a “patchwork” of funding and capabilities that should allow delivery partners to access a range of expertise and not be confined to the usual regulatory boundaries.

Working together allows us to leverage expertise, accelerate outcomes and create transformational change.

How we are working together

During the project Sia Partners, Cadent and NGN have:

- Delivered seven workshops with Partners to develop the vision and design the structure of the partnership ecosystem.
- Engaged 58 partners, drawing on contacts from Cadent, NGN and Sia Partners to find a range of stakeholders who could provide crucial capabilities to the partnership ecosystem.
- Conducted 41 introductory meetings with a range of partners, including GDNs, DNOs, charitable trusts, local city councils, and large multi-national corporations.
- Actively engaged 14 partners across our two pilot partnership ecosystems, operating in Cumbria and Birmingham.
- Gathered over 200 insights were from the pilots and partner discussions, helping us refine the Partnership Ecosystem for our scaling strategy.

Partnership & Community Impact

Cumbria Pilot

181 customers referred into the programme.

97 customers supported so far.

£9,358 average benefit per customer receiving all services.

Early indications from our debt advice partner are showing above expectation benefits of £7,637 per customer. Our grants and benefits partner are reporting £983 of benefits per customer supported and our energy efficiency partner is reporting benefits of nearly £603 per customer to date.

Birmingham Pilot

766 customers referred into the programme.

515 customers supported so far (75% received a financial benefit).

£9,000 average benefit per customer receiving all services.

Energy efficiency partners identified average savings of £542 per customer per year. Our debt advice partner showed average savings of £7,290 per customer per year and our income maximisation partners demonstrated an average financial benefit of £1,100 per customer.



Stakeholder Support

Cumbria & Birmingham Pilots brought together various delivery and support partners including:

Cumberland Council

YES Energy Solutions

Citizen's Advice

PennySmart

Cumbria Action for Sustainability

United Utilities

Churches Together in Cumbria

Cumbria CVS

Action with Communities in Cumbria

Birmingham City Council

NEA

Groundwork

National Grid

Egnida

Google

Evaluation & Learning

The project achieved a high return on investment:

- Cumbria £1.41 per £ spent
- Birmingham £2.22 per £ spent



Positive customer feedback achieved above average ratings in response times, process ease and clear information delivery. Early feedback reported by partners indicated that customers 'felt supported' and 'received good advice'.

Both projects have also shown the potential to yield significant 'soft' benefits including increased financial skills, improvement in mental health, increased quality of life, relief from debt burden, prevention of respiratory health problems and additional carbon savings.

Fuel poverty, energy affordability – collaborative projects

Delivery Partner / Project Title / Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project status	Investment	Forecasted SROI	Outcome to 31/03/2024
<p>Citizens Advice National – Energy Safeguarding & CO Safety Partnership</p> <p>Provide expert inhouse debt and benefits advice to help people maximise their income, build financial resilience and stay in a safe home. Targeted to assess the benefit of the provision of an Energy and CO Safety pack for customers who are at risk of carbon monoxide (CO) exposure that includes; a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm, a carbon monoxide (CO) safety leaflet, a thermometer card, information on how to access the Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES), and an energy saving advice leaflet.</p>	Lead GDN: SGN Supported by: Cadent, NGN & WWU	Jan 22 – Mar 23 Completed	£2,081,545	£5.76/£1	Directly reached 18,730 people with savings of £5,510,204 through CO/PSR awareness, income maximisation, benefit entitlement checks etc
<p>Citizens Advice National – Energy Safeguarding and CO Safety partnership 2023/24 – 2025/26</p> <p>Targeted to assess the benefit of the provision of an Energy and CO Safety pack for customers who are at risk of carbon monoxide (CO) exposure that includes; a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm, a carbon monoxide (CO) safety leaflet, a thermometer card, information on how to access the Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES), and an energy saving advice leaflet. To continue with support for vulnerable households providing a single point of contact for independent and bespoke support to keep a safe and warm home for less.</p>	Lead GDN: SGN Supported by: NGN & WWU	Apr 23 – Mar 26 In progress	£2,505,388	£5.54/£1	Directly reached 9,278 people with savings of £5,650,312 through CO/PSR awareness, income maximisation, benefit entitlement checks etc
<p>Fuel Bank Foundation – Fuel Crisis Support</p> <p>Targeted to deliver direct financial support and practical help to maintain a safe and warm home to vulnerable households identified via a network of community support partners and where required by direct referral from the funding networks.</p>	Lead GDN: SGN Supported by: Cadent, NGN & WWU	Jan 22 – Mar 26 Extended	£1,500,000	£2.88/£1	4,378 households supported with energy crisis vouchers
<p>MyBnk – Financial Inclusion & Energy Safeguarding School's Programme</p> <p>Targeted to deliver material to primary age young people as part of their financial education programme from MyBnk. With a dedicated module specifically focused on energy safety, usage and efficiency a long term and successful partnership with tangible outcomes can be achieved.</p>	Lead GDN: SGN Supported by: Cadent, NGN & WWU	Mar 22 – Aug 25 In progress	£102,058	£15.53/£1	5,336 households reached with financial education
<p>NEA and The Wise Group – Warm and Safe Homes</p>	Lead GDNs: Cadent & SGN	Apr 22 – Mar 23 Completed	£237,721	£8.05/£1	1,240 customers supported with in-depth energy efficiency advice, 565 received tailored support, 675 customers received face-to-face support

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE →



Fuel poverty, energy affordability – collaborative projects (continued)

Delivery Partner / Project Title / Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project status	Investment	Forecasted SROI	Outcome to 31/03/2024
<p>NEA and The Wise Group – Warm and Safe Homes – National Extension 2023 – 2025</p> <p>Targeted to provide support by phone, online or in person at a community event. Accessibility and inclusivity are central to delivery of NEA's activities so that all customers can access live in warm and safe homes and improve health.</p>	Lead GDN: Cadent Supported by: NGN, SGN & WWU	Apr 23 – Mar 25 In progress	£731,326	£3.20/£1	Customers reached: 4,004 Energy conversations: 18,597 CO awareness conversations: 253 PSR conversations: 1426
<p>National Energy Action (NEA) – Warm Homes Healthy Futures</p> <p>Targeted to connect health professionals and local public health bodies with energy advice and other specialist services, to support people to live in warm and safe homes and improve health.</p>	Lead GDN: NGN Supported by: Cadent, SGN & WWU	Mar 24 – Mar 26 In progress	£12,198,660	£2.66/£1	Directly supported 30,400 unique households Indirectly supported 15,360 households through community health workers and volunteers
<p>Warm Homes Network – fuel poverty partner ecosystem 2023/24 (Birmingham and Cumbria pilots)</p> <p>The fuel poverty partner ecosystem project has the objective of designing and testing a new approach to alleviating fuel poverty</p>	Lead GDN: Cadent Supported by: NGN	Apr 23 – Mar 24 Completed	£1,097,313	£1.70/£1	Individuals reached: 947 Fuel Vouchers provided: 1,200
<p>Carers Trust – Alleviating Unpaid Carers from Fuel Poverty</p> <p>Targeted carer specific support services focused at raising awareness of energy efficiency, the Priority Service Register (PSR), and the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO), whilst helping carers to access relevant benefits and to maximise their incomes.</p>	Lead GDN: WWU Supported by: Cadent, NGN & SGN	Apr 24 – Mar 26 NEW for 2024 Accepted	£4,075,771	£42.03/£1	43,425 directly reached 106,000 indirectly reached through carer family members 6,514 PSR referrals £2,000 avg increased income per household 80% improved mental health, wellbeing and resilience
<p>Severn Wye Energy – Reach out – Energy Support</p> <p>Targeted to raise awareness of the Priority Service Register (PSR), encourage consumers to sign up and to promote access to the free support services and benefits for each energy company in the event of a gas outage or electricity outage for example via collaborative working.</p>	Lead GDN: WWU Supported by: Cadent	May 24 – Mar 26 NEW for 2024 Accepted	£1,400,000	£12.36/£1	Overall forecasted reach of 4,600 No data to reference
<p>IE Hub – Income and Expenditure Hub, support for customers in vulnerable circumstances and financial difficulties</p> <p>The IE Hub project aims to maximise the success of participants identifying and claiming their full entitlement of benefits. This will be achieved by facilitating access to an accessible, expert, online tool.</p>	Lead GDN: Cadent Supported by: NGN, SGN & WWU	Jul 24 – Mar 26 NEW for 2024 Accepted	£743,932	£12.53/£1	Overall forecasted reach of 136,486





Supporting Priority Customer Groups

Our 'Supporting Priority Customer Groups' programmes are targeted at helping customers who are eligible to join the Priority Services Register. Through accessible, handheld support we can help some of the most disadvantaged communities across our network remain safe and warm in their own homes.

Although our priority customer groups have unique needs, they often share common circumstances that unite them as a community and already have trusted relationships with established support organisations who represent their interests.

Through our additional allowance and recognising the potential these organisations offer in providing targeted support to those most in need, we have developed new and innovative projects with organisations such as National Energy Action (NEA), Kidney Care UK, Carers Trust and Mental Health UK (MHUK). These projects focus on tackling fuel poverty and providing tailored support when it's needed most.

A recurring theme in our VCMA project proposals is the direct link between health and fuel poverty amongst specific demographics. Financial and social support is often inaccessible for people with complex and specific needs, but programmes developed by our partners have improved health by addressing issues caused by living in cold, damp homes.

We will continue to explore what our role looks like in the future energy landscape and assessing how our VCMA partners can support the most vulnerable individuals in our network. Our goal is to ensure that no one is left behind as we navigate a challenging energy transition.

RIIO-GD2

9

Supporting Priority Customer Groups projects

£11.8m

Investment to date

over 500,000

People supported

Case Study



Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: SGN

Participating GDNs: Cadent, NGN, WWU

Support Target: 21,200 households over four years

Duration: April 2022 to March 2026

Investment: £3,515,000 over three years

Forecasted SROI: £7.03

Status: On track

Key Achievements

Customers Supported via DES:

1,468

PSR Registrations:

1,744

Benefits Checks Provided:

666

Financial Savings Identified:

£764,813.51

SCOPE = Equality for disabled people

SCOPE Disability Energy Support with water advice

Delivering tailored energy advice and support for disabled people

Why we're working together

One in four people in the UK are disabled. Disabled people face many barriers to equality, from employment, negative attitudes or behaviours to accessible customer services. Added to this life costs an extra £975 a month if you're disabled, according to research from Scope.

With the extra costs of heating, equipment and therapies, disabled people are more likely to face financial vulnerability, increased energy costs and fuel poverty. Disabled people also often find it more challenging to access information and support to manage these issues.

Following a successful pilot project in 2020, in April 2022 we launched a national collaborative partnership to deliver tailored and targeted support via the Disability Energy Support (DES) with water advice service. This helped us meet the increased demand for this service as a result of the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis.

In February 2024, using the additional funding we worked with Scope to embed the learnings from research and regional pilot projects to enhance our partnership. By extending our service to March 2026 and including emergency resources including fuel credit, heated blankets and carbon monoxide alarms for disabled people struggling to maintain a safe and warm home.

Emergency Fuel Vouchers Provided: **511**

How we're working together

Working with Scope and the broader funding group of the DES helpline we're providing an appointment based accessible utility advice service that's integrated into the broader Scope advice team. Trained advisers provide support with understanding energy and water bills including support to address utility debt and accessing benefits and grants.

Should a disabled person in energy crisis contact the DES helpline, we're able to provide immediate support to keep the household safe and warm. This year we've introduced emergency funding for people on credit meters and heated blankets for those who would benefit from targeted warmth.

To ensure that disabled people are aware that support is available, working together we design seasonal marketing campaigns to promote the Priority Services Register, the DES helpline service and winter resilience information. We've also worked closely with Scope to redevelop its online resources around energy advice.

Partnership & Community Impact

The DES service continues to be a lifeline for thousands of disabled people, to help them manage their energy and water costs and needs. During the past 12 months, 1,468 disabled customers had tailored appointment support, that's 18% above target. In addition, customers have viewed the information on Scope's energy and carbon monoxide webpages 119,691 times.

Testimonials

“ Disabled people have been impacted the most throughout the cost-of-living crisis. The Disability Energy Support Service with water advice (DES) has been vital in supporting our customers. Our partnership with the GDN collaboration has been most valuable and we are delighted that we are now able to build the capacity of DES together, at this very critical time.

”
Mark Hodgkinson, Chief Executive at the disability equality charity Scope

“ I was broke the week that I got a voucher from DES, that voucher helped me wash all my clothes.

”
Keisha, DES beneficiary



Stakeholder Support

- VCMA Showcase – stakeholders wanted to see more investment in this partnership
- Utility Week Vulnerability Conference 2023

Evaluation & Learning

During this year, more than half (52%) of customers assessed by our DES service were in debt to their energy supplier. On average they owed £1,103. This has devastating consequences for health and wellbeing, as we see an increase in the complexity of issues that customers are presenting with. To support this growing need, another GDN partner IE Hub was introduced to the DES service. IE Hub enables customers to maximise income and manage their expenditure, share affordability with creditors, and set up plans that work for them. This tool has been integrated into the DES process, optimising outcomes with both digital and adviser support.

40% of customers that used the service had medical equipment to support their disability.

CO
Awareness
Sessions:
948



Case Study



Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: SGN

Participating GDNs: Cadent, NGN, WWU

Support target: 2,200 households per year

Duration: December 2022 to October 2025

Investment: £1,780,825 over three years

Forecasted SROI: £12.16

Status: In progress

Key Achievements

People Supported:

2,617

PSR Conversations:

1,744

Benefits Identified:

£1,083,455

Completed Fuel Poverty Training:

749

Marie Curie

Energy safeguarding and tackling fuel poverty for terminally ill people

Why we're working together

The rising costs of living are of increasing concern for everyone, but those diagnosed with a terminal illness are disproportionately at risk of falling into fuel poverty. Recent Marie Curie research shows that a terminally ill person's energy bill can increase by as much as 75% over what they were paying before they were diagnosed. The impact has left an increased number of terminally ill people struggling to afford to heat their homes sufficiently, living in a cold home can cause their health and wellbeing to deteriorate.

In addition, thousands of people living with a terminal illness rely on medical devices used at home. Equipment such as oxygen concentrators, ventilators, home dialysis machines play a vital role in preserving people's health, comfort, and dignity towards the end of their lives. The cost of running these devices can be a significant additional burden on a household's energy bill, leaving some with an awful and potentially life-threatening decision on whether to cut back on other essentials like heating or food, or ration their use of prescribed equipment.

How we're working together

Since our partnership service launched in December 2022, we've successfully been supporting terminally ill people and their families across Britain who are in fuel poverty with dedicated support and advice services.

We've now successfully embedded a new energy advice service into Marie Curie's Information and Support line, providing dedicated Energy Support Officers (ESOs) who help terminally ill people access financial support to address the underlying causes of fuel poverty. The ESOs have also training the wider adviser team on how to deal with energy-related enquiries and provide benefit and income maximisation checks.



Together we've co-designed a bespoke training package for Marie Curie's community nurses, healthcare assistants and volunteers on how to spot signs of a household in fuel poverty and refer patients for further support including sharing information on the importance of signing up to the Priority Services Register. We've also delivered targeted multi-channel marketing campaigns to promote the support available through energy retailers as well as radio and print media including Yours' Magazine and Money Saving Expert's Newsletter in October 2023.

Partnership & Community Impact

Our partnership has made a significant impact on our organisation, from training Marie Curie Nurses and clinical staff to increasing collaboration with other partner organisations.

Since December 2022 we've successfully trained 749 (this year 572) Marie Curie Nurses, clinical staff and volunteers, who are now better equipped to support patients and their households at risk of fuel poverty. The training was deemed joint 'most engaged with' topic for Marie Curie's Caring Services teams this year.

Our partnership has also enabled valuable conversations with partner organisations including Age UK, Scope, Fuel Bank Foundation and Together for Short Lives, sharing programme learnings and agreeing to act as referral partners for one another.

Stakeholder Support

- Health / critical illness – aligned to Pillar 2 – all GDNs focusing on the most vulnerable customer groups based on health outcomes
- VCMA Showcase – endorsed by stakeholders



Testimonials

“

We're thrilled to have celebrated the first year of our partnership with the Gas Distribution Networks. Our Energy Support Officers are making a vital difference to Support Line callers and the national roll-out of training to Marie Curie staff means we can be there for more people experiencing fuel poverty at the end of life. This partnership is ensuring we tackle these important issues head on and better support those at the end of life.

”

Matthew Reed, Chief Executive

“

For me, being able to help people and make them aware of information and services they didn't know about to help with rising bills is amazing. We're getting lots of positive feedback from callers too.

”

Rachel, Energy Support Officer, Marie Curie



- Utility Week Vulnerability Conference – shared learnings with industry leads – was recognised as industry leading initiative
- Shortlisted for two awards – UK Business Charity Awards / Better Society Awards

Evaluation & Learning

Over the year we've continued to see an above forecast number of benefits checks via our teams and the online resources. We've used this insight to focus our marketing activities and training on helping people 'unlock unclaimed financial support' which has seen our teams be able to help more people struggling with household essentials. In the last six months we've also seen a greater take up in the Priority Services Register sign ups through the partnership in Wales, the Midlands, South West and Scotland.

To help us better understand the impact our partnership is having for customers, this year we've started working with an evaluation specialist who is working alongside the Information and Support team including our ESOs to understand the impact and identify best practice and opportunity to increase outcomes for customers.



Case Study



Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: SGN & WWU

Participating GDNs: Cadent & NGN

Duration: February 2023 to March 2026

Investment: £2,295,020

Forecasted SROI: £26.12/£1

Status: Extended

Key Achievements

Benefit Calculations

Completed:

289,239

Age UK

Benefits Claimed:

£1,899,422

Age Scotland

Households Reached:

4,156

Age Cymru

Age UK, Age Cymru & Age Scotland

Energy Safeguarding - Helping older people live in safe and warm homes

Why we're working together

Fuel poverty is particularly serious for older people because they are most vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home, which increases the risk of stroke, heart attack and exacerbates pre-existing conditions such as cardiovascular disease and arthritis. It also impacts their mental health and wellbeing as they often deal with increasing feelings of anxiety, loneliness and depression, which adds additional pressure when dealing with financial hardship and struggling to pay energy bills.

Older people can often be faced with complex medical conditions, and as a result many of them rely on their heating, water and electricity to remain safe and warm in their own homes.

Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age UK are the country's leading charities for older people and they state that many older people simply won't be able to cover the further rise in living costs. This is particularly worrying for older people as they face higher heating needs, spend longer at home and are more vulnerable to the effects of the cold.

How we're working together

Bringing together the UK's leading older people's charities, Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age UK – this project supports people in vulnerable situations by providing energy safeguarding services to older people who are in or at risk of fuel poverty.

The collaborative partnership will look to ensure that older people are aware of and are assisted to access the Priority Services Register and support services that help increase



household income including benefits checks and provide advice on how to increase household energy efficiency and increase awareness on the signs, symptoms and mitigations of carbon monoxide harm.

The programmes are delivered via regional models and learnings between the partners are shared openly recognising that the three partners will need to co-ordinate within regional support frameworks – all working to a common outcome to help older people maintain a safe and warm home.

For more information on the extended project, please click [here](#).

Partnership & Community Impact

Through the original delivery of the project, Age Cymru, Age UK and Age Scotland reached over 57,000 people. Case studies and feedback from phase 1 of the project have demonstrated how valuable the support being provided is and highlights the increase in demand. As a result and due to the success of the initial project, we have invested a further £1.26m to enable Age Cymru, Age UK and Age Scotland to enhance their services and broaden their reach to further support older people across the UK.

Stakeholder Support

With around one million older people already living in fuel poverty, Age UK has warned that rising energy costs could push a further 150,000 older people into fuel poverty. Age UK research also highlighted the fact that older people said they would have to limit their heating in their home, chose between heating and food if their energy costs keep rising and that they would need to make cuts potentially getting into debt to simply afford to pay their energy bills.

Testimonial

“

I'm scared to put the heating on most of the time. I sit with a throw over me to keep my legs warm. Keep the windows closed. I was so concerned with heating costs last winter, now, I think I'll be okay.

”

Julie, Age UK client

Evaluation & Learning

The enhanced delivery model has been shaped using experience from the original project to make sure we are delivering value for money through this VCMA project whilst reaching and supporting vulnerable groups who are most in need.

Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age UK will conduct ongoing evaluation of the impact of the partnership as well as provide case studies and feedback from beneficiaries of the partnership. This will help the partners and the GDNs better understand how to support older people struggling with fuel poverty. Age Cymru and Age Scotland will also complete annual research the outcomes of which will be shared across partners and broader to support the advocacy of older people in energy.

Case Study



Project at a Glance

Lead GDN:	NGN
Participating GDNs:	Cadent
Duration:	18 months - Phase 1
Investment:	£487,050
Forecasted SROI:	£10.27/£1
Status:	Complete Phase 2 now live until 31st March 2026

Strata Nostra

The Carents Room

The Carents Room is an interactive, online website for Carents to access anywhere in the UK to receive instant online support. The platform exists to support individuals who find themselves supporting an elderly relative or friend – often a parent, hence the label carent – who need help to keep themselves and their elderly loved one safe and well. As this is an online resource, it is available to carents 24/7/365 which addresses the challenges associated with accessibility to advice, information and support, which is a common difficulty faced by carents.

Why we're working together

Carents are the largest group of unpaid carers (estimated at around four million adults in the UK), and this number is growing rapidly in the face of our ageing population. The nature and quantity of this care is changing and becoming more intensive. More than half of those who are carents are aged between 40 and 64, often juggling a range of responsibilities in order to support their loved ones.

The Carents Room aims to support people who have become lonely, increasingly isolated and at risk of fuel poverty. It is an online virtual place within the community where carents can link through shared experiences in a friendly environment, access information on a range of different subjects. This project provides carents with a place to access all the support and information they will need to be a carent. The Carents Room is a unique resource, accessible to anyone in the UK who needs general support in their carenting role, therefore this is not limited to specific geographical regions.

Key Achievements

Households Reached:

6,717,592

CO Awareness Advice:

166,395

Energy Efficiency Advice:

265,097

Carents Site Users:

773,102

How we're working together

NGN and Cadent funded this project as it addresses the need of an underserved group of carers living in the UK – Carents. The project looked at improving and enhancing the existing website to build a long-term and highly functional tool to ensure successful delivery of the objectives. Through the project, Stratra Nostra can provide a unique method of support to Carents whilst providing assistance to GDNs in the form of site traffic. This ensures customers have visibility of the process to sign up to the Priority Services Register (PSR), to partake in CO awareness questionnaires or apply for Locking Cooker Valves. The website is a self-sustaining and accessible engagement platform tailored to meet the needs of Carents, that can refer them and their relatives to relevant services and products including those provided, or facilitated, by GDNs and DNOs.

Knowledge of The Carents Room has grown significantly this year through targeted campaigns to engage pharmacies, GP surgeries, Local Authority carer assessment teams and social prescribers. This has allowed hundreds of thousands more Carents the opportunity to benefit from the support and resources available, and massively increased awareness across primary health care channels.

Partnership & Community Impact

The Carents Room platform supports thousands of users each week across its website, social and digital channels. The majority of platform users are anonymous, although some users might be identifiable via their social media handles.

Caring can be stressful, lonely and isolating which can have a profound impact on health – increasing the risks of dementia – heart disease and stroke. Emotional support is often limited and may not be available or accessed by carers until a crisis occurs. Carents can especially feel vulnerable and unsupported at transition points, such as transfer from hospital to community care. Relevant information and practical and emotional support is essential at these times. The project utilises peer support, helping to reduce social isolation, provide empathy and mutual emotional support. Getting information from someone who has been there can make a huge difference when you are navigating a complex path or practical and financial support.

The project has enabled the development of a "Carent" community, known as 'The Carents Lounge'. This is an online safe space where carents can interact with one another and offer information and peer support.

Testimonials

“

...mum has COPD, CKD stage 4, heart failure, IBS, is incontinent and suffers with RA. Neither of us drive, so because of this she can't access pulmonary rehabilitation. Mum has severe depression and is becoming agoraphobic. I work full time (gave up a higher paid job and took a menial job on the basis it's less stressful to offset my caring role)... I just wanted to say thank you for creating not only the website but the Facebook group too which has helped me to overcome the loneliness and isolation I have been feeling as a carer. The website is vast and jam packed with all sorts of information and signposting, I've told all my friends and colleagues about it.

”

Carents Room service user

Referrals
to
the^{psr}.co.uk:
19,566





Referrals for locking cooker valves:
3,492

Stakeholder Support

The Carents Room project was well supported by stakeholders at NGN’s Hot Topic workshop focused on health. It has been welcomed by a range of other VCMA partners who are now able to signpost to the platform to support carents that they encounter through the work of their own projects.

During the course of the project, service users have provided great feedback on the website and social media platform.

One service user has said *“Thank you for highlighting this. I’m now currently installing CO alarms in my parents’ house. Having arrived at last week’s visit to be engulfed by the stench of gas (hob left on without flame and parents hadn’t noticed). This article has now made me aware that some of my Dad’s dementia symptoms could actually be attributed to him constantly firing up an old motorcycle in his garage and not ventilating whilst doing it!”*

Evaluation & Learning

Several interventions were used successfully to inform individuals about the value of the PSR including printing PSR.co.uk and CO information onto pharmacy bags and distributing them to targeted pharmacies across the NGN and Cadent network. Leaflets, organic social posts, promoted posts, Carents Lounge discussions, GP pack letters, and website views were also used to generate traffic to the website.

Participating pharmacists were asked to complete a survey to assess the impact of the pharmacy bag campaign in winter 2023. 100% of the 105 respondents said that they were previously unaware of the support available, but now felt confident to signpost individuals to The Carents Room for support. 87% also said that they were previously unaware of the support available through the PSR.

A variety of interventions were also used to inform individuals of the risks of CO poisoning and the value of CO alarms. This included website pages, organic and promoted social media posts and the emergency e-booklet. The main challenge was responding to the increased interest and related activity on the website and socials whilst maintaining a personal approach to supporting carents which was hugely important to the delivery partner and supporting GDNs. Strata Nostra received multiple requests for presentations and information, and distributed extra leaflets to reflect demand.

The project has now moved into phase 2 delivery which will run from 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2026.



Case Study



Kidney Care UK

Safe and Warm: Providing a Critical Lifeline to Dialysis Patients Across the UK

Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: WWU

Participating GDNs: SGN, NGN, Cadent

Duration: 2 years

Investment: £2,577,376.62

Forecasted SROI: £16.45/£1

Status: Mobilising

Why we're working together

Currently across the UK, over 30,000 patients with advanced kidney disease rely on dialysis to stay alive. The majority of these patients have a routine which consists of three to four sessions a week (which can take up to six hours or more in hospital) and deal with the associated stress and time pressures of travel to and from treatment. Due to the time constraints and health impacts associated with treatment for patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD), only 26% of people on dialysis are able to work full time. The consequent low income means many of our patients live in relative poverty, compounded by the misery of increasing cost of living and people on dialysis are more likely to live in deprivation with 66% living in the three most deprived quintiles.

How we're working together

Kidney Care UK have developed a hybrid model which has been targeted to support the most deprived areas in each of the GDNs footprint. The hybrid model consists of dedicated personal support for 8,867 patients through face to face sessions across 128 renal units and also includes a telephone support line reaching a further 8,800 people across the UK to help alleviate and tackle fuel poverty across the most disadvantaged communities.

The model is specifically designed to:

- maximise and increase income
- reduce utility related expenditure
- deliver financial comfort and relief from financial stress
- provide an increased feeling of mental wellbeing and control for patients and their households, empowering them to feel safe and warm


Patients Supported via Telephone Helpline: **8,800**

Forecasted Outcomes

Beneficiaries Supported:
17,667

CKD Patients Directly Reached:
8,867

UK Renal Units Supported:
128



Patients to Benefit from Income Maximisation:
1 in 5

- provide a wealth of psychosocial help to support kidney patients across the four regions, through one to one support to patients and their families
- provide access to unclaimed welfare benefit entitlement, such as blue badges and PIP, and subsequently assist the individual with application and form filling process, which can otherwise be exceptionally difficult and often impossible for people on dialysis
- provide access to the appropriate utility company social tariffs and schemes and help with application process
- initiate conversations and introduce relevant charitable organisations that can help reduce utility debt
- raise awareness around the dangers of CO and increase PSR registrations.

Partnership & Community Impact

Since June 2023, Kidney Care UK have collaborated with the Welsh Kidney Network (WKN), NHS Wales and Auriga Services, which is a leading public benefit provider of welfare assistance packages, to deliver a transformational package of support for dialysis patients across Wales. This service is delivered face-to-face in renal units, helping people who would not necessarily have pro-actively reached out to us for remotely delivered support. This project was set up by working in partnership with Wales & West Utilities and is already achieving tangible results and a wealth of benefits for the 1,500 dialysis patient population in Wales. Due to the success of the project, Kidney Care UK have evaluated and used best practice and learning to develop an enhanced delivery model which will provide support across as network areas reaching a wider UK footprint.

They are also working in collaboration with SGN supporting a delivery model in Scotland with other utility providers to maximise outcomes for kidney patients.

Stakeholder Support

In 2022 alone, Kidney Care UK realised more than £1.4m in unclaimed benefits for kidney patients and those affected by CKD. In addition, Kidney Care UK provided £750,000 in financial support directly to patients facing immediate crisis, delivered 1,400 counselling sessions, and provided one-to-one support for more than 3,000 individuals. In 2023, they will give £850,000 in financial hardship grants directly to patients and demand is growing month on month.



Evaluation & Learning

This project will help us to understand the specific challenges facing people with CKD who need to be in a warm, dry house but face increased costs and reduced income. It also provides an opportunity for GDNs to further engage with CKD patients to understand how they are impacted by our business as usual (BAU) street works and mains replacement programme, allowing consideration to be given to making adaptations to our services.

Kidney Care UK aim to build life-long relationships with people living with CKD and are there for them at every stage of their journey. By working in partnerships with the gas networks, the positive impact of extending their reach will be felt for many years.

Case Study



Carers Trust

Alleviating Unpaid Carers from Fuel Poverty

Why we're working together

Unpaid family carers have been plunged even further into financial misery by the cost-of-living crisis with many still seeing the impacts both financial and emotionally, despite falling energy costs. With many carers being at home for the majority of time caring for their loved ones, it means they use more fuel, as their homes need to be warm and rely on specialist equipment resulting in higher energy bills. Not being able to do this has a severe and detrimental impact on both the carer's health and wellbeing, as well as the cared for person where illnesses can be exacerbated through lack of warmth. In addition, caring comes with additional costs that can have a significant impact on carers' finances and many carers suffer financial hardship.

In August 2022 Carers Trust surveyed unpaid family carers across the UK about their experiences of support and the financial hardships they face. The survey found that around 25% of unpaid carers had to cut back on food, 14% had not been able to pay household bills on time, 14% used a food bank and 63% of unpaid carers were worried about being able to afford energy bills.

How we're working together

Caring can be extremely isolating with carers seven times more likely than the general population to describe themselves as lonely, more so in rural areas where carers can struggle to access direct support and advice. Isolation has a huge impact on mental health and wellbeing, which can lead to worsening health conditions of the carer both mentally and physically. This project aims to help bridge the gap between financial uncertainty and health.

Improvements to health and wellbeing and improved awareness will be achieved through

Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: WWU

Participating GDNs: Cadent, NGN, SGN

Duration: 2 years

Investment: £4,075,770

Forecasted SROI: £42.03/£1

Status: Mobilising

Forecasted Outcomes

Direct Reach:

43,425

Indirect Reach:

106,000

PSR Referrals:

6,514

Increased Income per Household:

avg. **£2,000**

Improved Mental Health, wellbeing & Resilience:

80%

the following services:

- Income maximisation and welfare support through benefit entitlement checks
- Financial management and resilience services
- Specific fuel poverty and energy efficiency advice and support
- Reduced fuel bills
- Increased awareness of CO
- PSR conversations to raise awareness and support registration.

The project aims to directly reach over 40,000 beneficiaries with a range of interventions over the two-year duration and a further 106,000 indirectly through carer family members. The programme will be delivered by Carers Trust as the appointed service provider who will be working in collaboration with a network of local carer organisations across each GDN area.

The programme will focus on alleviating carers from Fuel Poverty in the most deprived areas across England, Scotland and Wales. The support provided will help reduce the financial burden faced by many carers, their families and those that they care for experience by having to heat, feed and manage the finances and affairs of multiple households. By providing them with direct support, immediate aid, knowledge and longer-term skills, carers will have increased financial resilience as well as increased competence and confidence to carry out their roles with greater energy efficiency awareness and reassurance of where to turn for support when needed.

More information on the project can be found [here](#).

Partnership & Community Impact

Carers Trust operates the largest UK-wide network of local carer organisations who specialise in promoting the wellbeing of unpaid carers. They have created a network of local carer organisations to provide funding and support, deliver innovative and evidence-based programmes and raise awareness and

Testimonials

“

I am terrified that I won't be able to pay the bills this winter

”

Carer A

“

Carer's Allowance is pitiful. I've had to give up my full-time job so my mum doesn't go into a care home which would cost the Government thousands. Yet all I get is £76 a week?

”

Carer B



influence policy providing meaningful outcomes to the caring community. Carers Trust's vision is that unpaid carers are heard and valued, with access to support, advice and resources to enable them to live fulfilled lives. They support 130 network partners across England, Wales and Scotland and work collaboratively to transform the lives of unpaid carers

Stakeholder Support

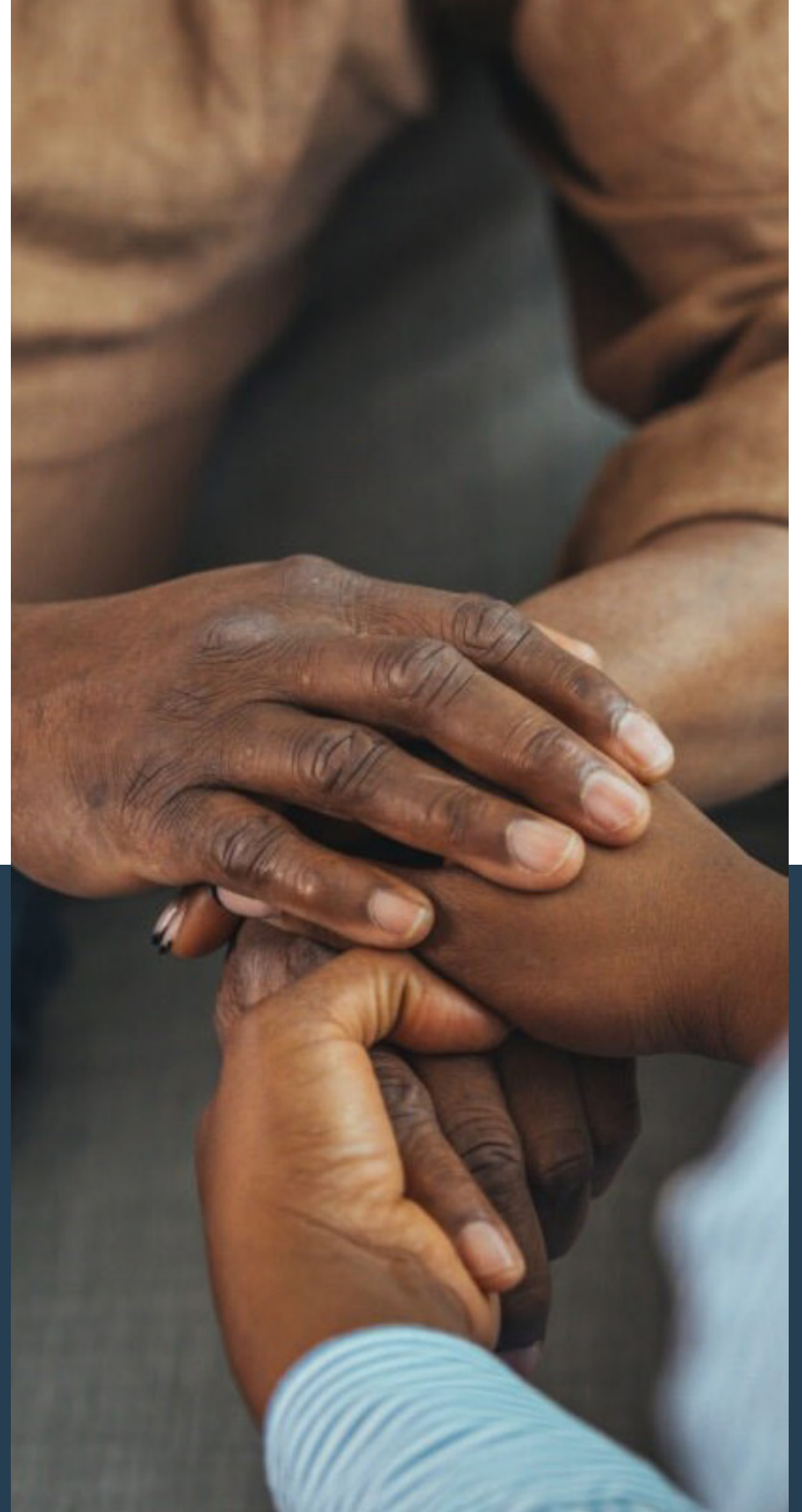
Through our business planning activities, stakeholders across our networks have told us that supporting priority groups and tackling fuel poverty should remain a key focus whilst highlighting the clear link between health and fuel poverty, which continues to be a hot topic of discussion.

Through continued engagement with stakeholders such as NEA and Citizens Advice supported by fuel poverty statistics, research shows despite falling energy prices, fuel poverty is still having a huge impact on our communities. People are still struggling and limiting the use of heating to unhealthy levels and appliances are not being serviced leading to future safety risks. The crisis has meant people who have never been in trouble now find themselves needing help but not knowing where to turn for advice, particularly those who are caring for others.

Evaluation & Learning

This project will help us identify and understand the need for support within the unpaid carers network, as well as how this can shape policy across the UK to improve their living conditions. It also provides an opportunity to share best practice and understand the regional differences that may affect unpaid carers in different ways.

We will monitor delivery and progress of the project sharing best practice and learning maximising outcomes for the caring community whilst delivering value for money.



Case Study



Project at a Glance

Lead GDN: WWU & SGN

Participating GDNs: NGN & Cadent

Duration: 2 years

Investment: £667,653

Forecasted SROI: £9.07/£1

Status: Mobilising

Key Achievements of pilot

Clients Supported with CO,
PSR & Energy Saving
Awareness:

680

Mental Health UK Advisers
Supported with CO,
PSR & Energy Saving
Awareness:

20

Mental Health UK

Energy safeguarding and tackling fuel poverty for people with Mental Health

Why we're working together

Approximately 7.5 million people in the UK live with a diagnosed mental illness and an estimated one in four of us experienced a mental health problem every year. This situation has been worsened by the challenges that the cost-of-living crisis has brought to our communities and to exacerbate matters further, it is widely recognised that due to the current climate, more people are now experiencing energy arrears and struggling to make ends meet. This financial burden is significantly impacting people's mental health and wellbeing, as they don't know what support is available or how to access it.

Mental Health UK has seen a significant increase in demand for the support in more recent years. In the first six months of 2023, it saw a one-third rise in people seeking advice on how to apply for PIP, compared to the same period in 2022. As the cost of living continues to increase, the number of people looking for advice on fuel bills has increased by 38% and is expected to keep rising.

During a pilot partnership launched in March 22 between SGN and MHUK, a total of 224 customers received access to a suite of holistic services including income maximisation, debt advice, housing advice, energy efficiency and CO awareness. A collaborative delivery model was explored off the back of the pilot and is now being rolled out with all gas networks working together to reach a wider UK footprint, supporting people with mental health who are in or at risk of fuel poverty.

How we're working together

Over the 24 months, this partnership will both contribute to and grow the Mental Health & Money Advice service in the UK. The project will enable Mental Health UK to train their Advisers and Navigators as energy specialists, so that anyone accessing the service via any referral mechanism can be supported with their energy needs.



Support services will be delivered through a series of telephone calls or video calls and services will include:

- Welfare rights and access to benefit entitlement check
- Income maximisation
- Debt advice
- Warm Home Discount and Winter Payments
- Advice and awareness provided around dangers of carbon monoxide
- Information on the Priority Services Register and access to other safety measures such as locking cooker valves.

To project aims to support at least 4,900 customers successfully addressing the issues that would prevent them from maintaining a safe and warm home long term. Mental Health UK aim to support those in need with access to practical help that improves their health and wellbeing and increases their confidence to manage their household utility costs.

Partnership & Community Impact

Financial risks within households are not just limited to utilities. Living in poverty can lead to a range of adverse outcomes such as issues in health and housing and being both the victim and perpetrator of criminal activity and substance abuse. Food poverty is on the rise and leading high street banks are also concerned about an anticipated increase in financial risk-taking behaviour such as gambling and online fraud.

Testimonial

“

We look forward to expanding the partnership with the Gas Delivery networks, which followed a successful pilot. We know the inequalities and disadvantages people experiencing mental health difficulties face in regard to their energy needs, and this funding will allow us to support our clients to ensure they have a safe and warm home.

”

Charlene Marks, Head of Mental Health at Mental Health UK

In 2024, Rethink Mental Illness will be adding the CO awareness training to their Learning and Development platform



Stakeholder Support

People on lower incomes struggling with poor mental health are often reliant on older boilers, older heaters, or even gas stoves or cookers to heat their homes; either due to financial barriers or because they are reluctant to have people in their homes. National Energy Action and Gas Safety Trust research found 35% of low income and vulnerable households surveyed exceeded the threshold for carbon monoxide levels. People living in deprived areas are also less likely to own an audible CO alarm than homes in non-deprived areas, further increasing the risk of CO poisoning.

Evaluation & Learning

MHUK will conduct ongoing evaluation of the impact of the partnership as well as provide case studies and feedback from beneficiaries of the partnership. This will help MHUK and the GDNs better understand how to support vulnerable households struggling with fuel poverty. The data collected through this partnership will be able to shape future mental health campaigns and will also highlight the realities facing some of the most disadvantaged communities who are struggling to maintain a safe and warm home.

This partnership is designed to become embedded within MHUK to ensure it delivers systemic change providing longevity and sustainability post VCMA funding. Once the partnership with the GDNs ends, MHUK will be able to continue supporting Mental Health and their families that are struggling with fuel poverty.



Priority customers – collaborative projects

Delivery Partner / Project Title / Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project status	Investment	Forecasted SROI	Outcomes
<p>SCOPE – Disability Energy Support (DES) Provide support and advice to raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO), and signpost to the Priority Service Register (PSR)</p>	Lead GDN: SGN Supported by: Cadent, NGN & WWU	Apr 22 – Mar 26 Extended	£3,515,000	£7.03/£1	1,468 customers supported via DES 2,492 PSR registrations 666 customers provided with benefits checks £764,813.51 financial savings identified 511 emergency fuel vouchers provided 948 carbon monoxide awareness sessions
<p>Marie Curie – Energy Safeguarding and Tackling Fuel Poverty for Terminally ill People Targeted support service for patients and their families during end of life care. Focused at raising awareness of energy efficiency, the Priority Service Register (PSR), and the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO)</p>	Lead GDN: SGN Supported by: Cadent, NGN & WWU	Dec 22 – Oct 25 In progress	£1,780,825	£12.16/£1	2,617 people supported 2,169 PSR conversations £1,083,455 benefits identified 8,169 energy related resources accessed
<p>Age UK/Age Cymru/Age Scotland – Energy Safeguarding Partnership Supporting the older community to stay safe and warm in their homes whilst also providing access to relevant benefits and to maximise their incomes and to signpost to the Priority Service Register (PSR)</p>	Lead GDN(s): SGN & WWU Supported by: Cadent & NGN	Feb 23 – Mar 26 Extended	£2,295,020	£26.12/£1	Benefit calculations completed: 289,239 – Age UK Benefits claimed: £1,899,422 – Age Scotland Households reached: 4,156 – Age Cymru
<p>Parsley Box/Latcham Direct Ltd – Parsley Box Delivering easy to store microwave meals across the UK with a primary customer base of over 65s and providing them with Priority Service Register (PSR) details for sign up</p>	Lead GDN: Cadent Supported by: NGN, SGN & WWU	Oct 23 – Jan 24 Completed	£20,452	£20.90/£1	Directly reached 65,732 people through deliveries and literature
<p>Kidney Care UK – Safe and Warm: Providing a Critical Lifeline to Dialysis Patients Across the UK Targeted support services for patients diagnosed with chronic kidney disease, focused at raising awareness of energy efficiency, the Priority Service Register (PSR), and the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO), whilst helping carers to access relevant benefits and to maximise their incomes</p>	Lead GDN: WWU Supported by: Cadent, NGN & SGN	Mar 24 – Mar 26 In progress	£2,577,377	£16.45/£1	Forecasted outcomes: 17,667 total beneficiaries supported 8,867 CKD patients directly reached through dedicated personal support 128 renal units across the UK being supported 8,800 patients supported through the telephone helpline 1 in 5 patients will benefit directly from income maximisation support

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE →



Priority customers – collaborative projects (continued)

Delivery Partner / Project Title / Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project status	Investment	Forecasted SROI	Outcomes
Crunch – PSR Digital Media Campaign Targeted collaborative social media campaign to raise awareness of, and increase referrals to, the Priority Service Register (PSR)	Lead GDN: WWU Supported by: Cadent, NGN & SGN	Nov 23 – Oct 24 In progress	£223,881	£79.04/£1	Forecasted reach: 2,472,209
Carents Room Targeted collaborative social media campaign to raise awareness of, and increase referrals to, the Priority Service Register (PSR)	Lead GDN: Cadent Supported by: NGN	Nov 23 – Mar 26 In progress	£487,050	£10.27/£1	Referrals to thepsr.co.uk: 19,566 CO awareness advice: 166,395 Energy efficiency advice: 265,097 Referrals for locking cooker valves: 3,492 Carents accessing the site and related information – site users: 773,102
Maggie’s Cancer Centres – Safe and Warm	Lead GDN: Cadent Supported by: NGN & SGN	Sept 22 – Dec 24 In progress	£212,040	£3.70/£1	19,123 customers received benefits and income maximisation 1,682 customers received energy efficiency advice 777 customers received CO and PSR advice 77 signed up to PSR
Mental Health UK – Energy Safeguarding and tackling Fuel Poverty for people with Mental Health Provide support and advice to raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO), and signpost to the Priority Service Register (PSR)	Lead GDN(s): SGN & WWU Supported by: Cadent & NGN	Jan 24 – Mar 26 Mobilising	£667,653	£9.07/£1	Between 2023-24, Mental Health UK and SGN piloting the project and supported 680 clients with CO, PSR and energy saving awareness In 2024, 20 additional Mental Health UK advisers took part in the same awareness training In 2024, Rethink Mental Illness will be adding the CO awareness training to their Learning and Development platform



Future Look

VCMA Funding and Focus

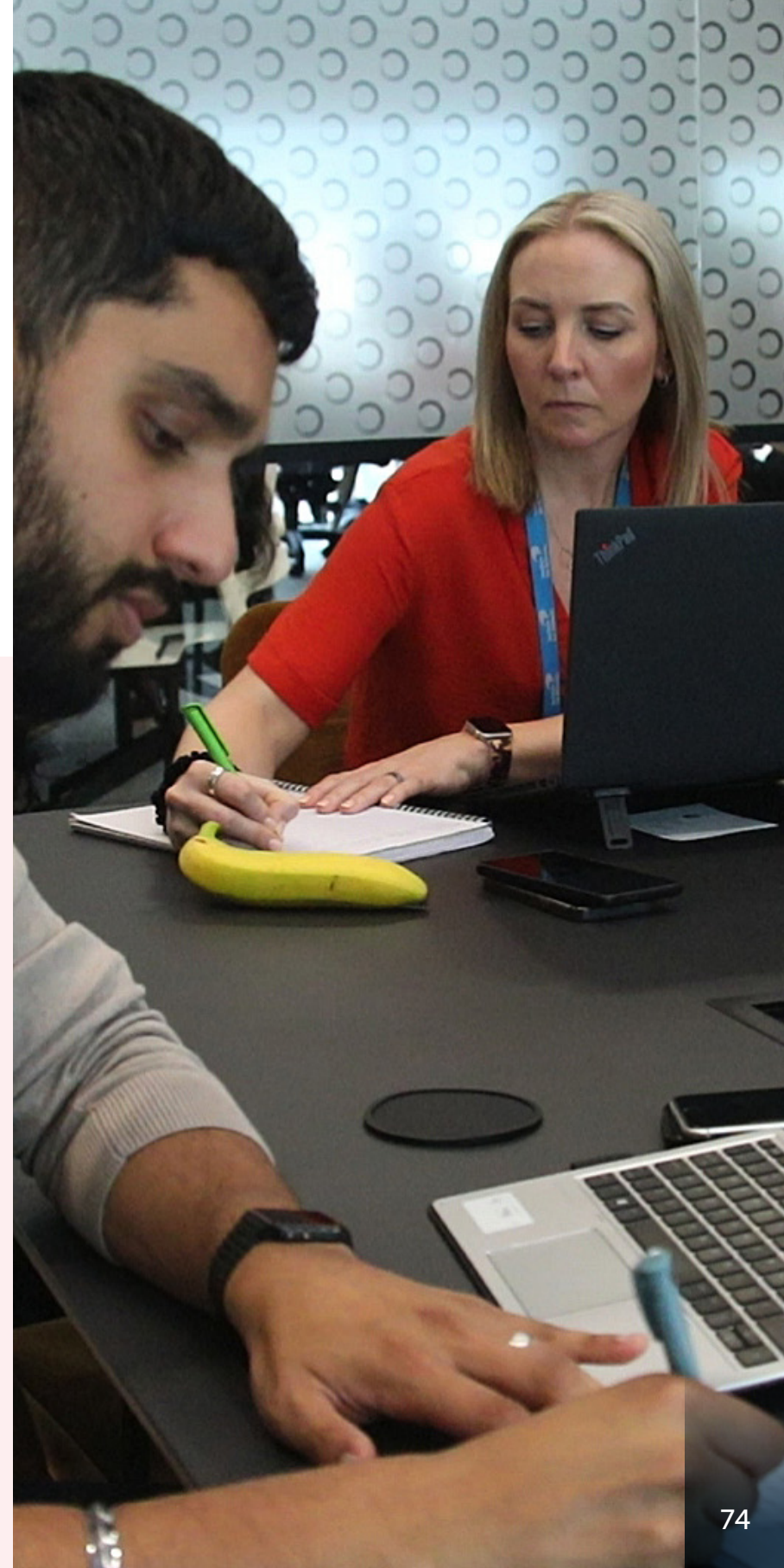
As we enter Year 4 of delivery, the majority of the VCMA funding has been allocated through a variety of projects, with new partner organisations and existing partners, who have enhanced their offering. We will continue to discuss potential project proposals to ensure the remaining allowance is spent well, delivering value for money and maximising outcomes for the most vulnerable communities. To ensure all partnership organisations have a fair opportunity to demonstrate the success of their projects, we expect to allocate all available VCMA funds by the end of this regulatory year (2024/25). Our attention will then be focused on ensuring all projects are delivering in-line with their initial proposals and looking for opportunities to increase the reach of beneficiaries for each project.

RIIO-GD3 (April 2026 to March 2031)

We have held joint GDN and stakeholder workshops with Ofgem, focused on support for priority customers. Ofgem proposed £74m funding for the VCMA in their December 2023 Sector Specific Methodology Consultation. The GDNs responded with evidence demonstrating that although fuel prices may be coming down, the legacy energy debt and other debt such as housing arrears, means the problems around energy affordability and safety will continue for many years to come. Combined with ageing and associated health of the population, we would like to be more ambitious and have asked for funding closer to the updated RIIO-GD2 levels. Ofgem are due to publish a decision document in July 2024.

The GDNs are all working on their Business Plans for RIIO-GD3, which are due to be submitted by December 2024. Ofgem also require each GDN to update and publish their Consumer Vulnerability Strategies by this date. Our future plans will be impacted by the government in office and their decisions, which will influence the way customers heat their homes in the UK. We will work with our key stakeholders and partners to make sure relevant support from GDNs is available, which will help customers make informed decisions. Ofgem are asking GDNs to include their 'Just Transition' plans within their updated strategies.

The GDNs are working together to undertake engagement with key national stakeholders and agree a collaboration strategy and commitments that will be common across the strategy documents and Business Plans.





Closing Statement

Thank you to all our partners who have helped compile this year's report and who continue to work together to provide support to customers in vulnerable situations.

You can register to attend our showcase event [here](#).

To find out more about VCMA projects or opportunities to work together in your local area, you can visit our websites:

