

# GDN Collaborative Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

## Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

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Alleviating Unpaid Carers from Fuel Poverty  
*Carers Trust*

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*February 2024*

## Gas Network Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Governance Document - Project Eligibility Criteria

| <b>Section 1 - Eligibility criteria for company specific projects (other than condemned essential gas appliance repair and replacement)</b>  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| In order to qualify as a VCMA project, a project must:   |                                    |
| <b>VCMA Eligibility Criteria</b>   | <b>Criteria Satisfied (Yes/No)</b> |
| a) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Have a positive, or forecasted positive Social Return on Investment (SROI), calculated in accordance with a model which the GDNs have developed and submitted to Ofgem including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA Project, and</li> <li>ii. have a positive, or a forecasted positive Net Present Value (NPV);</li> </ul>   | Yes                                |
| b) Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Provide support to consumers in vulnerable situations, and relate to energy safeguarding, or</li> <li>ii. Provide awareness on the dangers of CO, or</li> <li>iii. Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO;</li> </ul>   | Yes                                |
| c) Have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve the requirements in paragraph b;  | Yes                                |
| d) Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations; and  | Yes                                |
| e) Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding.   | Yes                                |
| <b>Section 2 - Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing</b>   |                                    |
| To qualify as a VCMA Project, essential gas appliance servicing must meet the following criteria:  |                                    |
| a) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. GDN has had to isolate and condemn an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role; or</li> <li>ii. a GDN or its Project Partner has identified an essential gas appliance which has not been serviced in the last 12 months in the owner-occupied home of a customer in a Vulnerable Situation where an occupier of the property suffers from a permanent or temporary health condition that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes; or</li> <li>iii. a GDN or its Project Partner has identified an essential gas appliance which has not been serviced in the last 12 months in a tenant-occupied home of a customer in a Vulnerable Situation where it is the tenant's responsibility to maintain the essential gas appliance, where an occupier of the property suffers from a permanent or temporary health condition that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes; and</li> </ul> | Yes                                |
| b) the household cannot afford to service the essential gas appliance, as assessed against the affordability criteria in the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) Guidance: Delivery document; and   | Yes                                |
| c) sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including a social or private landlord and national, devolved, or local government funding) to fund the essential gas appliance servicing.  | Yes                                |
| <b>Section 3 - Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance repair and replacement</b>  |                                    |
| To qualify as a VCMA Project, unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:  |                                    |
| a) A GDN has to isolate and condemn unsafe pipework or an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role; and  | N/A                                |

|   |     |
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| b) the household cannot afford to repair or replace unsafe pipework or the essential gas appliance, as assessed against the affordability criteria in the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) Guidance: Delivery document; and | N/A |
| c) Sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including national, devolved or local government funding) to fund the unsafe pipework or essential gas appliance repair or replacement.                          | N/A |
| <b>Section 4 - Eligibility criteria for collaborative VCMA projects</b>   |     |
| In order to qualify as a collaborative VCMA project, a project must:  |     |
| a) Meet the company specific project eligibility criteria set out in sections 1-3 above; and  | N/A |
| b) Have the potential to benefit consumers on the participating networks; and   | Yes |
| c) Involve two, or more, gas distribution companies.  | Yes |

Gas Network Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Governance Document - Project Registration  
Table 2

| <b>Information Required</b>   | <b>Description</b>  |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
|---|---|----------------------------------|--|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------|------------|------------------------|-------------------|-----|--|-------------|--------|---|----------|-----|---|----------|-----|--|-------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|--|-----|---------------|--------|---------------|-----|-------------|-----|---------------|--------------|----------------------|
| <b>Project Title</b>  | Alleviating Unpaid Carers from Fuel Poverty   |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| <b>Funding GDN(s)</b>   | WWU<br>Cadent<br>SGN<br>NGN   |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| <b>Role of GDN(s)<br/>*For Collaborative<br/>VCMA Projects only</b> | Lead GDN - WWU  |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| <b>Date of PEA<br/>Submission</b>                                   | April 2024  |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| <b>VCMA Project Contact<br/>Name, email and<br/>Number</b>          | Rachele Verdini, <a href="mailto:rachele.verdini@wwutilities.co.uk">rachele.verdini@wwutilities.co.uk</a> , 07811795210   |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| <b>Total Cost (£)</b>   | £4,075,770.79   |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| <b>Total VCMA Funding<br/>Required (£)</b>                          | <p>£4,075,770.79</p> <p>Overall budget breakdown:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2"><b>VCMA Collaborative Budget</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Carers Trust Costs*</td> <td>£1,128,731.09</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Local Sites Costs</td> <td>£2,947,039.70</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>£4,075,770.79</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The below table represents the local sites costs per GDN area:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><b>GDN</b></th> <th><b>No. Local Sites</b></th> <th><b>Total Cost</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>WWU</td> <td>5 + 2 outreach locality sites shared with SGN)</td> <td>£868,419.85</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cadent</td> <td>7</td> <td>£705,950</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NGN</td> <td>4</td> <td>£403,400</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SGN</td> <td>6 + 2 outreach locality sites shared with WWU)</td> <td>£969,269.85</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>22 + 2 outreach locality sites</b></td> <td><b>£2,947,039.70</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The below table represents the total costs for both Carers Trust costs and local sites costs combined per GDN:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2"><b>GDN cost allocation</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>WWU</td> <td>£1,159,010.64</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cadent</td> <td>£1,021,839.35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NGN</td> <td>£601,368.45</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SGN</td> <td>£1,293,552.35</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>£4,075,770.79</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>* Proportioned to each GDN by Carers Trust</p> | <b>VCMA Collaborative Budget</b> |  | Carers Trust Costs* | £1,128,731.09 | Local Sites Costs | £2,947,039.70 | <b>Total</b> | <b>£4,075,770.79</b> | <b>GDN</b> | <b>No. Local Sites</b> | <b>Total Cost</b> | WWU | 5 + 2 outreach locality sites shared with SGN) | £868,419.85 | Cadent | 7 | £705,950 | NGN | 4 | £403,400 | SGN | 6 + 2 outreach locality sites shared with WWU) | £969,269.85 | <b>Total</b> | <b>22 + 2 outreach locality sites</b> | <b>£2,947,039.70</b> | <b>GDN cost allocation</b> |  | WWU | £1,159,010.64 | Cadent | £1,021,839.35 | NGN | £601,368.45 | SGN | £1,293,552.35 | <b>Total</b> | <b>£4,075,770.79</b> |
| <b>VCMA Collaborative Budget</b>                                    |   |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| Carers Trust Costs*   | £1,128,731.09   |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| Local Sites Costs   | £2,947,039.70   |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>£4,075,770.79</b>  |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| <b>GDN</b>  | <b>No. Local Sites</b>  | <b>Total Cost</b>                |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| WWU   | 5 + 2 outreach locality sites shared with SGN)  | £868,419.85                      |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| Cadent  | 7   | £705,950                         |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| NGN   | 4   | £403,400                         |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
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| <b>Total</b>  | <b>22 + 2 outreach locality sites</b>   | <b>£2,947,039.70</b>             |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| <b>GDN cost allocation</b>  |   |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| WWU   | £1,159,010.64   |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| Cadent  | £1,021,839.35   |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| NGN   | £601,368.45   |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| SGN   | £1,293,552.35   |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>£4,075,770.79</b>  |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |
| <b>Problem(s)</b>   | 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:  |                                  |  |                     |               |                   |               |              |                      |            |                        |                   |     |  |             |        |   |          |     |   |          |     |  |             |              |                                       |                      |                            |  |     |               |        |               |     |             |     |               |              |                      |

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|-----------------------------|---|
|                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% of unpaid carers have had to cut back on food</li> <li>• 14% have not been able to pay household bills on time</li> <li>• 14% have used a food bank</li> <li>• 63% of unpaid carers are worried about being able to afford energy bills</li> </ul> <p>One carer said “I am terrified that I won’t be able to pay the bills this winter”.</p> <p>The survey provides a stark assessment of how many of the UK’s seven million unpaid family carers have been plunged even further into financial misery by the cost-of-living crisis. With many carers being at home for the majority of time caring for their loved ones, this means they use more fuel, as their homes need to be warm and many use more electricity for specialist equipment. Not being able to do this has a severe 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.</p> <p>In addition, caring comes with additional costs that can have a significant impact on carers’ finances and many carers suffer financial hardship. 44% of working-age adults who are caring for 35 hours or more a week are in poverty. (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, UK Poverty 2022). Carer’s Allowance is the main carer’s benefit and is £76.75 per week (2023/24) for a minimum of 35 hours. It is the lowest benefit of its kind. In the UK, 977,506 carers were in receipt of Carer’s Allowance in 2022 (X-Stat Explore (retrieved in Feb 2022)). Instead of avoiding poverty, Carer’s Allowance recipients were more likely to be experiencing financial hardship. Only 38% say Carer’s Allowance is enough to make a meaningful difference to them, with one carer saying:</p> <p>“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?”</p> <p>Caring can also 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.</p> <p>Carers Trust’s strategic goals (2022-25) of Building a Caring Society are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every unpaid family carer has access to a high-quality local carer organisation</li> <li>• No one is financially disadvantaged or pushed into poverty due to their caring role</li> <li>• All unpaid family carers can enjoy life alongside their caring relationship.</li> </ul> <p>Carers UK has submitted evidence to the independent Hills’ Fuel Poverty Review arguing that carers should be recognised as a vulnerable group in its fuel poverty strategies.</p> |
| <b>Scope and Objectives</b> | <p>This overall programme will focus on alleviating the financial penalties and specifically fuel hardships that 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 and the longer-term skills, knowledge and confidence, carers and their wider stakeholders will have increased financial resilience for what will be a continued difficult cost of living future, as well as tools and increased competence to operate their caring role(s) with increased energy efficiency and abilities to seek help where needed. The programme will help carers across all our targeted areas, including those in rural areas, those with extensive caring roles and those who may be furthest away from accessing health and social care support by giving them access to information, advice and guidance in ways that they can best access; be that online, one-to-one telephone support or locally delivered support. The project will also seek to enact systems change by influencing decision-makers in England, Scotland and Wales to increase the awareness of unpaid carer need, the efficiency and positive impact</p>   |

of targeted support and highlight the inadequacy of current low level statutory benefits that unpaid carers can easily access which can actually exacerbate the cycle of carer poverty.

The programme will focus on alleviating carers from Fuel Poverty in the most deprived areas across England, Scotland and Wales. This would involve us working in partnership across a number of GDN delivery areas, to impact not only on more of the carer population, but also the most vulnerable carers, working cross-nation on campaigning and influencing local and national decision-makers. By working with local independent carers' charities who are members of the Carers Trust Network in 23 local project sites; (17 in England, 3 in Scotland and 3 in Wales) we would ensure the direct delivery of income maximisation, advice around fuel poverty, energy efficiencies and supportive tools and systems available (e.g. locking valves, Priority Services Register etc.) as well as developing skills in financial resilience and empowerment to unpaid carers and their wider stakeholders. This approach has already proven to be highly successful at both Bridgend Carers Centre and Swansea Carers Centre and through our Network wide Learning Exchange Platforms, we know that it is desperately needed in more locations in this challenging economic climate.

The project at each local site will include:

- A full time (equivalent) Income Maximisation and Welfare Advisor, focused on supporting caring families (unpaid carers, their families and those that they care for) to access bill reductions, hardship grants, statutory and other sources of support available (e.g. referrals for specialist debt advice, fuel vouchers, food bank referrals). This could be to develop new services and/or dedicated partnerships with existing providers or bolster existing capacity in areas of particular social and economic deprivation and demonstrated carer need (e.g. waiting lists for access to welfare and/or benefits specific support)
- Programme of financial management and resilience workshops aimed at increasing carers' financial literacy, with particular reference to avoiding/reducing fuel debt, routes of access to existing support and increasing energy efficiencies - a specific carers financial resilience and fuel support awareness programme would be developed incorporating information in relation to VCMA identified activities, namely promotion and sign up to Priority Services Register, raising awareness of carbon monoxide and identification of homes where a locking cooker valve would support personal independence e.g. carers of adult children with additional learning needs, those with early dementia symptoms etc.
- Access to micro grants to provide immediate relief of energy associated debt - this could be delivered via a voucher scheme and/or support with missing payments and/or purchasing cost effective personal heating products (e.g. fleece blankets, additional warm clothes which may be needed to get through sudden cold snaps in the weather), which have proven to be popular and very useful. This would not be an openly advertised part of the programme, they would be allocated within set decision-making systems and unpaid caring families would be limited to up to £100 of direct grant support per year.
- Targets to support carers from under-represented groups, typically those who experience additional barriers to accessing statutory, health and social care support and those most at risk of living in poverty - this could be used to provide direct support (e.g. interpreters, financial related counselling and advice, visual aids etc.), outreach work to develop partnerships with trusted organisations to increase community carer awareness and referral into support ahead of crisis . These more vulnerable groups, which have been identified via Census data, reports from social mobility specialists and Carers Trust's own Centre of Evidence, will include:
  - o Carers from minoritised ethnic communities.
  - o Working carers (particularly those also in receipt of Universal Credit).
  - o Parent carers of children with additional learning needs.

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|  | <p>o Young adult carers (aged 18-25).</p> <p>Carers Trust will use their strong connections to influence local and national decision-makers by campaigning for improved recognition, financial support and benefits for carers across all three nations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving understanding amongst national and local decision-makers of the ‘costs of caring’.</li> <li>• Ensuring carers are identified as a priority group for the current Household Support Fund in England, Scottish Welfare Fund in Scotland and Discretionary Assistance Fund in Wales and future discretionary funding streams.</li> <li>• Leveraging the next general election as an opportunity to push forward the case for better financial support for unpaid carers.</li> <li>• Upskilling our network of local carer organisations to take a more prominent role in promoting and distributing funds locally and to engage with local decision-makers on the importance of these funds.</li> <li>• Having carers’ voices at its heart.</li> </ul> <p>Carers Trust are in the process of developing a Virtual Carers Centre. Designed in partnership with carers and local carers services it will be an online, one-stop-shop through which carers can access a wide menu of services, amplifying trusted community-based carer support into the digital realm and bridging the online and offline worlds. Through the mechanism of the Virtual Carers Centre platform, there is vast potential for us to innovate with partners to make support for carers struggling with their household finances fuel costs and energy efficiencies available to them wherever they may be.</p>  |
| <p><b>Why the Project is Being Funded Through the VCMA</b></p> | <p>This project operates across all the GDN networks and aligns to our collective GDN strategic ambition to support customers with ‘Fuel Poverty &amp; Energy Affordability’ and to help them maintain a safe and warm home.</p> <p>It will reinforce local carers agencies to deliver their tailored support packages to the communities they serve, as well as pushing for positive policy changes affecting carers.</p> <p>The project will build on the success of the Wales &amp; West Utilities initiatives with Swansea and Bridgend Carers centres, providing an in depth suite of energy specific support services helping carers reduce energy related expenditure, increase their income through benefit entitlement checks; safeguarding carers and their cared for through Priority Service Register (PSR) referrals and by providing awareness around the dangers of Carbon Monoxide (CO).</p> <p>The project will work collaboratively with expert agencies to maximise positive impacts and deliver defined outcomes for vulnerable individuals.</p> <p>In order to qualify as a VCMA Project, a project must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) have a positive, or a forecasted positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI) including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA project</li> <li>b) either: i. provide support to consumers in Vulnerable Situations and relate to energy safeguarding, or ii. Provide awareness of the dangers of CO, or iii. Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO;</li> <li>c) have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these;</li> <li>d) go above and beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations; and</li> <li>e) not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved, or local funding)</li> </ol> <p>This project is being funded through VCMA as per the above guidelines.</p> |
| <p><b>Evidence of Stakeholder/Customer Support</b></p>         | <p><b>WWU Stakeholder Evidence:</b></p>   |

Through our business planning for RIIO GD2, priority customers research and stakeholders told us that tackling fuel poverty was a priority for WWU alongside raising awareness of the PSR and the dangers of CO.

Our continued engagement with stakeholders such as the NEA, Citizens Advice, and charities supported by fuel poverty statistics shows due to high inflation and record energy prices that fuel poverty is impacting more homes than ever. People who were struggling are now not using the heating or limiting use 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.

We have tested support for projects under the VCMA which target fuel poverty through our CEG, Citizens panels, VCMA showcase events and Regional Workshops with overwhelming support to continue and do even more.

**SGN Stakeholder Evidence:**

Throughout GD2 SGN's dedicated Vulnerable Steering Group has helped shape our vulnerability strategy and our priorities to ensure that we meet our Business Plan commitments to support vulnerable customers, those most in need of support to maintain a safe and warm home. It is with guidance and support from our dedicated Vulnerable Steering Group that SGN have a clear approach to delivering support to vulnerable customers, ensuring that we're using relevant data to prioritise targeting priority customer groups and working in geographic areas most likely to be living in cold and unhealthy homes.

**NGN Stakeholder Evidence:**

As part of our Health Focussed CIVS workshop, stakeholders told us that one of the biggest concerns was health, specifically the link between living in a cold, damp home and the impact on health. Health projects are a priority for NGN this regulatory year and we have already started engaging with NEA and other partners on this issue. We are also engaging with the charity Noah's Ark, in relation to financial hardship and mental health.

Through extensive engagement with stakeholders, we are seeing a number of key themes coming through consistently in terms of the impact of health and increased risks associated with cold, damp homes. Some notable observations and key areas are:

- We're seeing evidence of more expensive fuel costs for those with disabilities and those living with specific health conditions
- We're seeing a rise in mental health issues within our network – and acknowledging this as a barrier to engagement in longer term support
- We're acknowledging increases in the risk of CO poisoning – and looking at ways to identify and address this

We are aware that where health is a concern, there may also be involvement of unpaid carers who themselves may be in a vulnerable situation. This could be as a result of financial hardship, social isolation and increased health and wellbeing risks. NGN have already observed the positive impact of The Carers Room project and are aware that the Carers Trust partnership will compliment the support already available, and increase support for a wider range of people in unpaid caring roles.

**Cadent Stakeholder Evidence:**

With regards to the customer/stakeholder engagement conducted by Cadent, an insights project was undertaken in May 2023 to support the future delivery of VCMA projects. The project was undertaken by experts from Savanta and consisted of stakeholder and

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|   | <p>customer interviews, as well as a national omnibus survey. The customer surveys found that tackling affordability and fuel poverty was top of mind. Every customer engaged as part of the project reported affordability as a concern, with many pointing to the mental and physical health impacts that they had directly experienced as a result of the cost of living/fuel crisis.</p> <p>The partnership with Carers Trust will provide support to customers who are unpaid family carers by delivering various services including offering tailored advice and access to micro grants.</p>  |
| <p><b>Outcomes, Associated Actions and Success Criteria</b></p> | <p>Carers Trust will employ two Programme Leads (1.4FTE) and a full-time Programme Support Officer to co-ordinate and support the activities in the 22 local project sites and 2 additional outreach locality sites, across all three nations.</p> <p>They anticipate that local project sites will directly interact with approximately 21,200 unpaid carers per year, across all funded delivery outputs. Indirect interactions (with other carers, people in receipt of care and wider family members) could amount to an additional 53,000 per year. Over the two-year delivery period, the programme would therefore aim to achieve:</p> <p>Target <b>direct</b> beneficiaries: 43,425</p> <p>This breaks down to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 25,552 accessing direct income maximisation and welfare support (500 per carers centre-based site, per year; 888 per outreach locality site per year)</li> <li>- 13,716 accessing financial management and resilience sessions (250 per carers centre-based site, per year; 679 per outreach locality site per year)</li> <li>- 35,920 accessing financial management and resilience materials including specific fuel poverty, energy efficiency and support access information (680 per carers centre-based site, per year; 1,500 per outreach locality site per year)</li> </ul> <p>Target <b>indirect</b> beneficiaries: 106,000 carer family members</p> <p>Total beneficiaries: 149,425<br/>Forecasted average cost per direct beneficiary throughout project term: £93.86</p> <p>15% of direct beneficiaries are estimated to result in a Priority Services Register sign-up (Total: 6,514)</p> <p>They will develop a range of resources and materials to provide effective and consistent information for carers at each local project site. This will include animations, low literacy versions and translations for specific targeted communities, including Welsh language materials in Wales as per Carers Trust's standard.</p> <p>Dedicate significant resource from a new policy role to focus on campaigning and influencing activities. This will draw on evidence from the locally delivered projects across all three nations, cross nation public polling and research work in order to raise awareness of and campaign for a better financial deal for unpaid family carers. They will manage a steering group of representatives from national organisations, including carers themselves, to support holistic programme development, including Citizens Advice Bureau, Turn2Us, National Energy Action and condition/community specific organisations. A specific 'community of practice' based around addressing financial insecurity will also be managed, open to local carer organisations (who are members of the Carers Trust Network), both those running local project sites within the programme and across the wider Network (totalling 124 member organisations) and other stakeholder partners to aid shared learning and help create a sustainable legacy for the programme, both locally and nationally.</p> |

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|   | <p>The development of the new Virtual Carers Centre digital platform will support local project sites by augmenting existing services, enabling reach to new carers and supporting collaboration and syndication of resources across the network. As a carer facing offer, it will ensure carers have access to a digital service that meaningfully routes into and integrates with local support.</p> <p>Carers Trust will aim to provide carers' access to materials and increased profile of local carer organisations to effectively provide income maximisation, fuel poverty and energy efficiency support to carers in their locality. The Virtual Carers Centre will have support applicable to carers of any age and caring for a diverse range of conditions and needs. It will work in connected partnership with local, quality carers organisations and have two further key audience beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local carers organisations - enhanced, digital ability to extend reach to new carers.</li> <li>• Commissioners – future developments will enable access to aggregated data and trends across local carer population on a local and regional basis.</li> </ul> <p>As the project comes to end, Carers Trust will also support each local project site with resources for further fundraising and commissioning opportunities, to enable sustainability of project impact. A dedicated resource within Carers Trust's Network Development Team will provide specific support to managers of the 23 sites with their sustainability plans from Year Two and further service design to those wishing to replicate income maximisation services.</p> <p>Percentage targets have been included against most of the outcomes. Where some haven't been included, this is due to the nature of the area, with many more factors having an influence on outcomes. We expect that:</p> <p>Short-term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased referral rate for income maximisation support – 80%</li> <li>• Reduction in unclaimed benefits – average £2k increase per household</li> <li>• More eligible households added to the Priority Services Register</li> <li>• Increased awareness of CO – 95%</li> <li>• More carers have reduced fuel bills – 75%</li> </ul> <p>Medium-term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced anxiety and financial stress relating to caring-related energy debt – 80%</li> <li>• Improved knowledge and application of financial literacy for carers and their wider support networks – 95%</li> <li>• Improved referral pathways to carer support</li> <li>• Increase in peer and support networks</li> <li>• Increased skills in providing relevant financial and welfare information – 18%</li> </ul> <p>footprint engaged of carer organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve mental health, well-being and resilience – 80%</li> <li>• Reduced waiting list to receive bespoke financial literacy support</li> <li>• Reduction in reported energy related debt – 60%</li> <li>• More carers being kept warm in their home – 75%</li> </ul> <p>Long-term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced financial hardship and increasing household income (measured by caring family members accessing correct benefits/support) – 50%</li> <li>• Increased community carer awareness</li> <li>• Increased diversity of carers accessing generic carer support – 50% on current groups</li> <li>• Improved energy efficiency of carers' homes – 50%</li> <li>• Reduced stress on social care services, including doctors' visits and the NHS around carbon monoxide poisoning and the effects of unheated homes</li> <li>• Increase in the awareness of carers issues with local and national decision-makers to create change</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Project Partners and Third Parties Involved</b></p> | <p><b>Wales &amp; West Utilities</b><br/> Bridgend Carers Centre<br/> Swansea Carers Centre<br/> Carers Outreach North Wales</p>  |

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|--|---|
|  | <p>The Carers Centre Bath &amp; North East Somerset<br/>Improving Lives Plymouth<br/>Carer Support Wiltshire &amp; Dorset*</p> <p><b>Cadent</b><br/>Carers in Hertfordshire<br/>City &amp; Hackney Carers Centre<br/>Manchester Carers Centre<br/>Sheffield Carers Centre<br/>Derbyshire Carers Centre<br/>Caring Together (supporting carers across eligible areas of Norfolk)<br/>Carers Trust Heart of England</p> <p><b>Northern Gas Network</b><br/>North Tyneside Carers Centre<br/>Carers Plus Yorkshire<br/>Sunderland Carers Centre<br/>Hartlepool Carers Centre</p> <p><b>SGN</b><br/>Helensburgh &amp; Lomond Carers SCIO<br/>Glasgow South East carers Centre<br/>Care for the Carers (East Sussex)<br/>Quarriers (cross local authority programme supporting carers based in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray)<br/>Carers Support East Kent<br/>Crossroads Care South-East London (Bexley, Greenwich, and Lewisham)<br/>Carer Support Wiltshire &amp; Dorset*</p> <p>Local project sites will also signpost and in many instances will refer carers to other services for further support; including Citizens Advice Bureaus, food banks and other local food pantries, care and repair services, Hospice UK, Marie Curie, connecting into the local authority on specific services e.g. disabled badges to help with isolation. Carers Trust will promote the services of MoneyHelper – who can offer training and advice on income maximisation to project staff within the local project sites. Carers Trust will also work with MoneyHelper on embedding tailored support throughout the Virtual Carers Centre as a legacy output of the programme.</p> <p>* Outreach locality sites.</p> |
| <b>Potential for New Learning</b>                  | <p>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.</p> <p>It provides an opportunity to share best practice and understand the regional differences that may affect unpaid carers in different ways.</p>  |
| <b>Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations</b> | <p>Using the expected number of customers reached provided by Carers Trust and the outcomes provided, this project is expected to achieve the below Social Return on Investment (SROI):</p>   |

|   |  |                                  |                 |
|---|--|----------------------------------|-----------------|
|   | <b>5-year Results</b>  |                                  |                 |
|   | <b>Economic</b>  | <b>Total gross present value</b> | £173,175,760.79 |
|   |  | <b>NPV</b>                       | £169,151,534.17 |
|   |  | <b>SROI</b>                      | £42.03          |
| <b>VCMA Project Start and End Date</b>            | March 2024 – March 2026  |                                  |                 |
| <b>Geographical Area</b>                          | Across Wales, England and Scotland at various carers agencies as outlined above.   |                                  |                 |
| <b>Internal Governance and Project Management</b> | <p>This project has been developed to cover a UK wide footprint in collaboration with all gas networks.</p> <p>This project proposal has been reviewed through various industry working groups including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GDN Vulnerability Working Group (monthly)</li> <li>- VCMA Steering Group</li> </ul> <p>In addition to the above, each GDN has their own internal governance structure which involves reviewing project proposals and budget costs with various teams and management levels throughout their organisation including senior managers and at an executive level.</p> <p>This project is also supported by stakeholders (as outlined above).</p> <p>The project will be managed and led by WWU and will consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monthly project review meetings</li> <li>- Quarterly stakeholder review meetings</li> <li>- Stage gate review after 1 year of delivery</li> <li>- Ongoing reviews throughout the duration of the project regarding delivery of outcomes - this will feed into lessons learnt and shared best practice to ensure the project is successful in delivering value for money and maximising outcomes for customers and communities</li> </ul> |                                  |                 |

**Gas Network Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Governance Document - PEA Control Table**

In order to ensure that a VCMA project is registered in accordance with the Ofgem VCMA governance document (incl. project eligibility assessment), the below table should be completed as part of the project registration process.

**Stage 1: GDN Collaboration Group PEA Review****Meeting date review completed:****Review completed by:**

| GDN:   | Name:             | Job Title:                                    |
|--------|-------------------|---|
| NGN    | Laura Ratcliffe   | Social Strategy Programme Manager             |
| SGN    | Kerry Potter      | Group Social Impact and Vulnerability Manager |
| WWU    | Sophie Shorney    | VCMA Manager                                  |
| Cadent | Gurvinder Dosanjh | Social Programmes Manager                     |

**Stage 2: GD2CVG Panel Review****Meeting date sign off agreed:****Review completed by:**

| GDN:   | Name:            | Job Title:   |
|--------|------------------|--|
| NGN    | Eileen Brown     | Customer Experience Director                             |
| SGN    | Maureen McIntosh | Director of Customer Services                            |
| WWU    | Nigel Winnan     | Customer & Social Obligations Strategy Manager           |
| Cadent | Phil Burrows     | Head of Customer Vulnerability Social Programme Delivery |

**Step 3: Participating GDN individual signatory sign-off**

| GDN    | Name:            | Job Title:   | Signature: | Date: |
|--------|------------------|--|------------|-------|
| NGN:   | Eileen Brown     | Customer Experience Director                             |            |       |
| SGN:   | Maureen McIntosh | Director of Customer Services                            |            |       |
| WWU:   | Nigel Winnan     | Customer & Social Obligations Strategy Manager           |            |       |
| Cadent | Phil Burrows     | Head of Customer Vulnerability Social Programme Delivery |            |       |

**Step 4: Upload PEA Document to the Website & Notification Email Sent to Ofgem (vcma@ofgem.gov.uk)**

Date that PEA Document Uploaded to the Website:

Date that Notification Email Sent to Ofgem: