

Wales & West Utilities Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Registration Form

Information required	Description
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Address	Wales & West House, Spooner Close, Celtic Springs, Coedkernew, Newport, NP10 8FZ
Project title	Welfare Benefits Advice Service for Unpaid Carers and their Families
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£50,000
Problem	<p>According to the State of Caring Report 2021 (Carers Wales) "If the health and social care systems are to recover, they must value and put in place support services for carers to enable them to carry on. 2022 must begin with urgent action to meet the needs of unpaid carers who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic."</p> <p>Since the pandemic, the number of unpaid carers in Wales has increased significantly and their physical and mental health has deteriorated, their services disrupted, and their careers curtailed if they are in employment.</p> <p>Unpaid carers were suffering before the pandemic but if recovery from the pandemic is to happen carers need to have improved access to practical financial advice and assistance to enable carers to continue to support their friends and loved ones who are ill, disabled, elderly, suffer with mental health or substance misuse issues.</p> <p>Carers reported, in the State of Caring Report 2021, that 23% feel unconfident of managing financially over the next year (2022) and 8% of unpaid carers are unable to afford utility bills. These figures have been made worse through the pandemic</p>

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	<p>with 36% of carers struggling to make ends meet; 23% are or have been in debt since the pandemic. In addition, energy bills have increased substantially whilst furlough has ended, Universal Credit reduced, and 66% carers are saying that they are spending more on groceries and bills since the start of the pandemic.</p> <p>This project will look to bolster the support being provided by Bridgend Carers Centre.</p>
<p>Scope and Objectives</p>	<p>Bridgend Carers Centre will hire a Welfare Benefits Advisor for a 2-year period, which will increase support to unpaid carers. This will help carers to avoid poverty through a diverse range of benefit applications (Attendance Allowance, PIP, Carers Allowance, Pension Credit, Council Tax Discount, DLA etc), improve debt management, and improve overall wellbeing for them and the people they care for. The Welfare Benefits Advisor would offer holistic support by assessing the financial situation, helping with debt, disabled badge applications, raising awareness of house/ car insurance comparison websites to save money, water meter installation, bereavement grants and benefits, energy efficiency awareness, applications for the Warm Home discount scheme, Nest Scheme applications (dependant on eligibility), CO safety initiatives and energy comparisons. They will actively sign eligible customers up to the Priority Service Register (PSR), provide awareness and advice around Carbon Monoxide (CO), access to free CO monitors, and utilise their existing network of partnerships to deliver ongoing support beyond this project agreement.</p> <p>We anticipate that this project will be achieve at least 900 interactions between the Welfare Benefits Advisor and clients, resulting in savings of at least £400,000.</p>
<p>Expected outcomes and the associated actions.</p>	<p>Wales & West Utilities will fund this project at a cost of £50,000 for a 2-year period. We anticipate that this project will be achieve at least 900 interactions between the</p>

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	<p>Welfare Benefits Advisor and clients, resulting in savings of at least £400,000. The benefits of this project will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct financial benefits to the carer/family - Improved Health and wellbeing of carer/family - Decreased stress - Decreased bills - Warmer/Healthier homes - Safer homes - Increased disposable income - More affluent communities - Improved environmentally friendly homes and these will be achieved by: - Maximisation of income for carers and families through welfare benefits checks and applications. - Increased support to receive debt management through increased referrals to CAB, and debt management agencies. - Safer homes through raising awareness and education of energy efficiency. - Alleviation of fuel poverty through switching tariffs and providers. - Increased capacity to support vulnerable carers and families of dementia, disabled children, cancer, and carers of children with learning disabilities. - Support will be given to bereaved carers through applications for grants and benefits. <p>Through additional support measures like the PSR and partnerships already cultivated by Bridgend Carers Centre this project will also see longevity past the project period, in terms of support for carers.</p>
Scale of VCMA project and SROI calculations	We have taken the forecast support measures from Bridgend Carers and used as the input to our SROI model. The output shows a £19.25 net benefit per £1 invested
Project Partners and third parties involved	This project will be delivered through a partnership of Wales & West Utilities, and Bridgend Carers Centre.
VCMA Project start and end date	Project start date: 01 April 2022 Project end date: 30 April 2024

Geographical area	This project will be run in Bridgend, Wales.
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Please return all completed forms to: VCMA@wwutilities.co.uk

For further information on the VCMA please use the below link to the Ofgem guidance document:

[Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance \(VCMA\) Governance Document | Ofgem](#)