

Start date: April 2026

PEA reference: PCG-Collab-012a

End of Life Energy Support Service

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)



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Project registration table

Project summary																					
Project title	End of Life Energy Support Service																				
Strategic area	Supporting Priority Customer Groups																				
Lead partner name	Marie Curie																				
Lead GDN(s)	SGN																				
Funding GDN(s)	Cadent, NGN and WWU																				
New/Updated (indicate as appropriate)	New																				
Collaborative VCMA Projects Specific role(s) of GDN(s) participating in a collaborative VCMA Project	SGN lead Cadent, NGN and WWU – delivery																				
Date of PEA submission	March 2026																				
Project start and end date	April 2026 – September 2028																				
Project location	England, Scotland and Wales																				
Sectors involved (include only those involved)	Gas Distribution Network Charitable Organisation																				
Project contact																					
Name	Shelley Smith																				
Contact details	Positive.impact@sgn.co.uk																				
Project partners and third parties involved																					
Organisation name	Role																				
Marie Curie	Lead delivery partner																				
Costs and funding																					
Total cost (£k)	£821,355.00																				
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	<table> <tr> <th>GDN</th> <th>Percentage</th> <th>Funding</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Cadent</td> <td>49.6030%</td> <td>£407,417.04</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NGN</td> <td>11.5965%</td> <td>£95,248.38</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SGN</td> <td>27.1459%</td> <td>£222,963.99</td> </tr> <tr> <td>WWU</td> <td>11.6546%</td> <td>£95,725.59</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>100%</td> <td>£821,355.00</td> </tr> </table>			GDN	Percentage	Funding	Cadent	49.6030%	£407,417.04	NGN	11.5965%	£95,248.38	SGN	27.1459%	£222,963.99	WWU	11.6546%	£95,725.59	Total	100%	£821,355.00
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Total BAU vulnerability and CO safety activity baseline allowance funding by activity (£k)	N/A																				

Problem(s)

This section needs to outline the problem(s) which is/are being addressed by the VCMA project.

Fuel poverty and energy affordability remain critical challenges across England, Scotland, and Wales. Rising household costs, regional inequalities, and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis have pushed many families into financial strain, but the impact is not felt evenly. Some households face significantly higher pressures due to housing conditions, income instability, health needs, and the cost of essential utilities. These pressures become even more acute for people living with a terminal illness.

A terminal diagnosis often brings a profound and sudden change in personal circumstances. Household finances can deteriorate rapidly as individuals reduce or leave work, carers take on additional responsibilities, and essential costs increase. Care needs escalate, and families face new demands on their time, income, and emotional capacity. Often, as household incomes drop and costs for essentials rise the ability to manage basic household essentials becomes increasingly fragile.

People at the end of life are also more vulnerable to the consequences of living in a cold home or experiencing interruptions to essential utilities. A warm, stable environment is not simply a comfort, it is a fundamental component of safe and dignified care. Any disruption or rationing of heating, electricity, or water can have a devastating impact on health, comfort, and quality of life. People living with a terminal illness are often relying on essential medical and mobility equipment and are often required to heat their living spaces to higher temperatures to manage pain, respiratory issues and other clinical symptoms. According to [Consumer Scotland](#) publication in March 2026, this can result in substantially higher living costs of up to 75%.

The average household paid over £800 more per year for their energy in 2024/25 compared to winter 2020/21 a 77% increase. For people experiencing a terminal illness, these rising costs are often compounded by increased energy usage and loss of income. For those below state pension age, the emergency benefits process can leave individuals out of work with significantly reduced income, creating a bleak financial situation at the very moment they are facing some of the most difficult experiences of their lives.

Evidence continues to highlight the scale of the problem. In September 2025, [the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Hospice and End of Life Care](#) published a report on the financial impact of a terminal diagnosis. It found that energy costs are a major driver of additional expenses. Many people with terminal conditions rely on powered wheelchairs, ventilators, oxygen concentrators, or specialist beds and equipment that can push electricity costs as high as £10,000 per year. These are not optional, they are essential for safety, mobility, and comfort.

Marie Curie's [Dying in Poverty Report 2025](#) found that more than 120,000 people die in fuel poverty each year, with an equal split between working-age and pension-age individuals. The report also highlighted stark inequalities with 27% of deaths among minoritised ethnic groups were from people experiencing fuel poverty at the end of life. Being in the last year of life is associated with a 32% greater risk of poverty for working-aged people and a 23% greater risk for pensioners.

For many families, the period following a terminal diagnosis is also marked by an overwhelming volume of information, assessments, and support services. Even when help is available, it can be difficult to navigate especially for those who have never previously needed to ask for support or engage with the welfare system. Awareness of schemes designed to reduce energy costs, protect vulnerable households, or provide financial relief is often low, and the complexity of eligibility criteria can deter people from applying. As a result, many families miss out on essential support at the very moment they need it most, compounding the financial and emotional strain they are already experiencing.

Scope and objectives

Outline the scope and objectives of the VCMA project linked to the problem statement above. This should be clearly defined including the benefits which would directly impact customers on the participating GDNs' network(s), and where the benefits of the VCMA Projects lie.

The project will build on the foundation of a programme delivered in partnership with Marie Curie and the GDNs since September 2022. It will focus on maintaining the skills across Marie Curie's extensive network on how to identify and support those at end-of life who are eligible for extra energy safeguarding support and a dedicated service to help those living with a terminal illness access the help they need to maintain a safe and warm home.

Together, the GDNs and Marie Curie will:

- Provide a dedicated Energy Support team who can provide advice on energy safeguarding, including understanding fuel poverty, safe heating, gas safety, and carbon monoxide risks
- Provide practical resources and tools to deliver clear, accessible engagement on topics such as energy and money advice, the Priority Services Register, gas and carbon monoxide safety in accessible formats both leaflets and website
- Help to integrate this support into their existing services so that Marie Curie nursing staff and volunteers can confidently recognise households struggling to maintain a safe and warm home and how to make effective referrals into the Energy Support team
- Expand the support services by promoting the energy support available through the national network of Community Fundraisers and the 130 Marie Curie charity shops

Overall, the objective of this partnership would be to maintain and develop a sustainable pathway for Marie Curie to deepen and share their skills in energy safeguarding, ensuring that families living with a terminal illness are identified early and supported to access the full range of extra help available.

Project design engagement

Targeting vulnerability support: This must describe how the GDN(s) identified the vulnerability need being addressed through the VCMA project, including the use of consumer research, stakeholder engagement, and data and technology.

Evidence of stakeholder and/or customer support: Information regarding all stakeholder and/or customer engagement which has contributed to the development of the VCMA Project.

Stakeholder project design input: How stakeholders were actively involved in the project design, and how their input and feedback were incorporated to shape the project design. Where stakeholders disagree about the project design, justification must be provided for why the current project design is deemed preferable.

Marie Curie has established itself as one of the most trusted and influential organisations supporting people at the end of life across England, Scotland and Wales. Through its nursing services, information and support lines, policy leadership and community partnerships, Marie Curie works to ensure that everyone receives the care, dignity and comfort they deserve in their final months, regardless of circumstance. The organisation is known for its clear, compassionate guidance and its ability to support families through some of the most complex and emotionally challenging moments of their lives.

Since 2022, Marie Curie has worked closely with the gas networks to explore how the energy sector can better support people living with a terminal illness. The pilot elements of our partnership demonstrated the value of

combining clinical expertise with industry knowledge to identify and support households at heightened risk of fuel poverty, energy insecurity and unsafe living conditions. We learned that engagement and training need to be co-designed with the clinical teams so that they are shaped with real world challenges, we also learned that some of our ambitions we're not feasible for example, PSR conversations targets were adjusted to take into consideration that most respite visits happen overnight where it is not always appropriate for conversation.

Between December 2022 and February 2026, the project has delivered strong and consistent impact across all key areas, surpassing 100% of its targeted deliverables 2 months ahead of schedule. We've trained 1,881 nurses, HCAs and Helper Volunteers (104.2% of target) and held 8,663 Priority Services Register conversations (103.2% of target). Our teams have completed 20,032 benefit calculations (103.9% of target) and supported 8,158 people with energy-related enquiries through our ESOs (110.5% of target). Alongside this, 35,758 users have accessed energy-related resources via our website (101.2% of target, on track for full delivery), and a further 15,592 people have received printed energy resources such as booklets and leaflets (132.1% of target).

This work has been strengthened further through a regional project delivered with SGN in the South of England. The project provided a deeper understanding of the specific vulnerabilities faced by people at the end of life, including increased energy usage, reliance on medical equipment, sudden changes in income and the emotional strain of navigating complex support systems. It also highlighted the importance of proactive, trusted outreach ensuring that families who may never have asked for help before are supported to access the schemes and protections available to them. The learning from this regional work has been instrumental in shaping the next phase of national collaboration.

Together, these projects have shown that when energy networks and end of life care specialists work side by side, they can reach people who are often invisible in traditional fuel poverty programmes and face urgent needs. They have also demonstrated that tailored, compassionate support can significantly reduce the risk of energy related harm at a time when households are at their most vulnerable.

The partnership between Marie Curie and the gas networks has become a flagship example of effective cross sector collaboration. It was showcased at the 2024 VCMA Annual Showcase, where it was recognised for its innovative approach to supporting vulnerable communities and its ability to translate learning from frontline care into practical, scalable solutions. The partnership has also been shared as best practice at the Utility Week Vulnerability Conference and at major charity sector events, where it has been highlighted as a model for how essential service providers can work with trusted charities to deliver meaningful, person-centred support.

Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

This should include an explanation of why the VCMA project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria, and how it aligns with the GDN's VCMA collaborative strategy.

This project meets this eligibility criteria, as the project aligns with the GDNs collaborative vulnerability strategy, in which we have a clear ambition to keep our communities safe and warm, and to support those most in need by helping vulnerable households not just today but as we invest in a green energy future.

- This project aligns with the following shared objectives of our collaborative vulnerability strategy:
- Help more vulnerable households access energy safeguarding services
- Reach communities under-served and most in need of trusted intermediaries to take up support services

How VCMA funding complements or supplements BAU activities

Where the VCMA Project is being delivered alongside a BAU vulnerability and/or CO safety activity or activities funded through the GDN's baseline allowance, the GDN must provide sufficient evidence that the VCMA Project complements or supplements the BAU activity or activities to prevent the risk of double funding.

By working in partnership with the GDNs, Marie Curie has established a robust referral pathway to raise concerns related to key energy safeguarding services and access for those at end of life. This collaboration ensures that issues affecting vulnerable individuals, particularly those who may struggle to access or navigate utility services are identified early and directed to the appropriate support from their utility companies.

As a trusted organisation, the Marie Curie is well placed to engage effectively with vulnerable individuals and refer eligible people for BAU funded support. This includes access to carbon monoxide alarms, Locking Cooker Valves, and other measures that help maintain safety and independence in the home.

Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

Details of the VCMA Project outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these, interim milestones and how the Funding Licensee will evaluate whether the project has been successful. Each action should have a proportion of the funding allocated.

Marie Curie and the GDNs will carry out monthly reporting reviews on measurable outcomes against targets to ensure successful delivery. Quarterly reviews will provide the opportunity for more in-depth analysis and the ability to highlight insights and learnings to share, as well as identify any risks and requirement for any associated actions to mitigate these.

Key outcomes we aim to achieve from this project:

Outcome	Project Target	Target by network			
		Cadent Approx Reach 49.6030%	NGN Approx Reach 11.5965%	SGN Approx Reach 27.1459%	WWU Approx Reach 11.6546%
PSR conversation	8,315	4,126	965	2,258	969
Energy advice	6,150	3,051	713	1,669	717
Benefits checks	12,450	6,176	1,444	3,379	1,451
Frontline training	500	248	58	136	58
Energy advice – web	12,810	6,355	1,486	3,478	1,492
Energy advice - print	13,680	6,784	1,586	3,713	1,594

*In our historical VCMA partnership with Marie Curie, it was not possible to allocate a small number of households reached due to lack of postcode data, private web browsing, etc. In these cases, we will split that unassigned group by GDN based on their customer split.

Success Criteria

During this 30-month project, Marie Curie will provide meaningful support via the Energy Support Officers of a minimum of 27,415 households impacted at end of life by;

- Training frontline nurses and volunteers so they have the skills to offer extra help through the service which includes CO safety messaging

- Meaningful outcomes to all customers who interact with the Energy Support Officer teams, meeting target numbers and making a measurable difference
- An accessible service to meet the needs of people at end of life
- Help for the most vulnerable households so they remain safe, warm and connected, with a reduced risk of self-disconnection
- Improved affordability through debt resolution, billing support and income maximisation
- Increased access to Priority Services Register protections for eligible customers
- Improved customer confidence, stability and ability to manage energy-related issues

Potential for new learning

Provide details of what the GDN(s) expect(s) to learn and how the learning will be disseminated.

Throughout GD2, Marie Curie and the gas distribution networks have taken an open, collaborative approach to developing and strengthening the community programme. Together, we have shared learning transparently, reflected on challenges and successes, and actively shaped the model through joint discussion and sector engagement.

Marie Curie has also played a central role in regional partner and stakeholder events across the networks, consistently attending with a spirit of collaboration that encourages the exchange of best practice at both national and regional levels. This openness has strengthened the programme's design, broadened its reach, and ensured that the support offered is grounded in the lived experience of the communities we collectively serve.

Our intention is to continue to share insights from our partnership and actively seek opportunities to raise awareness of the support available and effective ways to engage those most in need. This includes hosting roundtables with charities supporting people with critical medical needs and end-of-life care creating a space for organisations such as Together for Short Lives, Cruse Bereavement Support and Sue Ryder to contribute their expertise and help inform a more coordinated approach to vulnerability.

Aligning with and supporting wider vulnerability approaches

Details of how the project supports or aligns with approaches to vulnerability taken by the wider energy industry, other utilities and/or consumer organisations; local, national or devolved governments; or evidence innovation or a gap in vulnerability support provision. For example, this could include evidence of collaboration beyond the VCMA, non-VCMA joint funding of the initiative, or identified gaps in the provision of vulnerability services which the project seeks to address. The GDN should show how the project fits within broader approaches to vulnerability.

The partnership with Marie Curie has been built on a strong foundation of data, insight and frontline experience through GD2 which has helped shape the training and ongoing services provided.

The programme has been shaped with careful consideration of the wider vulnerability landscape across England, Scotland and Wales. The model aligns closely with the principles of the Warm Homes Plan, particularly its emphasis on early identification of vulnerable households, targeted support for those with the highest energy needs, and the importance of trusted intermediaries in reaching people who may not engage with statutory services.

It also reinforces industry initiatives such as the Priority Services Register by helping families understand their eligibility, supporting them to register at the earliest opportunity, and ensuring that those living with a terminal

illness receive the protections and tailored support they are entitled to. By integrating these national and industry priorities into a single, compassionate approach, the partnership strengthens the safety net for people at the end of life and ensures that energy vulnerability is addressed in a way that is consistent, coordinated and responsive to the realities families face.

Monitoring and evaluation

Details of how the GDNs will work with their project partners to monitor the impact of the VCMA project and evaluate its effectiveness and success.

This project features co-designed success criteria underpinning its Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework, with clear reporting and insight requirements from mobilisation through to delivery.

Marie Curie and the GDNs will continue to review monthly reports on measurable outcomes, collaborating to ensure successful delivery, while each quarter the core project team will come together to share performance insights, highlights mitigations for any underperformance, and drive opportunities for continuous improvement.

We will report annually on partnership impact, sharing broadly via collaborative and company-specific reports to showcase outcomes and key learnings. Additionally, the CO and Vulnerability Working Groups provide performance updates to the National Delivery Group and National Steering Panel, with all GDNs disseminating results through their business governance processes, including Independent Steering Groups.

Scale of VCMA project and SROI calculations, including NPV

Justify the scale of the VCMA project – including the scale of the investment relative to its potential benefits. As part of this, the Funding Licensee(s) should provide the SROI calculation, including NPV. Note: The value in numbers of the SROI and NPV must be provided, rather than confirmation of positive impact.

Together with the other Gas Distribution Networks we worked with leading social impact research consultancy SIRIO Strategies on the development of the Industry Standard Social Value Framework and supporting GDN Rulebook. We have used that GDN Rulebook to carry out an assessment of financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to our services for vulnerable households included in this partnership.

We’ve incorporated social value based on the deliverables and associated targets detailed above. Carrying out an assessment of these predicted outcomes we forecast a positive net Social Return on Investment of £40.72 for every £1 spent.

Social value measurement

Total cost*	£810,182.14
Total gross present value	£33,797,251.76
Net Present Value (NPV)	£32,987,069.62
SROI	£40.72

*Accounting for inflationary factors over the term of the project.

Internal governance and project management evidence

Provide a description of GDN(s) review of proposal and project sign off, with details on how the project will be managed.

Project management for this partnership will be led by SGN with clear governance arrangements in place to monitor delivery, performance and risk throughout the duration of the project.

A structured contract framework will ensure that any material changes remain aligned with customer need and stakeholder expectations, safeguarding the effective and responsible use of VCMA funds.

SGN has worked closely with the other GDNs and Marie Curie to co-design this partnership so that its ambition directly contributes to the GDN's Collaborative Vulnerability Strategy, developed through the Vulnerability Working Group and overseen by the GDN Steering Group.

The PEA has been reviewed and approved through each network's internal governance processes and formally signed off by the relevant senior leaders.

GDN	Approver (Name and Role)	Date
Cadent	Phil Burrows, Head of Social Programmes	01/04/2026
NGN	Eileen Brown, Director of Customer Service	07/04/2026
SGN	Maureen McIntosh, Director of Customer Services	13/04/2026
WWU	Gwyn Thomas, Communications and Customer Senior Manager	25/06/2026

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility Criteria	Description	Project qualifies Yes / No
Positive SROI	Have a positive, or a 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	Yes
Positive NPV	Have a positive, or a forecasted positive Net Present Value (NPV)	Yes
Support Criteria	Either: i. provide support to consumers in Vulnerable Situations and relate to Energy Safeguarding, or ii. provide support for those most at risk of being left behind in the transition to net zero, or iii. provide awareness of, and education on, the dangers of CO beyond the activities funded as business as usual (BAU) through baseline allowances, or iv. reduce the risk of harm caused by CO	Yes
Defined Outcomes	Have specific, measurable, and time-bound outcomes which align with relevant Consumer Vulnerability Strategy objectives to achieve the requirements set out in 'Support Criteria' above	Yes
Beyond Other Funding	Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s), including baseline allowance funding, or required through licence obligations	Yes
Support or Align	Support or align with approaches to vulnerability taken by the wider energy industry, other utilities and/or consumer organisations, and local, national and devolved government, or evidence innovation or a gap in vulnerability support provision;	Yes
No Other External Funding	Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding	Yes
BAU vulnerability and CO safety activities	Where a GDN's BAU vulnerability and CO safety activities are funded through baseline allowances, these are not suitable for funding through the VCMA. The GDN is permitted to use VCMA funds to supplement or complement its BAU activities, however, it must ensure that its reporting provides sufficient evidence to prevent double funding.	Yes

Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing

Eligibility Criteria	Description	Project qualifies Yes / No or N/A
Servicing must meet the following criteria:	Either: i. A GDN has had to isolate and condemn an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role; or 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 condition¹² that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes; or 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	N/A
Affordability	The household cannot afford to service the essential gas appliance, as assessed against the affordability criteria set out in the VCMA governance document	N/A
Funding	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	N/A

Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance repair and replacement

Eligibility Criteria	Description	Project qualifies Yes / No or N/A
Unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:	Either: i. GDN has had to isolate and condemn unsafe pipework or an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role; or ii. A GDN or its Project Partner has had to condemn unsafe pipework, or an essential gas appliance, following an essential gas appliance service (as described in 3.19 of the VCMA governance document)	N/A
Health condition	Either: i. The 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 has a household income of £31,000 or below in 2025/26 prices, adjusted for inflation using Consumer Price Index with Housing costs (CPIH) 13, or ii. the household cannot afford to service the essential gas appliance, as assessed against the affordability criteria set out in Appendix 1 of the VCMA governance document	N/A
Funding	Sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including national, devolved, or local government funding) to fund the unsafe pipework or the essential gas appliance repair or replacement.	N/A