

Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

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

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Welsh Kidney Network - Patient Support & Advocacy Service

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Eligibility criteria for company specific projects (other than condemned essential gas appliance repair and replacement)

In order to qualify as a VCMA Project, a project must:

- a) have a positive, or a forecasted positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI) including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA Project;
- 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;
- c) have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these;
- d) go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations; and
- e) not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding.¹

Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing, repair, and replacement

In order to qualify as a VCMA Project, unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance² servicing, repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:

- a) a GDN has to isolate and condemn unsafe pipework or an an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role;
- b) the household cannot afford to service, repair or replace unsafe pipework or the essential gas appliance; and
- c) 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 servicing, repair or replacement.

¹ If part, but not full, funding is available through an external funding source for an eligible project, VCMA funding can be used for the remaining amount.

² Essential gas appliances are gas fuelled heating systems (including gas boilers and gas fires), and gas cookers.

Information required for the registration of VCMA projects

Information required	Description
Project title	Welsh Kidney Network - Patient Support & Advocacy Service
Funding GDN(s)	Wales & West Utilities
New/ Updated PEA	27 th April 2023 <u>Updated October 2024</u>
VCMA Project contact name, email and number	Tom Robinson, tom.robinson@wwutilities.co.uk , 07890 315438 <u>Updated October 2024:</u> Sophie Shorney Sophie.shorney@wwutilities.co.uk 07583 076147
Total Cost (£)	£568,000 <u>Updated October 2024</u> Additional allowance - £257,502.85 New Project Total - £825,502.85
Total VCMA funding required (£)	£568,000 <u>Updated October 2024</u> New Project Total - £825 502.85
Problem(s)	<p>Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is common, affecting up to 1 in 10 of the adult population, and the numbers are expected to rise over the next decade, driven by the increase in diabetes, obesity, and vascular disease. A small but significant proportion of patients with CKD develop advanced progressive disease. Advanced kidney disease leads to several symptoms including breathlessness, nausea, itching and lethargy. Left untreated this is a life-threatening illness. Currently across Wales, 1500 patients with advanced kidney disease are reliant on dialysis to keep them alive. Dialysis in a hospital or satellite unit is collectively called Unit Haemodialysis (UHD) and is undertaken 3 times a week for at least 4-hour sessions at a time.</p> <p>Patients with advanced kidney disease face many barriers to remaining in or joining the workforce after starting dialysis. These include poor employment opportunities because of disadvantaged socioeconomic status, fatigue</p>

Criteria

	<p>and other symptoms of renal failure, depression and feelings of social isolation, comorbid diseases, transportation issues and scheduling conflicts with dialysis. In addition, many patients on dialysis also have anaemia, which leads to difficulties in maintaining body temperature, making the need for a warm home imperative so utility usage is higher than average. The consequent low income, particularly when compounded by increasing cost of living which are becoming more acute by the day means many of our patients live in relative poverty.</p> <p>In Wales, 45% of people on all forms of renal replacement therapy are noted to be in the 4th (22%) and 5th (23%) most deprived quintiles. Although there are government led benefit departments, citizens advice services available these services are not deemed suitable for patients with advanced kidney disease due to the time constraints patients have to work within due to treatment regimes, the impact on their physical and mental health wellbeing and the negative impact this has on their ability to focus, absorb and act upon complex information and often complex processes to ensure that they have access to the benefits and welfare support they are entitled to.</p>
Scope and Objectives	<p>The project will provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for the development of a welfare and benefit support network for patients with advanced kidney disease in Wales. • Timely, trusted advice and welfare support through 3 x Advocacy Officers, recruited and managed by Kidney Care UK (KCUK) with the specialist benefit provision being provided by Auriga Services under a sub-contract arrangement with KCUK. Each officer will be allocated to a region in Wales that provides the provision of renal dialysis services. These are hosted by Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (CVUHB), Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB) and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB). The Welsh Kidney Network (WKN) will have oversight due to its

	<p>commissioning responsibility for provision of all special adult kidney care for the population of Wales. This includes all dialysis and kidney transplant services.</p> <p>This model is specifically designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise income. • Reduce utility-related expenditure. • Provide a wealth of psychosocial help to support kidney patients across Wales, through one-to-one support to patients and their families. • Provide access to unclaimed welfare benefit entitlement and subsequently assist the individual with the application and form filling process. • Provide access to the appropriate utility company social tariffs and schemes and help with the application process. • Initiate conversations and introduce relevant charitable organisations that can help reduce utility debt. <p><u>Updated October 2024:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce a telephone support line - Support more vulnerable people. A total of 1,691 patients over the period of extended funding - to achieve better outcomes: - 756 patients with end-stage kidney failure will be helped by the Welfare and Wellbeing service from June 2025 to March 2026. - 935 patients and their families will access information and advice through the Support Line service from January 2025 to March 2026.
Why the Project is being funded through the VCMA, and how this aligns to GDN's VCMA Strategy	<p>Wales & West Utilities does not own or bill customers for their gas consumption, however, through stakeholder engagement, we recognise our role in making sure gas is used safely, and efficiently. This project goes above and beyond our core responsibilities as a Gas Distribution Network, and is eligible under the VCMA funding criteria as it will provide energy</p>

	<p>efficiency advice and CO safety advice/interventions, empowering each householder to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably.</p> <p><u>Updated October 2024:</u></p> <p>All GDNs have committed to spending VCMA money within four strategic pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fuel Poverty & Energy Affordability 2. Services Beyond The Meter 3. Supporting Priority Customer Groups 4. Carbon Monoxide Awareness <p>This project aligns to strategic pillar one and three.</p>
Evidence of Stakeholder/ Customer support	<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.</p> <p>We have undertaken further stakeholder engagement in late 2020 and early 2021 to understand the impact of COVID-19 and to confirm our assumptions on the split of the VCMA fund. The majority of stakeholders flagged fuel poverty as a bigger issue than ever due to COVID-19 and its impact on people's income, health, and upward cost of gas and electricity. This has been further exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis.</p> <p>There are around 30,000 dialysis patients in the UK and 64,000 with kidney failure. The disease is incurable. A person with kidney failure needs regular dialysis or a kidney transplant is needed for them to survive. Generally, they cannot work once they commence renal dialysis, due to the commitment to long dialysis sessions three times per week, which leaves them extremely fatigued.</p> <p>Once at the stage of receiving dialysis, the majority of renal patients are receiving a low income as they become ill, lose their jobs and become dependent on state benefits. Renal patients cannot easily improve their financial position or reach any level of financial comfort</p>

Criteria

	<p>due to the range of barriers discussed above. The World Bank reports that in an analysis of case studies of people and households that have become poorer worldwide, illness was one of the most common. Understanding and claiming the right benefits is an area where many kidney patients require guidance and support.</p> <p>Healthcare staff interviewed for the Money Advice Service research recognised this vulnerability of their patients and expressed concerns that they were falling through the welfare safety net leaving them vulnerable to falling into poverty including fuel poverty.</p> <p><u>Updated October 2024:</u></p> <p>We have tested support for projects under the VCMA which target fuel poverty through our Independent Stakeholder Group, Citizens panels, VCMA showcase events and Regional Workshops with overwhelming support to continue and do even more.</p>
<p>Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria</p>	<p><u>Tangible outcomes to kidney patients across Wales:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly increases patients' income through unclaimed welfare benefit entitlement, identifying additional income through grants etc. • Reduce the level of financial burden through debt advice. • Increase the number of patients on the Priority Service Registers (PSR). • Identify and support patients to fully utilise the energy/water efficiency and cost reductions available through the various schemes available i.e., warm home assistance, tariff advice. • Increase the awareness and access to Carbon Monoxide alarms. • Increase access and equity to telephone counselling and advocacy support for kidney patients across Wales. • Identify and provide access to other eligible welfare support such as aids and adaptations, blue badges,

	<p>occupational therapy, wheelchairs, medical exemption cards, and more.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to other support organisations. • Increase the use of digital self-help tools i.e., Ask Bill <p><u>Qualitative outcomes to kidney patients across Wales:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase confidence and independence including feeling safe and secure in their own homes. • Improve mental health. • Improve patient's ability to self-manage and focus on improving their health conditions. • Provide clarity and signposting to the wider support network for kidney patients. • Empower patients to become more resilient financially. <p><u>Updated October 2024:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From June 2025 to March 2026 through the additional allowance, the project will support a further 1,691 patients: - 756 patients through the Welfare and Wellbeing service - 935 patients and their families through the Support Line service from January 2025 to March 2026.
Project Partners and third parties involved	The project is being funded by Wales & West Utilities and run in partnership between Welsh Kidney Network, Kidney Care UK, and Auriga Services.
Potential for new 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 WWU 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.
Scale of VCMA Project and SROI calculations, including NPV	Advocacy Officers working on this project aim to support 50% of the total CKD patients in

	<p>Wales, of which, 70% will be referred into Auriga Services for financial assistance. This project therefore has a forecasted SROI per £1 spent between £8.87.</p> <p><u>Updated October 2024:</u></p> <p>We have taken the forecasted numbers expected by Auriga Services throughout the delivery period and calculated the following SROI over the duration of the project:</p> <p>Total Gross Present Value = 1,263,872.50 Net Present Value = 805,058.37 Positive SROI per £1 spent = £1.75</p> <p>Please note that the updated SROI calculation was completed using the GDN-shared SROI rulebook released in September 2024, which produces stricter and more accurate results compared to previous models.</p>
VCMA Project start and end date	<p>Our partnership with WKN, KCUK, and Auriga Services will begin in January 2023, with project delivery kicking off on 1 April 2023 and ending on 31 March 2025.</p> <p><u>Updated October 2024</u></p> <p>Project will now end in March 2026</p>
Geographical area	<p>This project will support CKD patients in hospitals throughout Wales.</p>
Internal governance and project management evidence	<p><u>Updated October 2024:</u></p> <p>The original project was identified through a procurement event testing the market for the best projects and a programme that provides geographical and demographic coverage.</p> <p>Projects are assessed by our internal Customer and Communities steering group and discussed with our Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG). Projects exceeding £250,000 are formally signed off as investment papers by our Executive team with a contract award paper from the Procurement team</p> <p>This project will have a monthly meeting to assess progress in mobilisation and delivery with a more formal quarterly meeting involving the responsible senior manager.</p>

Project Eligibility/ Registration Criteria

	Data and outcomes from the project will be summarised and reported to our internal Steering Groups and Committees for review and challenge and will be formally reported to Ofgem and stakeholder through the annual VCMA report, showcase event and RRP which are all subject to the Data Accuracy Governance process (DAG)
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