

ACE (Action in Caerau and Ely) Hafan

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

Start Date: April 2026
PEA Reference: FP- WWU-002b



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Project Registration Table

Project Summary	
Project title	The Hafan Project
Strategic area	Fuel Poverty & Energy Affordability
Lead partner name	Ace – Action in Caerau and Ely
Lead GDN(s)	Wales & West Utilities (WWU)
Funding GDN(s)	N/A – company specific
New or updated	New
Collaborative VCMA Projects	N/A
Date of PEA submission	April 2026
Project start and end date	April 2026 – March 2028
Project location	This project will be delivered to the communities of Ely and Caerau
Project Contact	
Name	Tom Robinson
Contact details	Tom.Robinson@wwutilities.co.uk
Project partners and third parties involved	
Organisation name(s) and role(s)	ACE – Core delivery
Sectors Involved	Gas Distribution Network Charitable Organisation
Costs and Funding (£k)	
Total cost	£59,964.20
Total VCMA funding required	£59,964.20
Total BAU vulnerability and CO safety activity baseline allowance funding by activity	CO Alarms – 100 - £1,313

Problem(s)

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

The Hafan project, funded through VCMA, supports vulnerable individuals with underlying health conditions who are at heightened risk of deterioration due to living in cold, underheated, or unsafe homes. The current project enabled ACE to embed specialist energy advisers within the established YourSpace social prescribing service and GP surgeries, while educating trusted frontline staff to identify fuel poverty, carbon monoxide (CO) risk, energy insecurity, and the impacts of fuel poverty, particularly on those with poor respiratory health.

Vulnerable households with long-term health conditions are disproportionately affected by fuel poverty, unsafe heating systems, and limited understanding of energy support mechanisms. Many do not self-identify as needing energy help and are often unaware of the Priority Services Register (PSR) or energy rights.

The pilot phase uncovered widespread risks, including:

- Underheated homes directly worsen chronic health issues
- Households blocking vents to retain heat, increasing CO exposure risk
- Ageing appliances and reduced ventilation are contributing to CO hazards
- Patients are struggling to navigate energy systems without guided support

Community Connectors within ACE's 'YourSpace' social prescribing service consistently highlighted the unmet need for embedded energy support. While they regularly engaged with patients facing energy issues, they lacked the tools and confidence to signpost effectively prior to the Hafan project. The Hafan model directly addressed this gap by placing energy expertise inside trusted primary care and community pathways.

The pilot phase has delivered substantial, measurable outcomes demonstrating the model's effectiveness. 765 vulnerable patients have been supported with bespoke energy advice, with 97% of those accessing the project reporting improved health and wellbeing through safer, warmer homes. The project generated a total of £987,414.84 in unclaimed benefits, energy savings, water savings, and fuel vouchers.

Many people living with chronic physical and mental health conditions are disproportionately affected by poor-quality housing and fuel poverty, leaving them at heightened risk of harm. A recurring challenge

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is the lack of financial resources to afford adequate heating, resulting in under-heated homes, increased exposure to carbon monoxide from ageing or poorly maintained appliances, and reduced ventilation where households attempt to retain warmth by covering essential vents. These individuals are also more likely to live in properties with poor insulation and harder-to-heat layouts, further worsening cold-related health impacts and accelerating deterioration of existing conditions. Compounding this vulnerability is a lack of awareness of key support mechanisms such as the Priority Services Register (PSR) and limited engagement with wider services, often due to low income, unclaimed benefit entitlement, or general disengagement from support networks. As a result, many medically vulnerable households remain in unsafe, cold environments without access to the help that could keep them warm, safe, and well, highlighting a clear need for targeted intervention.

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 Hafan project will extend and strengthen an already proven model that embeds specialist energy advice and vulnerability support within GP surgeries, social prescribing pathways, and community settings across WWUs network. Hafan focuses on supporting households whose health and wellbeing are negatively affected by cold homes, fuel poverty, unsafe heating practices, and limited understanding of energy rights, safety, and available support. By maintaining and expanding this established service, the project will ensure vulnerable customers continue to receive accessible, high-quality guidance through trusted health and community professionals, supporting safer use of gas and improved outcomes on the network.

ACE will ensure seamless continuity of support, with no gaps in service delivery and no need for new recruitment, additional training programmes, or changes to the existing project model following the pilot phase in GD2. Capacity will be further strengthened through the involvement of trained Energy Champions; volunteers who will provide light-touch support that complements the caseworker's role and enhances the project's ability to reach and assist more households effectively.

ACEs existing complex caseworker brings extensive experience in supporting vulnerable households through face-to-face advice and holds the City & Guilds Level 3 Energy Awareness qualification, ensuring high-quality, expert delivery from day one. The case worker is a familiar, known, and trusted face within existing surgeries and the local communities. They will continue to focus primarily on providing targeted energy advice to individuals whose health conditions are exacerbated by cold homes.

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ACE's Volunteer Development Officer will oversee and support the emerging network of volunteer Energy Champions, ensuring they are appropriately recruited, trained, supervised and supported to deliver safe, consistent and high-quality interventions. Energy Champions will provide a wide range of light-touch support, including issuing foodbank and fuel vouchers, completing Priority Services Register sign-ups for individuals with identified vulnerabilities, and holding supportive conversations around behaviour change and the transition to net zero. They will also play a key role in identifying when households require more intensive intervention and referring patients with complex or unresolved needs to the specialist caseworker, ensuring individuals receive timely, in-depth support to address underlying issues beyond the volunteers' remit.

The Hafan project will deliver the following benefits:

- Improve health and wellbeing
- Increase financial resilience through benefits maximisation, access to grants, social tariffs, and practical energy savings.
- Enhance customer safety by identifying unsafe heating practices, improving CO awareness, and promoting safe ventilation and appliance use.
- Strengthen PSR uptake among eligible households, ensuring vulnerable customers receive enhanced support from their network operator.
- Support a fair transition to net zero by ensuring low-income and health-affected households are not left behind, receiving accessible, confidence-building guidance.

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.

The Hafan project has been designed through a well-established partnership model that is already embedded across local primary care and ACE's community-based pathways. ACE have analysed referral routes, data handling processes and on-the-ground delivery arrangements which are in place from the pilot phase, allowing ACE to mobilise quickly and maintain continuity of support.

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The Hafan model was developed directly in response to stakeholder feedback from health professionals, community practitioners, and vulnerable customers themselves. Working directly with beneficiaries we have learnt that there has been increased reporting in improved safety, comfort, financial stability, and reduced stress for households, further demonstrating community need and clear support for continuation. Engagement also highlighted that many vulnerable households do not self-identify as needing energy support, reinforcing the value of delivery through trusted health and community settings.

Stakeholder feedback from health professionals and community practitioners have stressed that before Hafan, frontline staff identified significant gaps in their ability to signpost or advise patients on fuel poverty, CO risk, and energy insecurity. Learning from the pilot also identified unsafe coping behaviours, directly shaping Hafan's focus on practical safety advice and early intervention.

Learnings across our VCMA portfolio have shown that providing tailored, hands-on support is highly valued by customers and plays a vital role in helping to alleviate fuel poverty. This has further informed our strategic priorities as we move into our next price control period.

Whilst the Hafan project has gone some way towards addressing these issues, gaps remain in other surgeries and, without continued funding, this vital support would no longer be accessible within primary care settings. Ongoing engagement with partners throughout delivery will ensure the project continues to respond to local need and learning.

Why the project is funded through VCMA

This should include an explanation of why the VCMA project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria, and how it aligns with WWU company specific vulnerability strategy and GDNs collaborative vulnerability strategy.

This project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria, as the project aligns with WWU consumer vulnerability strategy, in which we have a clear ambition to keep communities safe and warm, and for customers to receive the support they need from those best equipped to provide it, particularly those most at risk of fuel poverty or energy insecurity.

As a trusted delivery partner, ACE is essential in helping WWU realise its ambitions by reaching households who are most in need and least likely to seek support without targeted, community-based intervention.

The project also aligns with several shared objectives within the GDN collaborative vulnerability strategy, including:

- Empowering local communities to identify and support vulnerable households with their energy safeguarding needs.
- Improving access to essential energy safeguarding services for households experiencing fuel poverty or energy affordability challenges.
- Reaching under-served communities who benefit most from trusted intermediaries, such as ACE, to navigate available support

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The project has been co-designed in collaboration with ACE and developed in line with the updated VCMI governance framework, embedding strong oversight, accountability, and continuous improvement from the outset. The VCMA eligibility criteria have been met and are detailed within the table at the end of the PEA.

Both WWU individual and the GDNs' vulnerability strategies underpin this project under the pillar of 'Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability' and, by combining WWUs evidence-led targeting and ACE's specialist expertise in fuel poverty interventions, the project is designed to ensure that households facing the highest risks of cold homes, energy debt, and unaffordable bills receive the tailored, practical, and accessible support they need to improve their energy affordability and wellbeing.

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.

During the two-year Hafan project, ACE will deliver activities that complement the VCMA-funded services, including raising awareness of carbon monoxide (CO) safety and energy safeguarding.

As a trusted organisation with WWU, ACE is well placed to engage effectively with vulnerable individuals and refer eligible people for BAU funded support. This includes CO alarms, Locking cooker valves and other measure that help maintain safety and independence in the home.

Where additional BAU-funded activities are undertaken during this project, the PEA will be updated as required.

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.

The Hafan project will directly support 2624 unique individuals through:

- GP surgeries, home visits and Community venues
- Group settings via community groups, clinics and workshops
- Remote phone calls and video consultations
- Signposting
- Referrals

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Key outcomes expected from this project:

Outcome	Year 1 Individuals	Year 2 Individuals	Total Individuals
Unique Direct Reach - Face to Face Support	1312	1312	2624
Outcomes Achieved through:			
Energy Efficiency Advice (Behavioural)	480	480	960
Income Maximisation (Welfare Benefits)	480	480	960
PSR Registrations	240	240	480
Net-Zero conversations	480	480	960
CO Awareness	80	80	160

Success Criteria

During this two-year project, ACE will deliver targeted, person-centred support to households experiencing energy vulnerability, with a focus on improving health outcomes, affordability and home safety. The project will provide holistic support to households whose health conditions are exacerbated by cold or unsafe homes, helping them to better manage energy use, reduce financial pressure and remain safe and well at home. Alongside individual household support, the project will strengthen local capacity through partnership working, trusted referral routes and inclusive conversations that support a fair transition to net zero.

These outcomes will be achieved through:

- Delivering specialist in-depth energy advice and home or community-based assessments
- Providing income maximisation support including access to fuel and social tariffs
- Completing Priority Services Register registrations
- Raising CO, ventilation, damp and mould awareness
- Recruiting, training and supporting volunteer Energy Champions to deliver light-touch net zero support
- Monitoring delivery, capturing learning and reporting outcomes

Potential for new learning

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

Through monitoring the impact of the programme, ACE will gain insight into the lived experiences of people in fuel poverty, these insights will also provide the scale of need, impact on physical and mental health as well as financial gains.

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Learnings will also provide further insight, but not limited to:

- Levels of debt in Caerau and Ely
- Householder needs and lived experiences of people in fuel poverty
- Numbers of low-income homes transitioning to more energy efficient heating sources and take up of retrofit measures
- Demographics of householders and tenures of properties most likely to be experiencing fuel poverty
- Referral patterns and service gaps across communities
- CO Awareness and safety behaviours
- Effectiveness of communication methods

The Community Support Coordinator will play a key role in sharing learning, insights, and updates, including changes to energy support programmes, across our internal teams and wider networks. They will represent ACE at the Cardiff Affordable Warmth Steering Group, NEA fuel poverty forums, and other relevant partnership meetings to ensure alignment with local strategic priorities and best practice.

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.

This project strongly aligns with wider vulnerability strategies across the energy industry, health sector, local government, and third-sector organisations by addressing clear gaps in fuel poverty support and embedding ACE's established vulnerability triage model. Hafan is intentionally designed to complement existing provision, addressing gaps in early identification, coordination and access to support rather than duplicating services.

ACE's approach reflects established principles of collaborative, person-centred vulnerability support embedded across health, community and utility sectors. Building on relationships established through the pilot, the project enhances cross-sector collaboration through referral and signposting pathways with primary care clusters, social prescribing partners, welfare rights and money advice providers, housing and landlord engagement services, home improvement agencies, and other utility and hardship support schemes. This ensures households can access income maximisation, debt advice, energy efficiency measures, home safety interventions, social tariffs and wider support beyond the VCMA scope.

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The project further supports a fair and inclusive transition by addressing digital exclusion and aligning with organisations providing digital inclusion support, ensuring vulnerable households are not left behind as energy services move towards digital-first models. By combining early intervention, holistic advice, coordinated referrals and system-level collaboration, Hafan fills critical gaps in existing provision and delivers sustainable outcomes, enabling vulnerable customers to remain safe, warm and supported while reducing the risk of repeat crisis.

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.

WWU will work closely with ACE to monitor the delivery, impact, and effectiveness of the project throughout its duration. ACE will provide WWU with monthly performance reports detailing progress against agreed outcome measures, including the number of households and individuals supported, the nature of interventions delivered, financial gains achieved, and any emerging trends in vulnerability or fuel poverty. These reports will enable WWU to track delivery against the PEA and respond quickly to any areas requiring adjustment.

In addition to monthly reporting, WWU and ACE will hold quarterly review meetings to assess project performance in greater depth. These meetings will provide an opportunity to review operational insights, address any risks or underperformance, and ensure the project continues to meet the needs of vulnerable households across the WWU network. WWU will also work with ACE to ensure appropriate auditing and impact assessment processes are in place, including the evaluation of before-and-after changes in household circumstances, financial resilience, and wellbeing outcomes.

ACE will provide anonymised case studies and beneficiary testimonies, where appropriate, to substantiate the project's impact on lived experience and demonstrate the value derived from VCMA-funded interventions. WWU will compile an annual summary of project performance and insights within its company-specific VCMA reporting, ensuring a high standard of transparency and accountability. The learning generated will further inform the development of future initiatives, support the refinement of service delivery, and contribute to the continuous enhancement of WWU's broader strategy for identifying and assisting vulnerable customers.

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.

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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 £4.67 for every £1 spent

Social value measurement - GDN Rulebook v. September 2024

Total cost*	£59,964.24
Total gross present value	£324,330.98
Net Present Value (NPV)	£267,144.19
SROI	£4.67

*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 WWU, with clear governance arrangements in place to oversee delivery, performance, and risk throughout the duration of the project. A structured contract framework between WWU and ACE will ensure that any material changes remain aligned with customer need, regulatory expectations, and the responsible use of VCMA funds.

WWU has worked closely with ACE to co-design this project so that its ambition directly supports WWU's Consumer Vulnerability Strategy and strengthens the network's wider approach to identifying and assisting households in fuel poverty.

The project has been reviewed and approved through WWU's internal governance processes and formally signed off by the relevant senior leaders, ensuring robust oversight from initiation through to completion.

GDN	Approver (Name and Role)	Date
WWU	Bethan Jones- Head of People and Customer Experience	08/07/2026

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 paragraph b;	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.	N/A

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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

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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. ii. iii. 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