

GDN Collaborative Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Gas Safe Charity – Think CO App development

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

Section 1 - 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:	
VCMA Eligibility Criteria	Criteria Satisfied (Yes/No)
a) Have a positive, or forecasted positive Social Return on Investment (SROI), including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA project;	Yes
b) Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Provide support to consumers in vulnerable situations, and relate to energy safeguarding, or ii. Provide awareness on the dangers of CO, or iii. Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO; 	Yes
c) Have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these;	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
Section 2 - Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing, repair and replacement projects	
In order to qualify as a VCMA project, unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance servicing, 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;	N/A
b) The household cannot afford to service, repair or replace the unsafe pipework or essential gas appliance; 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 servicing, repair or replacement.	N/A
Section 3 - Eligibility criteria for collaborative VCMA projects	
In order to qualify as a collaborative VCMA project, a project must:	
a) Meet the above company specific and boiler repair and replace (if applicable) project eligibility criteria;	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

Information Required	Description												
Project Title	Gas Safe Charity – Think CO App development												
Funding GDN(s)	The GDN(s) which register(s) the VCMA project SGN / Cadent Gas / Northern Gas Networks / Wales & West Utilities												
Role of GDN(s) *For Collaborative VCMA Projects only	The specific role(s) of GDN(s) participating in a collaborative VCMA Project Lead GDN - SGN Supporting GDNs - Cadent Gas / Northern Gas Networks / Wales & West Utilities												
Date of PEA Submission													
VCMA Project Contact Name, email and Number	Dan Edwards Dan.edwards@sgn.co.uk 07800 655582												
Total Cost (£k)	£42,825												
Total VCMA Funding Required (£k)	£42,825 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Cost per GDN</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Cadent</td> <td>£21,329.42</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NGN</td> <td>£4,949.09</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SGN</td> <td>£11,593.18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>WWU</td> <td>£4,953.31</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>£42,825</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Cost per GDN	Cadent	£21,329.42	NGN	£4,949.09	SGN	£11,593.18	WWU	£4,953.31	Total	£42,825
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Problem(s)	<p>Carbon Monoxide (CO) can pose a serious threat to human health and even fatality, with around 40 deaths caused by CO poisoning each year in the UK and 4,000 people treated in hospital as a result of CO poisoning. Many people in the UK who use carbon fuelled appliances are not aware of the dangers of CO and do not have a working audible CO alarm. Of 8,000 people surveyed in 2020 45% didn't know that CO doesn't have a smell, and only 42% had a working audible CO alarm. Lack of awareness about the dangers of and ways in which to prevent harm from CO are a major contributing factor to why we're still seeing CO related deaths and harm in a time when safety devices such as CO alarms are cheaper and more accessible than ever.</p> <p>There is a direct correlation between fuel poverty and carbon monoxide poisoning. Lower income householders are often reliant on older boilers, older heaters or even gas stoves or cookers to heat their homes. National Energy Action and Gas Safety Trust research found 35% of low income and vulnerable households surveyed exceeded the 10ppm threshold for carbon monoxide levels.^[1] People living in deprived areas are also less likely to own an audible CO alarm than homes in non-deprived areas, further increasing the risk of CO poisoning.^[2] Older people, pregnant women, and young children have also been found to be particularly vulnerable to CO poisoning, spending more time at home and with a need to stay warm, resulting using the heating more regularly.^[3] Social tenants are less at risk due to RSL requirements for annual gas safety checks and higher energy efficiency standards.</p> <p>Through our existing partnerships and engagement, we have identified that there is a significant knowledge and skills gap around CO safety within third sector organisations and their frontline staff and volunteers who work in the homes of vulnerable people. Meaning that although they are often best placed to do so, these frontline staff and volunteers are not able to raise awareness of the dangers of CO or identify potential CO risks when supporting people living in vulnerable circumstances.</p>												

	<p>As a result of the recent legislative changes around CO alarms in England, Scotland and Wales the profile of CO has increased and those supporting vulnerable people in their homes will need to be confident in providing CO safety advice and guidance on current legislation.</p> <p>The Gas Safe Charity's work programme 'Think CO' has provided free CO awareness training and resources to approximately 4,000 front-line staff and volunteers from hundreds of organisations since 2016. The overall aim of Think CO is to raise awareness of the dangers of CO poisoning for those who work in the homes of vulnerable people. It has been identified through the delivery of this programme that it would be beneficial for these frontline staff and volunteers to have an up-to-date, easy-to-access resource to provide CO safety information and advice.</p> <p>The Think CO awareness training does empower frontline workers to identify potential CO risks and provide onward learning of the dangers of CO for the people living in vulnerable circumstances they support. However due to the broad and complex nature of the support they provide, and with so many differing topic areas to cover, retaining and utilising this CO safety information is extremely challenging without an easy to access and understand reference resource.</p> <p>Aside from searching online or locally storing/saving documents/presentations there are currently no easy to access CO safety reference resources available for frontline workers. Both come with inherent issues. Searching online will provide too much information, some of which may not be accurate or reliable, making it difficult for someone trying to find key CO safety information and unlikely to feel confident to provide advice or make any judgements on potential CO risks. Locally storing/saving CO safety documents/presentations will only provide 'point in time' CO safety advice and based on policy changes or new research could become outdated at any point. Storing hard copies of information also carries the issue of storage and likelihood of being lost/damaged.</p> <p>^[1] Cited on Safelincs blog (2020) Carbon monoxide poisoning: who is most at risk? ^[2] Kokkarinen et al (2014) Investigation of audible carbon monoxide alarm ownership ^[3] Ibid. Safelincs, Carbon monoxide poisoning</p>
<p>Scope and Objectives</p>	<p>Through this project we aim to empower frontline workers from third sector organisations, Fire and Rescue Services, local authorities, Occupational Therapists, private home care and other support services, to identify potential CO risks and provide CO safety information to vulnerable households they support. Helping to increase CO awareness and reduce the risk of CO harm for some of the most at-risk vulnerable customers throughout England, Scotland, and Wales.</p> <p>Our aim is to provide an enduring, convenient, easy-to-access, up-to-date, and simple to use resource, that will provide CO safety information and advice.</p> <p>We will develop a dedicated Think CO App that provides a quick and easy reminder of the sources, signs and symptoms of CO and immediate advice on steps to take if symptoms of CO poisoning or signs of CO exist or are suspected during a home visit. Critically, this App would be in situ, available in real time as the frontline workers are supporting someone vulnerable in their home.</p> <p>The Think CO App would be immediately available on mobile devices including phones or tablets. It offers flexibility in the content it holds and can be updated as required should there be any policy changes or updates to advice. The benefits of having an app are that there is no need to remember a web address and most if not all of the information and features are available regardless as to whether the phone has signal (dependent on final app scope and build).</p> <p>The App would be on the Play Store (Android) and Apple Store (iPhones) and available free for anyone to download. Reference to the App would be made in all Think CO training sessions and the e-Learning, as well as in the Think CO resources, including a brief overview of the App content, App name to search, and direct links to the App stores to enable participants to download direct to their device(s).</p> <p>The final scope of content for the App is yet to be confirmed, but as a minimum it will include:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key information on sources, signs and symptoms of CO • A decision tree asking key questions to assist in identifying and addressing potential CO risk within the property • Guidance on where to place (install) a CO detector • Current CO alarm legislation within each country (England/Scotland/Wales) including rights and responsibility • The Emergency Gas Number and appropriate safety advice <p>Other potential features that may be incorporated dependent on need, complexity and cost include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to share PDFs with key safety messages in different languages. These could be shared directly from the App via email, WhatsApp/Messages etc to the vulnerable person being supported • Information videos such as the Think CO videos in BSL, Hindi, English • Links to local Gas Safe registered engineers on the register via the GSR website or Google location • Information on further additional support available such as local Fire and Rescue Service Safe and Well visit, energy providers additional support, or grants like the Foundations Independent Living Trust • Priority Service Register information – reminder of what the PSR is, who qualifies and how to access it and potentially a template to register people for their respective PSR. • A quiz to test existing knowledge and to act as a reminder – top tips • An exercise which is a 3D view of a property which enables the user to identify risks and agree actions to take • A feedback form to capture any CO instances • A feedback form about the use of the App and any suggestions for improvement
<p>Why the Project is Being Funded Through the VCMA</p>	<p>This project operates nationally within all GDN networks and has been co-designed with Gas Safe Charity to provide an enduring resource providing important CO awareness and safety information for those supporting vulnerable customers in their homes. It qualifies under the VCMA funding criteria as it will empower frontline workers to identify potential sources of CO and/or suspected CO poisoning and provide CO safety advice/awareness for the clients they support, enabling each householder to use energy their safely.</p> <p>Eligibility Criteria</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) We have calculated from a subset of outcomes that this project will have a positive net SROI for customers. b) This project will provide support to consumers in vulnerable situations and relate to, providing awareness of the dangers of CO c) We have defined outcomes for this project and the associated actions to achieve these as detailed below; d) This project and its outcomes go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanisms or required through licence obligations; and e) Is not being delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding.
<p>Evidence of Stakeholder/Customer Support</p>	<p>Gas Safe Charity Think CO follow up research</p> <p>In January 2022 Gas Safe Charity’s Think CO team sent out a survey to 1,000 previous participants of the Think CO training asking for feedback on the training and looking for insight around the provision of a follow up resource that provides an easy to access and use reference for CO safety information and advice. Over 200 responses were received across a good mix of third sector organisations including Fire & Rescue Services, NHS staff, Local Authorities, Housing Associations and Charities. The response was positive and in support of not only the development of a referral resource, but specifically an App that could be downloaded onto mobile phones or tablets. Some key statistics from the responses to this survey are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% were doing jobs which involved visiting vulnerable people in the homes • 96% had found the Think CO training ‘very’ or ‘quite’ useful in their work role • 89% said that since the training their organisation were ‘much more’ CO aware or ‘somewhat more’ CO aware • 87% were interested in the idea of having an App to provide CO safety information and advice

- 62% prefer the idea of an App to a website, with a further 23 % stating they 'didn't mind'
- The top four content ideas out of a list of 13 were prioritised as;
 - Key information on sources, signs and symptoms
 - A decision tree to address a CO risk
 - Where to place a CO detector
 - Emergency Gas Number

SGN Customer Engagement Group and Vulnerable Steering Group Engagement

During the shaping of the SGN business plan we committed to, over the 5-year price control, to support over 250,000 vulnerable customers to use gas safely, affordably and efficiently. To ensure that we adapt to market conditions we continue to engage our SGN Vulnerable Steering Group, they help us shape our vulnerability and CO strategies and our priorities for GD2 based on current need. Our expert stakeholders representing a range of vulnerable customer segments guided us to work with existing organisations that already support those in crisis and where we are able to broaden the reach or increase the capacity of those established charities that support people most in need. It is with guidance and support from our dedicated Vulnerable Steering Group that SGN prioritise support for those most likely to need help from their utility company due to low incomes, in extreme financial vulnerability and fuel crisis.

Northern Gas Networks stakeholder workshops and engagement

Asking our stakeholders what's important – using our wide range of engagement mechanisms from strategic workshops to customer perceptions, we asked stakeholders to prioritise what is most important to them (including digital engagement in light of CV-19). During 2019-2020 we held multiple workshops with our stakeholders on the subject of customers in vulnerable situations. During our August 2020 CV-19 specific workshop, our stakeholders identified that there was an increased risk of CO poisoning due to the impact of the pandemic. This is further compounded when there are cultural differences to also consider, due to alternative ways of heating and cooking. Many people had been furloughed, were on lower incomes and suffered redundancy, which created significant financial challenges. As a consequence, maintaining and repairing/replacing appliances was not a priority for these groups, therefore the risk of CO poisoning was significantly increased. Stakeholders said there needs to be more focus on CO awareness, so customers understand the risks posed by not having appliances repaired or serviced.

During our November 2021 Energy Crisis / Partnership Working Workshop our stakeholders said the energy crisis will result in people not getting their appliances serviced every year, which increases the risks of CO poisoning. Since November 2021 and currently we are still in an energy crisis which is further impacting vulnerable customers and increases these risks.

We held a CO awareness specific workshop in February 2022 of which Think CO carried out a presentation around CO. During this workshop our stakeholders identified that gas servicing organisations need to communicate more effectively with customers. They could collect information whilst handling and leaving useful information with customers whilst on site.

Each year we use our annual Customer Perceptions Research to understand the priorities of our customers. Amongst a set of general tracker questions i.e., same questions that are asked year on year, the evidence in the most recent research, indicated that keeping bills as low as possible ranked more highly, than providing a safe and reliable supply of gas, for the first time. This is a clear indication, as to how concerned customers are about the cost of energy.

Northern Gas Networks Customers in Vulnerable Situations (CIVS) Workshops 2021 – 2022

Asking NGN stakeholders what's important – using our wide range of engagement mechanisms from strategic workshops to customer perceptions, we asked stakeholders to prioritise what is most important to them. During 2021-2022 we held multiple workshops with our stakeholders, on the subject of customers in vulnerable situations, and one specifically focused on Carbon Monoxide Awareness. During our CO specific workshop, our stakeholders highlighted the ongoing importance of investment into CO awareness, particularly amongst vulnerable and hard to reach groups, and where there may be additional barriers to communication (eg. language barriers, digital exclusion). They stated that targeting of CO awareness was key, suggesting schools and nurseries as appropriate settings to cascade important CO safety messages to children and families. They also raised concern

	<p>about the potential increase in unsafe behaviours that could raise CO risk as a result of the struggles around rising energy costs and the cost-of-living crisis.</p> <p>Northern Gas Networks commissioned CO research – July-August 2022 Research commissioned by NGN around public perceptions of CO showed increased levels of awareness compared to previous research (2020). This project will support the ongoing campaign around CO safety in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target increasing awareness of the dangers of CO • Increase understanding of what CO actually is • Increase awareness of what do to if CO poisoning is suspected • Encourage people to get a CO alarm • Encourage people to test their alarms
<p>Outcomes, Associated Actions and Success Criteria</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>This project will create an enduring resource that will provide key CO safety advice and up-to-date legislation details for anyone supporting vulnerable households, or anyone that has an interest in raising their own CO awareness. Of the circa 2,500 annual Think CO training participants we expect this app to be downloaded by approximately 30% of them, meaning 750 frontline workers per year,</p> <p>The planned and measurable outcomes for this project are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CO Safety app developed to support frontline workers and anyone supporting people in their homes • Frontline workers have increased confidence to support vulnerable households and provide CO safety advice/guidance as well as identifying potential CO risks in peoples’ homes • Vulnerable households are more aware of the dangers of CO, reducing their own risk of CO harm • Increase in the number of organisations and individuals taking part in the Think CO training and accessing the app • CO Safety app shared with ‘Think CO’ training participants, circa 2,500 per annum. • CO Safety app shared with all previous Think CO participants, circa 4,000 frontline workers. <p>Success Criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The App will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis – Particularly should there be any CO legislation or policy changes • Linear increase in App users year on year (downloads) • The App is Accessible and easy to use for those with basic digital skills • Reducing risk of CO harm – obvious this is an outcome, but how could this be demonstrated? • Feedback from App users about information provided and other potential developments for the app – Link back to participants that have been through the Think CO training. • App users are confident that they know the signs of CO exposure and what to do to reduce CO harm <p>Although this project is detailed to run until 31 March 2026, we expect this app to be live and in use beyond that time, being supported and managed by the Gas Safe Charity Think CO team and providing enduring CO safety information for future participants of the Think CO training and others supporting vulnerable households.</p>
<p>Project Partners and Third Parties Involved</p>	<p>Details of Project Partners or third-party involvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gas Safe Charity – Lead delivery partner • App developer (TBC) – Creator of Think CO app based on specification as agreed by Gas Safe Charity and all GDNs. • SGN – Lead gas network, providing funding, feeding into to app specification and requirements, and supporting the delivery team • Cadent / Northern Gas Networks / Wales & West Utilities – Partner gas networks providing funding and feeding into to app specification and requirements

Potential for New Learning	<p>There are currently no App's specifically providing CO safety information and advice and certainly nothing aimed at frontline workers who are best placed to support some of the most at risk and vulnerable customer groups.</p> <p>Through the development and rollout of the App we expect to learn how best to engage and provide support for frontline workers around CO safety.</p> <p>We will collect data from App downloads as well as feedback from App users which will be collated and analysed to create annual project reports with findings and recommendations, and to show the real difference that has been made.</p> <p>These project reports will be published and disseminated to project partners, and relevant members and stakeholders in the sector through the VCMA showcase and the Annual Report.</p>																
Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations	<p>The Funding Licensee(s) should justify the scale of the VCMA Project – including the scale of the investment relative to its potential benefits. As part of this it should provide the SROI calculation.</p> <p>We worked with leading social impact research consultancy SIA Partners to carry out an assessment of the wellbeing outcomes applicable to the development of a CO safety App aimed at frontline workers but available for all. Reach has been calculated using two distinct streams of influence. The impact of frontline worker interactions and app referrals to non-Think CO trained workers.</p> <p>Carrying out an in-depth assessment of the predicted app downloads and assumed household reach we forecast a positive 5-year net social return of £0.51</p> <p>5 Year figures:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="427 887 1015 1048"> <tr> <td>Total cost</td> <td>£41,699.10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total gross present value</td> <td>£63,136.16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NPV</td> <td>£21,437.06</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SROI</td> <td>£0.51</td> </tr> </table> <p>Due to the nature of this project and the expectation that the app will continue to be downloaded and used well beyond the five-year SROI modelling period, we have also calculated the SROI over 10 years. This is a conservative forecast and only assumes delivery of Think CO training and associated downloads of the app for the first five years, so in reality would likely be much higher.</p> <p>10 Year figures:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="427 1317 1015 1478"> <tr> <td>Total cost</td> <td>£41,699.10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total gross present value</td> <td>£87,622.45</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NPV</td> <td>£45,923.35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SROI</td> <td>£1.10</td> </tr> </table>	Total cost	£41,699.10	Total gross present value	£63,136.16	NPV	£21,437.06	SROI	£0.51	Total cost	£41,699.10	Total gross present value	£87,622.45	NPV	£45,923.35	SROI	£1.10
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VCMA Project Start and End Date	01/03/23 – 31/03/2026 (Remainder of GD2)																
Geographical Area	Nationally throughout England, Wales, and Scotland in all four GDN network areas.																
Remaining Amount in the Allowance at Time of Registration	<p>Remaining funding left in the Licensee's/ Licensees' funding pot.</p> <p>Amount before this project: £7,713,137.78</p> <p>Project costs: £42,825</p> <p>Remaining following this project: £7,670,312.78</p>																

