

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

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

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*Hospital to Home Confidence Support*

Advocates & Angels

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*Sophie Stone*

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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.<sup>1</sup>

## 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 appliance<sup>2</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

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### Information required for the registration of VCMA projects

Information required	Description
Project title	Hospital to Home Confidence Support
Funding GDN(s)	Wales & West Utilities
New/ Updated PEA	Updated March 2025
VCMA Project contact name, email and number	Sophie Stone <a href="mailto:Sophie.Stone@wwutilities.co.uk">Sophie.Stone@wwutilities.co.uk</a> 07977 804612
Total Cost (£)	Original project- £30,000 Updated March 2025- Additional £59,000
Total VCMA funding required (£)	Original project- £30,000 Uplift £59,000 Total funding: £89,000
Problem(s)	<p>Every year, over 90,000 babies are cared for in neonatal units in the UK because they have either been born prematurely (before 37 weeks of pregnancy), are sick, or disabled. 20,000 of these children will also be admitted to the intensive care units. As a result, parents will often stay at hospitals to provide support and care for their newborns. During this time parents will usually be without a bed, access to a shower and other hygiene products, unless they make trips back and forth to their homes.</p> <p>Furthermore, because of the palliative care that these infants require, their parents, when able to take them home, will often experience an increase in their general living costs, including large increases to their energy consumption. Subsequently parent carers are more susceptible to falling into fuel poverty, with benefits such as carers allowance providing just £62.50, per week if parents provide up to 35-hours of care to their child. Often parents do not consider themselves carers for up to two years, missing vital support they are entitled to, financial and social.</p>
Scope and Objectives	<p>Advocates &amp; Angels currently serve every child's ward in Wales with hygiene essentials through care packages for parents and expectant parents providing palliative care to their children.</p> <p>This project will look to utilise this supply chain and reinforce each care package with targeted messages to raise awareness of the dangers of Carbon Monoxide (CO), and signpost to the Priority Service Register (PSR) which all families will be eligible to join.</p> <p>Additionally, these care packages give Advocates &amp; Angels the opportunity to provide free CO alarms to eligible families in person, as well as Keep Warm Packs containing a range of</p>

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	<p>low/zero cost heating options including blankets, hot water bottles and hand warmers, for when families return home. Advocates &amp; Angels currently serve every child’s ward in Wales with hygiene essentials through care packages for parents and expectant parents providing palliative care to their children.</p> <p>This project will look to utilise this supply chain and reinforce each care package with targeted messages to raise awareness of the dangers of Carbon Monoxide (CO), and signpost to the Priority Service Register (PSR) which all families will be eligible to join.</p> <p>Additionally, these care packages give Advocates &amp; Angels the opportunity to provide free CO alarms to eligible families in person, as well as Keep Warm Packs containing a range of low/zero cost heating options including blankets, hot water bottles and hand warmers, for when families return home.</p> <p>Advocates &amp; Angels will also create a page on their website where parents can learn about CO and apply for CO alarms and warm packs online.</p> <p>Over a two-year period, Advocates &amp; Angels aim to reach 7,000 families with their care packages.</p> <p>Updated March 2025:</p> <p><u>From March 2024- March 2026, Advocates &amp; Angels will expand the services as described above into the south-west region of our network, delivering care packages to up to 32 wards and hospices across the south-west of England.</u></p> <p><u>Over a 24-month period, Advocates &amp; Angels will provide 5200 care packages reaching 10,400 parent carers, based on 2 parents per pack, in the south-west of England.</u></p> <p><u>In addition, from September 2025, Advocates &amp; Angels will continue with the delivery of the project across Wales for an extended period until March 2026.</u></p> <p><u>Over a 7-month period, Advocates &amp; Angels will provide an additional 900 care packages reaching up to 1800 parent carers in Wales.</u></p>
<p>Why the Project is being funded through the VCMA, and how this aligns to GDN’s VCMA Strategy</p>	<p>Wales &amp; 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 CO safety</p>

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	<p>advice, PSR information/signposting as well as warm packs that will assist vulnerable customers who may find themselves struggling with their new circumstances amongst the rising cost of energy prices.</p> <p>Updated March 2025:</p> <p>All GDNs have committed to spending VCMA money within four strategic pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fuel Poverty &amp; Energy Affordability</li> <li>2. Services Beyond the Meter</li> <li>3. Supporting Priority Customer Groups</li> <li>4. Carbon Monoxide Awareness</li> </ol> <p>This project aligns to strategic pillar three.</p>
<p>Evidence of Stakeholder/ Customer support</p>	<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. 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.</p> <p>At the National Energy Action Energy Crisis conference, which took place in Birmingham in January 2023, industry experts including those from the third sector, utilities, and government, engaged with our joint Gas Distribution Network stall to let us know that providing access to small energy efficiency measures is a priority for them to tackle fuel poverty.</p> <p>Updated March 2025:</p> <p>Throughout the planning phase for our RIIO-GD3 business plan we have engaged extensively with key stakeholders such as Ofgem, vulnerable consumers, Local Authorities and other gas networks regarding the VCMA.</p> <p>Stakeholders want WWU to adopt a multifaceted approach to support specific vulnerabilities and priority groups, focusing on targeted engagement initiatives, collaboration with local organizations, and holistic support strategies. They emphasised the need to address specific vulnerable groups, such as those experiencing fuel poverty, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities</p>
<p>Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria</p>	<p>WWU will fund this project at a cost of £30,000 for 13 months. Through the on the ground support provided by Advocates &amp; Angels in neonatal wards, we will look to support at least 7,000 parents within Wales.</p>

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	<p>Expected Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Through our VCMA specific Social Return on Investment (SROI) tool, developed for us by Sirio, we believe 64% of eligible consumers engaged with about the PSR will sign up.</li> <li>- WWU have forecasted that 32.99% of those who receive information on the PSR and sign up will be eligible for the Warm Home Discount Scheme, with 10% eligible for water social tariffs.</li> <li>- Those who sign up to the PSR will also be prioritised during a utility interruption by network companies and get communications in formats of their choice ensuring they are not disadvantaged and receive and inclusive service from companies.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, the occupiers of these households will realise health benefits associated with being warmer and more comfortable through the small energy efficiency measures we provide.</p> <p>Updated March 2025:</p> <p>From March 2024, WWU will fund this project with an additional £50,000 to expand its services, as outlined above, to the south-west region of our network.</p> <p>Over a 24-month period, Advocates &amp; Angels will deliver 5200 care packages to up to 32 neonatal wards and children’s hospices across the south-west of England, supporting up to 10,400 parent carers, based on two parents per pack.</p> <p>In addition, from September 2025, WWU will fund the extension of the Wales delivery of the project at a cost of £9,000.</p> <p>Over a 7-month period, Advocates &amp; Angels will deliver 900 care packages to neonatal wards across Wales, supporting up to 1800 parent carers.</p>
<p>Project Partners and third parties involved</p>	<p>This project will be delivered through a partnership of Wales &amp; West Utilities and Advocates &amp; Angels, engaging with NHS hospitals and Trusts throughout Wales.</p> <p>Updated March 2025:</p> <p>Engaging with NHS hospital and Trusts throughout Wales and the south-west of England.</p>
<p>Potential for new learning</p>	<p>WWU expects to gain a greater understanding of the impact of rising energy prices on those already facing unexpected increased energy use due to the health of their child. We hope that we can assess whether a project such as this can</p>

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	<p>adequately assist those experiencing such difficult and unique circumstances or whether further support should be provided. We also hope that this project will provide further insight into whether working within hospital wards is an effective way of targeting those who are most physically vulnerable.</p>												
<p>Scale of VCMA Project and SROI calculations, including NPV</p>	<p>We have taken the forecast support measures from Advocates &amp; Angels and used them as the input to our SROI model. The output is as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="651 481 1370 725"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">5-year Results</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="4"><b>Economic</b></td> <td><b>Total cost</b></td> <td>£29,403.69</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total gross present value</b></td> <td>£129,264.91</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>NPV</b></td> <td>£99,861.22</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>SROI</b></td> <td>£3.40</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>SROI Updated March 2025:</p> <p>We have taken the forecasted numbers expected by Advocates &amp; Angels throughout the delivery period (which includes the original project delivery in Wales, the project extension in Wales, and the expansion into the south-west) and calculated the following SROI over the duration of the project:</p> <p>Total Gross Present Value = £122,256.50        Net Present Value = £39,128.50        Positive SROI per £1 spent = £0.47</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>	5-year Results			<b>Economic</b>	<b>Total cost</b>	£29,403.69	<b>Total gross present value</b>	£129,264.91	<b>NPV</b>	£99,861.22	<b>SROI</b>	£3.40
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<p>VCMA Project start and end date</p>	<p>Start date: 1st August 2023          End Date: 31st August 2025</p> <p>Updated March 2025:</p> <p>Original Wales project end date: extended until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026</p> <p>South-West England expansion:          Start date: 01 March 2024          End date: 31 March 2026</p>												
<p>Geographical area</p>	<p>This project will be run across all paediatric wards in Wales.</p> <p>Updated March 2025:</p>												

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	<p>This project will be run across all paediatric wards in Wales as well as up to 32 wards and children’s hospices across the south-west of England.</p>
<p>Internal governance and project management evidence</p>	<p>Updated March 2025:</p> <p>Advocates &amp; Angels project proposal has been reviewed through various industry working groups including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GDN Vulnerability Working Group (monthly)</li> <li>- VCMA Steering Group</li> </ul> <p>This project is also supported by stakeholders (as outlined above).</p> <p>The project will be managed and led by WWU and will consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monthly project review meetings</li> <li>- Quarterly stakeholder review meetings</li> <li>- Stage gate review after 1 year of delivery/ mid-way point of regional delivery</li> <li>- Ongoing reviews throughout the duration of the project regarding delivery of outcomes - this will feed into lessons learnt and shared best practice to ensure the project is successful in delivering value for money and maximising outcomes for customers and communities.</li> </ul>