

Driving success through collaboration

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

GDN Collaborative Annual Report 2024/25





doesn't have
a sense of
humour
GLORIA STEIN

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How to use our interactive report

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Welcome

We're delighted to share our fourth annual collaborative report which marks the first four years of our regulatory period (RIIO) from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2026. Over the last 12 months we've continued to expand our reach, allowing us to help more customers across our networks.

This report highlights how we have worked together as a group of Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs), delivering projects together with trusted and reliable organisations funded through the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA).

To support this report, all GDNs will publish a company specific annual report which provides more detail about the projects being funded through each individual GDN in their local networks and communities.

Throughout this report, we will demonstrate how we continue to work collaboratively to identify customer need and create lasting partnerships, as well as how we measure the outcomes and impacts of our projects.

This year has seen more individuals across our networks continue to feel pressure and having to make tougher choices between heating their homes and feeding their families daily. Recent energy price cap rises, and the removal of the winter fuel allowance has meant more and more are reliant on the services and partnerships the GDNs fund through the VCMA.

The strategy to work with partners in our local communities is key to delivering a range of services that help us raise awareness of support and advice to people living in the communities in which we work. As you will see throughout the report this is varied, diverse and wide ranging and is wrapped around the needs of the community the project seeks to serve.

Following on from last year, and something that remains prevalent across media and news channels, is cold and damp homes. These homes remain a major factor in contributing to the poor health of our customers. Various factors are at play in this, but it is often due to individuals making a choice not to use their heating due to the cost and concern over energy prices. The projects we support collaboratively look to redress this problem and support customers in being able to afford and be educated on heating their homes.

All GDNs remain committed to keeping their customers safe, warm and independent in their own homes. We're extremely proud to work together, and through feedback and case studies highlighting the real impact of the support provided, we're seeing life-changing outcomes for our customers and communities.

We'll be hosting our annual virtual VCMA Showcase event on 9 July 2025, further bringing our partnerships to life through lived experiences. We will hear directly from key stakeholders, our customer facing colleagues, and those we're working in partnership with to deliver meaningful projects that keep vulnerable customers safe, warm and well in their homes.

Who we are and what we do

Cadent, Northern Gas Networks (NGN), SGN, and Wales & West Utilities (WWU) manage the gas infrastructure across England, Scotland, and Wales.

We operate the **National Gas Emergency service (0800 111 999)** and respond to gas emergencies. We connect new homes and businesses, and maintain our networks. We also replace old metal pipes with new plastic ones to ensure a safe and reliable gas supply for future generations.

We operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, to ensure the uninterrupted flow of gas and to safeguard our communities by keeping them safe and warm in their homes. While our responsibility ends at the gas meter, we strive to exceed expectations for our customers.

Each GDN provides tailored support to address regional needs and demand, but collectively we work together to assist customers in vulnerable situations and disadvantaged communities within our networks. This includes proactively identifying those requiring additional assistance and registering them onto the Priority Services Register (PSR). We collaborate with the broader energy and water sectors to optimise the support available to customers facing vulnerability during gas, electricity, or water interruptions.



Key facts

 **280,000km**
of gas pipes

 **22m**
households and businesses
connected to our networks

 **52m**
customers served

Gas distribution networks




Northern
Gas Networks


Your Gas Network

VCMA and its impact

The VCMA is a 'Use It or Lose It' (UIOLI) funding mechanism, distributed to partnership organisations via the gas distribution networks. This provides partners the opportunity to support those who are most in need, through innovative and eligible projects.

Our spend profile

In year four, we have spent a total of £28.8m on collaborative projects delivering fuel poverty, vulnerable customer and carbon monoxide initiatives to support those in our communities. This has contributed to our overall spend of £45.6m on collaborative projects since the VCMA fund was initiated in April 2021.

£28.8m*

total year 4 spend

£51.4m*

minimum collaborative allowance at March 2025

£45.6m*

actual spend to date

*nominal prices

VCMA projects are focused on supporting customers in vulnerable situations and increasing the awareness of carbon monoxide (CO), that go above and beyond our business-as-usual activities.

Eligible projects must:

- Provide support to customers in vulnerable situations and relate to energy safeguarding, or;
- Provide awareness of the dangers of CO, or;
- Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO.

Each GDN is allocated a proportion of the allowance based on the numbers of gas consumers served across their network (Cadent 49%, NGN 12%, SGN 27% and WWU 12%), with a requirement that a minimum of 25% of the allowance be used to fund collaborative projects where at least two GDNs are funding a VCMA project.

Following consultation with Ofgem and other key stakeholders, it was agreed in October 2023 to repurpose unspent allowances from the Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES) into the VCMA, the VCMA funding increased from £60m to £171m (18/19 prices), with 2024/25 being the first full-year we've had to access the uplifted allowance.

Key developments in 2024/25

We continue to be proud to work together, and through feedback and case studies highlighting the real impact of the support provided, we're seeing life-changing outcomes for our customers and communities.

Using stakeholder feedback obtained from our Showcase Event in 2024, we engaged with Ofgem to change the eligibility criteria for servicing/repair and replacement of essential gas appliances. GDNs were encountering customers that were eligible for but not claiming any means-tested benefits. This meant that they were not eligible for support through the VCMA. Furthermore, previously the criteria for gas appliance servicing was different from the eligibility criteria for essential gas appliance repair and replacement, with the criteria for the latter more restrictive as it did not consider the health condition of the occupier.

The changes to the VCMA Governance Document that came into effect on 6 January 2025, brings consistency between the criteria for gas appliance servicing and gas appliance repair and replacement. These changes ensure vulnerable customers who are not in receipt of means-tested benefits but have a health condition can be supported.

Over the last year the GDNs have ensured that there is consistency and a common approach to how we measure SROI (social return on investment) and each of the values of the activities that are undertaken. The proxies measured range from energy efficiency and social isolation all the way through to various benefit and financial support measures. The SROI tool allows all users the opportunity to ensure that when we are assessing the viability of a project, we're consistently using the same values to generate SROI and therefore remove any ambiguity. The tool is still very much a work in progress and the GDNs meet regularly to share feedback and look for ways to enhance and improve the tool as well as adding any new proxies. This tool will continue to evolve in year five and on into RIIO-3.

Our collective impact

Our impact as a group of GDNs goes much further than where we work individually through the VCMA. Our collaborative allowances enable us to use our size and scale to work with a range of organisations to reach thousands of customers in vulnerable situations across the UK and provide support where it is needed the most in our networks.

Here is a summary of what we have delivered using the combined allowance over the price control to date.

Total spend

£134.4m

**% increase
in CO awareness
knowledge**

45%

**Fuel Poor Network
Extension Scheme
connections**

10,200

**Priority Services
Register registrations**

330,000

**Individuals helped
with fuel poverty
and energy efficiency
support interactions**

1.5m

**Carbon monoxide
surveys completed**

467,000

**ISO consumer
vulnerability standards
achieved**



**GDN average PSR
customer satisfaction
score in 2024/25**

9.47/10

Our collaborative strategy

Our collaborative strategy focuses around four key pillars. We engage with both stakeholders and customers and the feedback they provide determines what and how is the best way to support our customers across the four pillars.

The wide-ranging insights and feedback ensure that we can reach a variety of customers in need across a range of demographics, geographies and social groups.



Services Beyond the Meter

Direct operational support provided to customers in vulnerable situations as we go about our work.



Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness

Programmes to increase awareness of CO, how to stay safe and the impact of CO on different vulnerabilities and age groups.



Fuel poverty and energy affordability

Programmes designed to help customers achieve affordable warmth.



Supporting priority customer groups

Programmes targeted at PSR-eligible customers and disadvantaged communities with energy safeguarding services.

All collaborative VCMA project proposals are reviewed through our industry working groups and aligned to one of our key strategic pillars.

This helps us to identify and react to gaps in support for certain vulnerable groups, with particular focus on those who are under-represented or underserved.

We identify, design and deliver programmes through a five-stage process which is covered in more detail in this document.

- 1 Identifying customer need:** embracing stakeholder insight and remaining agile to meet customer need through unprecedented and challenging times.
- 2 Identifying projects and partnerships:** scoping eligible projects and suitable partners with national coverage to deliver accessible and tailored support services.
- 3 Delivering programmes:** monitor and assess delivery throughout to ensure outcomes are maximised for the most vulnerable communities across our network.
- 4 Measuring outcomes and benefits:** using tools such as Social Return on Investment (SROI) to measure the financial and societal benefits to customers and communities.
- 5 Review and learning:** review and evaluating programmes, sharing best practice and learning to help shape future project delivery and our future strategic approach.

Our collaborative strategy continued

1 Identifying customer need

Understanding who and where our vulnerable customers are, is key to providing tailored support. Vulnerability can be complex, varying in nature and duration, so a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work.

Stakeholder input has been crucial in shaping our strategy. Through engagement like workshops and events, stakeholders have consistently expressed a strong desire for us to do more – especially in addressing fuel poverty.

Their insights help us refine our processes and deliver targeted support. By collaborating with key stakeholders, we can better understand community needs, identify gaps and enhance the impact of our VCMA funded projects.

2 Identifying projects and partnerships

Once we identify customer needs through feedback, data and research, we assess how to enhance delivery with current partners or fill any gaps by building new relationships with organisations offering tailored support.

Project proposals come through various channels, including:

- Direct applications from new or existing partners
- Expansion of GDN-specific projects to a national level
- Gaps identified by stakeholders or industry groups
- Insights from data and research

We adapt to the evolving economic, political and social landscape, including responding to procurement events.

All projects go through a rigorous scoping and selection process involving internal and external reviews by participating GDNs, eligibility checks, forecasted SROI, legal contracts, and Project Eligibility Assessments. We only work with partners who align with our goals to deliver meaningful outcomes and address identified gaps.



Our collaborative strategy continued

3 Delivering programmes

As GDNs, we're committed to supporting those most in need. While project development can be intensive, it's essential each initiative is fit for purpose and delivers real impact.

Lead GDNs monitor progress throughout delivery via monthly touchpoints, quarterly reports and stage gate meetings to track success and address challenges. Ongoing partner engagement is key to overcoming obstacles and achieving outcomes.

Knowing a blanket approach doesn't always work, some projects require different partners to meet local needs while aiming for the same outcomes – like our work with Age UK, Age Cymru and Age Scotland. Their tailored models, adapted to regional constraints, led to a project extension to March 2026, with an additional £1.26m in funding.



4 Measuring outcomes and benefits

Through collaboration and shared learning, we've developed consistent methods to measure project outcomes and benefits delivered to customers.

These include:

- Case studies, feedback, and comparing forecast vs. actual outcomes
- Adapting delivery based on best practice and lessons learned
- Stakeholder insight from engagement, including willingness to-pay studies
- Use of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) model

Customer panels have shown strong support for services tackling vulnerability, fuel poverty and CO safety, and emphasised the value of trusted delivery partners through VCMA projects.

SROI evaluates both financial and societal benefits using standard proxies. As required by Ofgem, all VCMA projects must demonstrate a positive SROI – delivering greater benefits than the cost of investment.

Outcomes include increased household income, reduced stress, better health, fewer GP visits and fewer CO incidents.

Our portfolio supports a wide range of demographics, but shares key objectives:

- Increase household income (through benefit checks, debt reduction)
- Improve energy efficiency
- Promote CO safety
- Raise awareness and encourage PSR sign-ups

5 Review and learning

Evaluation and learning are essential to delivering impactful projects and shaping future strategies that ensure no one is left behind. Over the past four years, we've seen the positive impact of our support on vulnerable communities.

Our evaluations show that collaboration must be tailored – regional differences across GDNs mean customer needs vary. We'll continue engaging through industry groups, sharing insights to meet local needs while working toward shared goals.

We've hosted three annual showcase events (with another in July 2025) to highlight project outcomes, gather stakeholder feedback and share lived experiences. We'll keep encouraging input through these events and our annual reports, including ideas on partnerships to support the net zero transition and ensuring no-one is left behind.

We're also promoting collaboration between partners to create referral pathways, share best practices and explore joint opportunities. Co-designed services are being embedded within partner organisations to ensure long-term sustainability beyond VCMA funding.

Our collaborative strategy continued

How we work together

VCMA steering group

This group is made up of key senior VCMA leads across the GDNs and provides sign off for the projects and partnerships identified in the working groups below as well as ensuring the appropriate governance is applied. The group is also represented by Citizens Advice, National Energy Action and other key stakeholders.

Vulnerability and fuel poverty working group

This group looks at how we can support partnerships and projects with VCMA funding. These partnerships are both local and national and look to raise awareness on a variety of initiatives including PSR, CO, energy efficiency and providing support for those living in fuel poverty. The delivery of the Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES) is also discussed within this group.

CO collaboration working group

The focus of the group is to raise awareness of signs and symptoms of CO as well as educating in how to stay safe as well as lobbying for change. The group will ensure that any collaborative projects with partners encompasses key messaging and raises awareness of the silent killer. The group is supported by a range of key stakeholders including alarm manufacturers, Policy Connect and Gas Safe Register.

Beyond the meter working group (new for 2025)

The group meets bi-monthly, providing a platform to share learnings, best practices, and insights across organisations. A key objective is to ensure that all consumers receive a consistent level of service and support, regardless of which network they live in. Since its establishment, the group has facilitated the exchange of valuable knowledge, including processes, operational procedures, and delivery models to strengthen each GDN's approach.

Customer service best practice group

This group focuses on enhancing collaboration and alignment across all GDNs to improve customer satisfaction outcomes. The group has worked together to create new survey processes for customer groups experiencing paid-for and safety disconnections from the gas network, an area of regulatory focus. By sharing insights, methodologies and best practice, we've been able to collectively align our approaches to ensure customers who experience our service are treated fairly and consistently regardless of geographical location. By working together, we aim to further enhance customer satisfaction.

Cross Sector – safeguarding customer working group

This established group are industry experts on the Priority Services Register and associated outcomes/services aligned to customer need as recorded by the PSR industry needs codes. With membership from across energy networks (gas and electricity), suppliers, independent networks, trade bodies, regulators, water companies and third sector – this group actively drives change to support vulnerability across the UK.



Services Beyond the Meter

Our Services Beyond the Meter (SBtM) programmes offer direct support to vulnerable households identified during our daily operations. These services extend beyond our regular activities to support customers in vulnerable situations, including those living in fuel poverty and are unable to fund appropriate maintenance, repair or replacement of their gas appliances.

Collaborative RII0-2

3

Services Beyond the Meter projects

Over 1,700

appliances repaired

£13.4m

investment

2,700

appliances replaced



Through a range of approaches, we aim to fund the repair, replacement, and servicing of gas pipework and essential appliances for those who need it the most. This also includes crucial carbon monoxide safety checks for customers who have called us following their carbon monoxide alarm sounding.

We ensure our engineers and frontline employees are equipped with the skills and resources to assist customers in vulnerable situations with their specific needs and requirements, which helps to build trust as well as high levels of customer satisfaction.

The foundation of our ways of working is to provide a safe and reliable network and we continue to provide positive experiences for our customers.



Going beyond to maintain safe and warm homes

Why we established our approach

As GDNs, we're responsible for the gas pipes up to a customer's meter whilst the responsibility of the internal pipework and appliances sits with the customer.

When we attend a gas emergency, our primary response is to make sure any appliances are made safe if a fault is detected, this may mean we need to condemn the appliance or isolate the gas supply, leaving the customer safe but without heating, hot water and possibly cooking facilities.

This can leave customers in a vulnerable situation and facing financial hardship with the unexpected expense of calling out a Gas Safe registered engineer and potential repair and replacement costs. This can often result in households going for long periods without heat and unsure where to turn for support.

To overcome this, we've created a range of additional services that are designed to help customers get their household and appliances back on gas.

Our impact

We have established two-way referral pathways with partner organisations to ensure vulnerable households aren't left without a working appliance or gas supply for longer than necessary if we need to condemn an appliance or isolate their gas supply.

While we use different delivery models for our SBtM programmes, we work together to share best practice and to seek a consistent approach to eligibility and how our customers access this support.

If a customer is in financial difficulty and unable to meet the cost of a repair or replacement of an essential gas appliance or pipework, we will arrange for a Gas Safe registered engineer to visit and carry out the required work. This could be one of our own upskilled engineers or a partner organisation.

Gas Safe registered engineers can also undertake enhanced CMDDA1 (Carbon Monoxide/Dioxide Dwelling Atmosphere and Appliance Testing) checks to identify the source of a carbon monoxide leak.

Through the provision of these additional services and emergency funding, we're able to reduce the time it would potentially take a vulnerable household to get their gas supply back on.

Alongside being able to prevent a vulnerable household from being left without gas indefinitely, we can also provide additional safety measures where appropriate, such as installing our free locking cooker valve (LCV) safety device or supplying a CO alarm, as well as connecting these households to vital additional support services from our partner organisations.

By working together to refine this offering, we have improved efficiencies in delivery and created a better customer journey which is sensitive to the needs of the most vulnerable households across our networks.

Key achievements

8,276

Carbon Monoxide/Dioxide Dwelling Atmosphere and Appliance Testing jobs completed



Going beyond to maintain safe and warm homes continued

Services Beyond the Meter

By extending our reach beyond traditional services, focusing on appliance repairs, replacements, and proactive gas servicing SBtM supports our customers who could potentially be left in a vulnerable situation if we need to condemn their appliance or isolate their gas supply.

Cadent and NGN have assisted thousands of customers in restoring their internal gas supply, ensuring they have a safe and warm home environment or providing essential cooking facilities. These interventions have been delivered through internal delivery models using direct labour to undertake the necessary work required in our customers' homes.

Our servicing work not only addresses safety concerns but also identifies appliances at immediate risk of emitting carbon monoxide if left unchecked. By proactively maintaining and servicing these appliances, our operational teams ensure they remain in safe working order, safeguarding our customers' wellbeing.

This year we've had to increase the funding for the project to address the surge in the number of gas appliance repairs and replacements. We believe this is driven by the cost-of-living crisis and more customers unable to afford annual servicing for their appliances.

By aligning our efforts and sharing best practices, we're not just serving our individual customer bases; we're collectively elevating the standard of service for all. This alignment underscores our shared commitment to customer safety and wellbeing, as well as our dedication to providing essential services that keep homes safe and warm.



Extra Care Support Services

SGN have developed direct support services to provide an immediate and longer term offering, so our frontline teams can feel confident that they're leaving the household in a better position than when they arrive.

After our engineer leaves, and refers our customer, they are in the safe hands of their Careline team. Our experienced Careline advisers take the time to fully understand the household's unique needs – whether that's safeguarding, financial or wellbeing – and create a tailored package of support, drawing on our range of direct support services and those offered by our 134 Safe & Warm community partners.

In winter 2022, we expanded our Careline service by establishing a depot-based Safe & Warm community team who take Careline and partner delivered services to the doorsteps of vulnerable households.

We'll always make the situation safe when we're called to a gas emergency. If the issue is with a faulty appliance or internal pipework, this means we must isolate the appliance or supply until it's repaired or replaced by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

Many vulnerable households are unable to meet this unexpected cost or find it challenging to arrange a repair. Through our Care and Repair scheme, we're able to support customers through every stage of arranging the repair, including identifying funding schemes to cover the repair costs. If there's no scheme available, we'll provide emergency funding to ensure vulnerable households are not left without gas indefinitely because they can't afford the unplanned repair or replacement.



I was very grateful because if they hadn't done that, I might not be here to tell the tale. They also gave me carbon monoxide advice and a new CO alarm to keep us all safe."

Customer

Services Beyond the Meter

We had a callout to an elderly customer whose boiler hadn't been serviced for several years, it was unsafe meaning we had to disconnect it leaving the customer without heat or hot water. Previously the customer would have needed to seek their own solution but we were able to go out and service the boiler and provide the customer with CO advice and a new CO alarm.

We've supported eligible customers through this scheme since winter 2020, with our current delivery partner Universal Gas Solutions providing this service for us since August 2022.

In addition, the Universal Gas Solutions team can provide customers with additional support services including installing new CO alarms and making sure that if any extra help is needed these needs are fed back to the Careline team so that tailored support is provided.



Going beyond to maintain safe and warm homes continued

Services Beyond the Meter

WWU's SBtM programme ensures vulnerable customers can remain safe and warm in their own homes, retaining their own independence and feel reassured that they are being supported beyond our works.

Through a new HyperCare team we will support customers in vulnerable situations to keep themselves safe, warm and independent in their own homes, by giving them access to support from us that hasn't been in place previously. This allows us to expand support for customers beyond the gas meter specifically and therefore broadening the range of help and guidance we can provide.

Support will include but is not limited to:

- Arranging meter installations with suppliers following a connection
- Finding and dealing with third parties such as Gas Safe Registered (GSR) engineers, electricians, landlords etc. following a gas connection
- Making partnership referrals for additional support through our project portfolio.

In addition, we've upskilled ten engineers who can carry out enhanced carbon monoxide checks for vulnerable customers, following a suspected carbon monoxide call out.

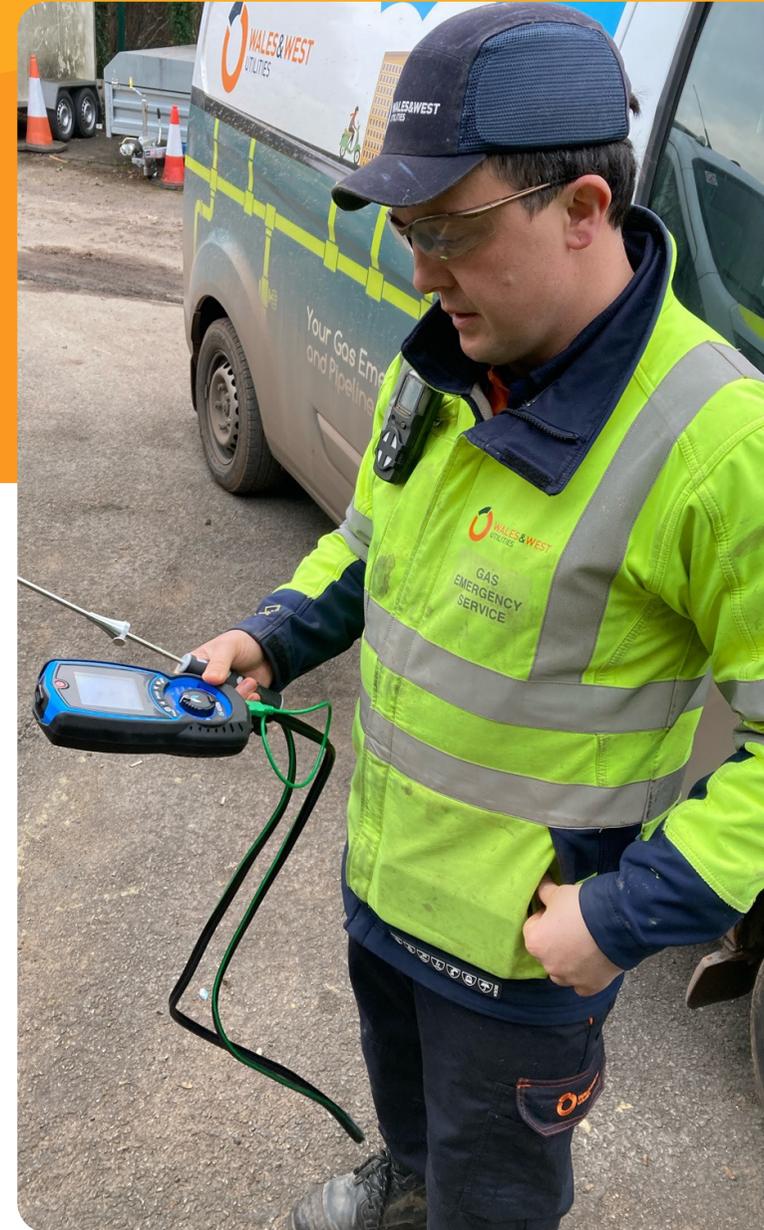
This new process is offered free of charge within 24-48 hours after the initial call out to determine what further action can be taken.

In addition the gas appliance referral scheme allows WWU front-line engineers to make referrals to NEA for customers whose supply has been isolated for safety reasons and don't have the financial means to get the issue resolved.

NEA will have an eligibility conversation with the customer and where the customer does require support, a Gas Safe registered engineer will attend the property and carry out an assessment. If it's economical to do so, the engineer will repair the appliance or pipework. If not, we will look at replacing the appliance, accessing external funding where applicable.

Through NEA, customers are also offered support on maximising income, registering for the PSR and CO awareness.

This project operates alongside our Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability project we have in place with Warm Wales, to make sure customers helped with an appliance repair or replacement can also be referred on to potentially benefit from a range of other support services if they require financial help and advice. We have put a huge focus on bringing our project partners together to collaborate and create an eco-system of referrals making sure people know who and where to turn for support.





Live projects by commitment

Delivery Partner/Project Title/Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/Project Status	Investment	Forecast SROI	Outcomes
Services Beyond the Meter	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by: NGN	Apr 23 – Mar 26/In progress	£1,712,000	£1.90/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5,236: CO investigations completed • 657: pipework trace and repairs • 999: gas appliances serviced • 227: gas appliances repaired • 1,155: gas appliances replaced • 4,013: CO awareness conversations • 4,013: CO alarms installed • 8,026: energy efficiency advice conversations
NSPCC – Collaborative Safeguarding and Gas Safety Services	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by: NGN, SGN and WWU	Apr 23 – Mar 25/Completed	£595,719	£5.01/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 120,729 individuals received fuel poverty signposting and CO advice • 7,582 front-line professionals received training on CO • 3,703 CO alarms were issued
One Number	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by: NGN	Jan 23 – Jan 25/Completed	£4,823,036	£2.75/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,650 one-to-one conversations with customers on energy and income advice • 3,737 referrals to expert partners for support with interventions • 1,592 fully funded interventions have been completed for those living in crisis • 319 customers reached through CO awareness initiatives • 379 customers made aware of the PSR



Carbon monoxide awareness

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless gas that poses a significant risk. CO poisoning can lead to serious health issues and, in severe cases, death. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure widespread messaging to reduce potential harm from CO poisoning.

Collaborative RIIO-2

6

carbon monoxide projects

120m

people reached with CO messaging

£4.9m

investment to date

75,000

CO alarms distributed



To effectively mitigate the risk, it is essential that our messages reach as many of our customers as possible. We have achieved this through the use of innovative engagement channels and collaborative campaigns. By leveraging social media, community outreach programs, and public service announcements, we can effectively deliver CO awareness messaging across our networks.

Building strong partnerships is at the heart of our approach. Collaborating with organisations that work with different age groups and needs can ensure that the information is tailored and accessible. This includes working with schools, those working with those of pensionable age, and community centres to address specific concerns related to CO risks.

Distributing CO alarms is a tangible way to reinforce our safety messages and provide lifesaving information. By ensuring that households have access to CO alarms, we can help prevent CO poisoning and keep families safe. We will continue to focus on areas of our network that are high-risk and our customers in vulnerable situations.



The Scouts

The creation of activities for Scouts of all ages that raise awareness and understanding of CO poisoning, and how to manage and reduce the risks

Project at a glance

Lead GDN:	SGN
Participating GDNs:	Cadent, NGN and WWU
Duration:	August 2021 – March 2026
Investment:	£523,400
Forecast SROI:	£3.34/£1
Status:	In progress



Why we're working together

While young people are one of the demographics most at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, they're also one of the groups least aware of the dangers of CO. Our partnership not only enables us to reduce CO harm among large numbers of young people nationally, we're also able to raise awareness of the silent killer among young people who are potentially more likely than their peers to come into contact with CO through camping and other outdoor activities.

Due to the success of our CO awareness programme, we broadened the scope of our partnership this year to incorporate energy efficiency and fuel poverty awareness. Educating and empowering young people around how to be efficient with energy usage is something that they can not only take home, practice and share with their household now, but will also benefit them in the future when they become independent.

How we're working together

We've developed an embedded programme of 11 CO safety activities, tailored to the differing needs and interests of young people across four Scouting sections – Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers. We've also embedded a bespoke Think CO e-learning package into the Scout Association training materials. We developed these with Gas Safe Charity to educate Scout leaders and adult volunteers on CO safety, helping to ensure they are keeping their groups safe from the silent killer, and empower them to confidently deliver our CO activities.

During CO Awareness Week in November, we launched a new CO Awareness blanket badge, designed for older Scouting sections. It's available all year round and includes flexible, fun activities that help reinforce the CO safety message in a meaningful way.

Key achievements

259,454

Scouting members engaged with CO activities, 80,498 in 2024/25

45,578

Home Safety badges awarded, 14,052 in 2024/25

35,863

Scouting members engaged with energy efficiency activities, overall and in 2024/25

809

Think CO e-Learning completions, overall and in 2024/25

520

CO blanket badges awarded, overall and in 2024/25



The Scouts continued

This year, we also launched a programme of five energy efficiency and fuel poverty activities that educate young Scouting members, and their households, on how to use their energy more efficiently and affordably.

Partnership and community impact

The partnership between Scouts and the GDNs is instrumental in supporting the Scouts' strategic goals of Programme, People and Perception. We've been able to enhance their CO safety guidance and ability to raise awareness around how to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably. Our programme of 11 CO and five energy efficiency activities are available to Scouts' 450,000 members, as well as people outside of the scouting movement.



This year, we developed and trialled our CO-Safety Team programme, aimed at engaging Explorer Scouts (14-18 years) to help raise awareness of CO. Explorers learn about CO risks through online resources and the bespoke Think CO e-learning, then deliver a CO session using our programme of activities to their linked group.

With more CO and energy efficiency activities in the pipeline over the coming year, we'll further expand our programme and help us reach even more young people and their households. This helps them understand the dangers themselves while also sharing vital knowledge with younger Scouts.

Stakeholder support

We know that by working with Scouts and raising awareness of CO and energy efficiency with younger Scouting members, we're helping to create CO and energy champions who can take this learning home and share with their households. This is helping households we might not otherwise have been able to reach to use their energy safely, efficiently and affordably.

We're able to effectively reach young people through a trusted organisation where safety messages are expected.

Throughout the development and delivery of our partnership with Scouts, stakeholders regionally and nationally have supported our programme.

Evaluation and learning

Building on the shared learning opportunities, we've developed the CO-ol Safety team scheme this year, which is aimed at Explorers. Our CO-ol Safety team will educate themselves on CO safety before delivering CO activities to other younger sections, becoming CO ambassadors in their regions.



Safety is a priority for Scouts. Our partnership enables us to reach our young people, leaders and their families with lifesaving CO awareness and energy efficiency messages in a fun and informative way. Fun activities, supported by e-learning modules for leaders. Scouts learning by doing, having fun, literally learning skills for life. Thank you."

Scout Leader

Not only do our CO-ol Safety team ambassadors get a nice new pin badge to show for their efforts, but it also contributes towards their King Scout and Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

We've also seen our GDN Ambassador working group, made up of GDN employees who also volunteer with their local Scout movement, provide a wealth of input and support into our programme. Providing guidance and advice on the development of the new activities launched this year, helping design and roll out the new CO blanket badge, and supporting in the trial of the CO-ol Safety team scheme ahead of its full roll out.



Summer and winter awareness campaigns

Raising awareness of CO, the National Gas Emergency number and the Priority Services Register (PSR)

Project at a glance

Lead GDN:	Cadent
Participating GDNs:	NGN, SGN and WWU
Duration:	August 2021 – March 2026
Investment:	£1,323,171
Forecast SROI:	£140/£1
Status:	In progress

Why we're working together

It is reported annually, that an average of 4,000 A&E visits are related to carbon monoxide, with 40 deaths attributed to CO poisoning. Therefore, CO is a major health risk to those using gas and carbon-based fuels. This risk is even more prevalent due to the current socio-economic climate, pushing people into relative poverty and therefore more unlikely to have the means to afford carbon-based fuel appliance servicing.

The most effective preventative measure remains the installation of a CO alarm that alerts when CO is present, alongside awareness and appliance servicing. Despite CO alarms being widely available, it is still reported that less than 50% of households have one.

Additionally, registration to the PSR is one of the most effective means of support that GDNs can offer to customers living in vulnerable situations. As a result of registering for the PSR, GDNs can tailor their support by identifying specific needs for each individual.

New research from not-for-profit organisation, the Vulnerability Registration Service (VRS), has revealed that very few people – less than 20% of UK adults – are aware of the PSR, despite the ongoing energy crisis. www.vulnerabilityregistrationservice.co.uk/80-of-uk-adults-have-never-heard-of-the-priority-services-register-new-research-reveals/

By working together, we can reach more customers across the UK to educate and help keep customers safe with consistent messages.



The collaborative summer and winter campaigns are a great way to share consistent messaging across all the GDNs. To be able to share safety critical messaging around PSR and CO is essential and the campaigns are a brilliant way to ensure our customers are kept informed on these hugely important topics.”

Phil Burrows

Head of Customer Vulnerability and Social Purpose, Cadent

How we're working together

The VCMA has enabled the GDNs to make a consistent approach when educating the wider public. This ensures that key messaging is delivered to all customers, regardless of their demographic, age, and vulnerability.

The summer campaign this year has focused on a holiday essentials theme by providing CO safety messaging to festival goers, travelling on holiday, camping as well as when using BBQs.





Summer and winter awareness campaigns continued

The winter campaign focused on the importance of appliance servicing, having a CO alarm and how to recognise the symptoms of CO poisoning. It also covers the PSR looking at who is eligible to register and how to apply.

Key achievements

7,092,850

customers reached on CO awareness (with retention)

3,995,330

customers reached about the PSR (with retention)

Retention rates

32%

mass awareness social media

6.4%

out of home advertising

25.6%

leaflet door drop

The campaigns ensure CO and PSR awareness is delivered, increasing customer knowledge on how to register for the PSR, recognising the symptoms of CO poisoning, and the steps and actions they can take to protect themselves from the potential harm.

Partnership and community impact

The summer 2024 and winter 2024/25 campaign had an overall combined reach of over 40.9m (without retention rates). Reaching 27,430,162 individuals for CO awareness and 13,533,445 for PSR.

Using the insights from the GDN rulebook specific retention rates for each media type have been applied.

Stakeholder support

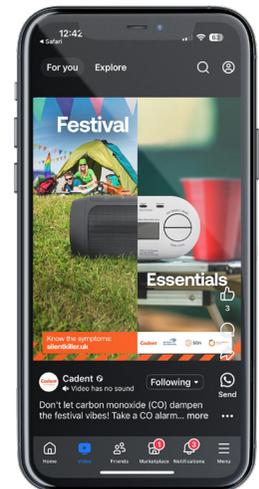
We have used the experience and expert knowledge of our partner Eleven Miles to ensure that our campaigns provide best value for money whilst reaching as many customers as possible. They help turn our ideas and suggestions into content which is meaningful, effective and engaging. We aim to continually improve the success of each campaign year on year, and this year we have tried different methods of communication, as well as testing different formats to see which perform best with engagement from customers.

Evaluation and learning

As we are running these campaigns annually, we're able to review the success of the different communication channels and how customers have responded. Weekly campaign performance calls are held with our partner Eleven Miles, where content performance is reviewed and updated if needed. Online adverts provide statistics on the performance of content and what works well and not so well. This allows us to adapt our approach and focus on more of the activities that customers find engaging and take the time to view. This year we trialled using content creators on Snapchat and TikTok for the first time within the campaigns. The results of this were positive and showed us that this is a method of engagement that our customers respond well to and allow us to reach a younger audience.

In addition, the campaigns are used to raise awareness of the National Gas Emergency number so that customers are aware of what number to call if they suspect CO.

The campaigns utilise various channels, which are chosen specifically to suit each campaign, messaging and demographic. These include leaflet door drops, TV, radio, Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram as well as out of home billboards on the London Underground and motorway service stations.





Live projects by commitment

Delivery Partner/Project Title/ Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project Status	Investment	Forecast SROI	Outcomes
Bonanza Creative – Carbon Monoxide Schools Education Year 2	Lead GDN: SGN. Supported by: Cadent, NGN and WWU	Sep 22 – Mar 26/In progress	£646,333	£2.34/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 33,021 Five to 11 year olds educated on CO safety through in school sessions, and a further 1,440 12 to 16 year olds educated through the new 221 Baker Street pilot 22/23 – 8,161 young people educated 23/24 – 12,787 (WWU 1,372 + 3,565 Apr – Jul + 7,850 Sep – Mar) 24/25 – 12,073 + 1,440 (KS3)
Scouts – Badge Sponsorship	Lead GDN: SGN. Supported by Cadent, NGN and WWU	Aug 21 – Mar 26/In progress	£523,400	£3.34/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RIIO-2 to date: 259,454 young people made more aware of the dangers of CO and how to keep themselves and others safe through our programme of CO activities 35,863 young people engaged with our programme of energy efficiency activities, helping them and their household to use their energy more efficiently 45,578 Cubs Home Safety CO badges awarded 809 Adult leaders/volunteers completed the new Scouts Think CO training package
Gas Safe Charity – Think CO App Development	Lead GDN: SGN. Supported by Cadent, NGN and WWU	Mar 23 – Mar 26/In progress	£42,825	£1.10/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Think CO' app in the final testing stages before launching on Google Play Store and Apple's App Store
EGNIDA – Raising CO Awareness using Augmented Reality	Lead GDN: NGN. Supported by Cadent, SGN and WWU	Oct 23 – Mar 26/In progress	£80,000	£3.51/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project extended due to delayed launch and mobilisation period Total reach 2,988 individuals 747 CO surveys completed across 4 universities (one per GDN) Delivery will continue until total target CO survey reach of 1,481 achieved between all 4 universities
Improving Performance in Practice (iPiP) – Preventing Harm from Environmental Exposure to Carbon Monoxide (PHECO) – E-Learning for Health	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by NGN, SGN and WWU	Jan 24 – Mar 26/In progress	£190,850	£18.63/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e-learning for Healthcare Professionals is currently at a pilot stage and feedback is being gathered from users
Eleven Miles – Collaborative GDN Winter and Summer Awareness Campaigns	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by NGN, SGN and WWU	Apr 23 – Mar 26/In progress	£1,000,000	£120.42/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overall reach for CO was 7,092,850 customers across the UK and a reach of 3,995,330 for PSR



Fuel poverty and energy affordability

Fuel poverty occurs when households spend a large portion of their income on fuel, leaving them unable to afford essentials or keep their homes warm. This issue is influenced by income, fuel costs and a home's energy efficiency.

Collaborative RII0-2

12

fuel poverty and energy affordability projects

1.9m

households reached

£16.6m

investment to date



Our fuel poverty and energy affordability projects aim to help customers achieve affordable warmth by providing tailored support services for those in need.

To make a meaningful difference, we have worked with a range of partners to develop long-lasting, practical solutions for customers. With a range of approaches, designed to make sure our customers can afford to heat their homes, we place a strong emphasis on solutions which help to take households out of fuel poverty.

We play a crucial role in delivering whole home interventions to combat fuel poverty and work with organisations such as the National Energy Action (NEA) who help us to facilitate this and mitigate the impact of the continuing cost-of-living crisis which, for many, has become a way of life.

This year we have improved existing programmes and built new partnerships and, where possible, customised our approach to reach those who most need our help and support.



Warm Homes Healthy Futures

Connecting health professionals and local public health bodies to energy advice and other specialist services

Project at a glance

Lead GDN:	NGN
Participating GDNs:	Cadent, SGN and WWU
Duration:	March 2024 – March 2026
Investment:	£12,174,860
Forecast SROI:	£2.66/£1
Status:	In progress

Why we're working together

The Warm Homes Healthy Futures project was developed to directly address fuel poverty and health inequalities by establishing, coordinating, supporting, and championing strong local energy and health partnerships. Acknowledging the undeniable link between cold homes and poor health outcomes, GDNs continue to work closely with National Energy Action (NEA) using uplifted VCMA funding, with the aim of tackling both issues simultaneously. The project enabled the development of a national network of energy focused support, which is locally targeted to draw upon existing strengths in health services, creating inroads to support people who are most at risk from the impact of living in a cold, damp home.

It was vital that a project of this nature and scale was supported, in light of the energy and cost-of-living crises. Many vulnerable households have continued to struggle, in order to achieve and maintain affordable warmth, despite the adverse health consequences.

How we're working together

Using information provided by GDNs, NEA specifically targeted areas where long-term health problems are a significant vulnerability factor. NEA then used the [Core20PLUS5](#) framework to guide the project and unlock health sector partnerships in each area. The first year has seen significant focus on the establishment of these localised partnerships.

NEA provide a central point of contact and a simple route into networked, energy-related advice and support for health partners. A network of advice is provided via energy and benefits case workers and community co-ordinators. Specialist energy advisers are co-located with the appropriate local health body, for example, with a health and well-being board, local authority public health team or NHS authority. Local energy advice services have been engaged to help and support with delivery via existing networks, with training and oversight from NEA. Community Co-ordinators work closely with partners to increase awareness, trust and engagement with the service.

Key achievements

£1.8m

in previously unclaimed benefits secured for customers

3,201

households accessed energy casework

3,740

customers supported at more than 220 community events

Working in partnership with more than 20 specialist energy advice and support organisations, and more than 54 health, social care and third sector referral partners





Warm Homes Healthy Futures continued

Partnership and community impact

Over a two-year period, this programme will directly support 30,400 unique households and indirectly support 15,360 households through community health workers and volunteers. The first year of delivery has seen continual growth as local partnerships across the four GDNs have been established and delivery started. To date, confirmed financial gains for beneficiaries has exceeded £1.4m.

By individualising the approach in each geographical area, the project has a greater opportunity to benefit from collaboration with established, trusted services, and reach more customers overall. The network is thriving, and we have seen so much enthusiasm from both delivery partners and health and social care professionals. There is now a version of Warm Homes Healthy Futures in 70 places across England, Scotland and Wales. Two in-person conferences, dedicated to this project, have been scheduled for September 2025. This will help to further raise awareness and impact during the second year of delivery.

Stakeholder support

GDNs had consistently heard from stakeholders that greater focus should be given to health-related projects, specifically targeting areas with high levels of deprivation. Understanding the potential benefits of integrating energy advice within the health sector, our stakeholders supported this proposal from the outset. Excitement around the project continues to grow nationally, and the Minister for Energy Consumers stated that she was 'inspired' by the work at NEA's Fuel Poverty Conference earlier this year.

Evaluation and learning

In-depth social evaluation and gathering quantitative and qualitative data is ongoing and will document and evidence lived experiences and real-world impacts of support. Examining energy vulnerability and health outcomes of engaging with the service will also be presented.

It continues to be critical to demonstrate and embed the evaluation of health impacts, throughout the delivery of the programme. A key element of the development of the wider project involves establishing a framework for understanding how we can measure health impacts effectively and meaningfully.

Year 1 Impact Report highlights:

- 55.3% of customers were on an income of £12,000 per annum or less
- 37% had a mental health condition
- 70.7% of those surveyed said they had struggled to find help with their problem elsewhere
- 75.6% lived in the rented sector
- Prior to accessing the service, 38% could not keep their homes warm when they needed or wanted to, compared to 19.4% after
- The number always keeping the heating on lower than they'd like due to cost fell by 31%
- 70.5% said that their knowledge of the signs and risks of CO poisoning has improved since receiving support
- 65.2% said the service helped them to communicate with a company or organisation and 55% now feel comfortable communicating with their supplier
- 81.8% said they were able to communicate with the service in a way that was best suited to their needs. As a result, 65.8% know more about saving energy at home while staying comfortable and healthy, and 39% have been able to reduce and pay off energy bills.



As a Social Prescriber with The Medics PCN in Luton, I'm leading a project supporting families with children and young people with asthma. As part of this work, I regularly refer into National Energy Action's Warm Homes, Healthy Futures programme – not only for asthma support, but also for patients at risk of cold homes due to cancer treatment, mobility issues, mental health challenges, and more. The support provided has been invaluable, and patients consistently praise National Energy Action teams' care and responsiveness. This collaboration has been a key part of our holistic approach, and we look forward to continuing to work together to support our community."

Emma Prince

Social Prescriber, The Medics PCN, Luton



YMCA: Cost of Living

Supporting vulnerable households with a single point of contact for independent and bespoke support

Why we're working together

The ongoing cost-of-living crisis has had a devastating impact on vulnerable communities, including low-income households, renters, single-parent families and the elderly. Rising food and fuel costs have exacerbated existing social and health inequalities, leaving many struggling to maintain a safe and warm home. Through this initiative, YMCA and its partners aim to provide holistic, place-based support that addresses financial hardship, fuel poverty and well-being.

The remit of the YMCA is primarily to support vulnerable, disadvantaged and disenfranchised people, as well as the wider communities in which YMCAs operate. This includes, but is not limited to, low-income households, vulnerably housed individuals, people with poor physical and/or mental health, socially excluded and isolated people, and the elderly. Many people face multiple adversities or vulnerabilities.

The YMCA is concerned that the current economic climate ("the cost-of-living crisis") which has seen significant and sustained rises in the cost of necessities such as food and fuel has, and will continue to, exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, and cause greater social and health issues for families. Research has shown that those people amongst the hardest hit by the current economic climate include the poorest households, renters, single-parent households and the older generation.

Cadent and the YMCA ran a 'Cost of Living project' as a pilot over six months (1 February – 31 July 2024). This was a huge success, reaching 35,033 individuals across 32 YMCAs with a range of cost-of-living support. Cadent and the YMCA are pleased to see this project reinstated and extended until the end of March 2026 and to scale the project to other locations.



YMCA remains dedicated to supporting vulnerable communities, ensuring that no one faces hardship alone and support is delivered. Through our collaboration with SGN, we are doing just this, expanding our efforts to provide essential support to those in need. By working together, we are making a meaningful impact – empowering individuals and families to navigate challenges and build a more secure future."

Kerry Reilly

Chief Executive, YMCA Scotland

Project at a glance

Lead GDN:	Cadent
Participating GDNs:	SGN and WWU
Duration:	January 2025 – March 2026
Investment:	£1,392,800
Forecast SROI:	£1:19/£1
Status:	In progress

YMCA





YMCA: Cost of Living continued

The 'Cost of Living' project, identified a need beyond the Cadent network. By replicating and extending the work piloted by the YMCA and Cadent, the project can support even more people in need across the communities served by SGN and WWU in England, Scotland, and Wales.

With 9,466 beds across England and Wales, their holistic support connects more than 20,000 people each year with case workers and provides access to life skills, healthy living activities and budgeting sessions designed to help them to live independently. The aim for all people living in YMCA-supported accommodation is that there is support enabling people to move on to live in their own independent accommodation, whether this might be social housing or private rented accommodation.

How we're working together

Delivered in partnership with the YMCA, and co-funded by Cadent, SGN and WWU, this project aims to support vulnerable households with a single point of contact for independent and bespoke support to keep a safe and warm home for less.

Given the evidenced success of both partnership projects with Cadent and the continuing need for cost-of-living related support, including need beyond the Cadent network. This initiative proposes to build on the existing 'Cost of Living project' to create more widely accessible support to vulnerable customers affected by the cost-of-living crisis, and to support communities in other parts of England as well as Scotland and Wales.

Scaling the project to areas covered by SGN and WWU as well as Cadent would see the existing cost-of-living project replicated, with 78 local YMCAs in these areas (most of which are multi-site) expressing interest in participating.

The project takes a place-based approach, providing tailored services aligning with the six key themes of the project to meet the needs of local people.

The project's delivery will be split into six services and information distribution. This will ensure a range of audiences are reached through a hybrid of remote and face-to-face engagement:

- Benefits and welfare support
- Health and well-being
- Employment and education/training
- Life skills
- Money/budgeting
- Cooking and healthy eating.

Training will enable staff to have meaningful conversations with vulnerable customers engaged within the six key project themes to complement and embed learning from the safeguarding information distributed.

Reach

73,412

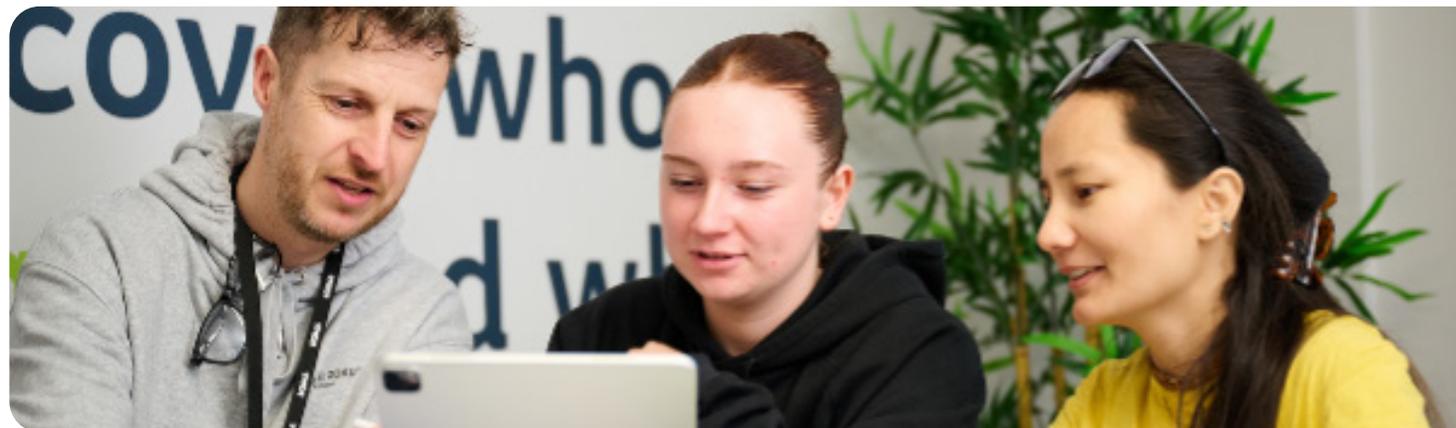
customers through 32 YMCAs by Cadent

95,777

customers through 35 YMCAs by SGN

58,177

customers through 11 YMCAs by WWU





YMCA: Cost of Living continued

Stakeholder support

YMCA's latest research, published as part of Campaign for Change evidences how young people have been 'Trapped in the Cost of Living Crisis' (April 2023), shows reforms to the benefits system could provide critical support and save taxpayers money.

This research follows on from YMCA's 'Breaking Barriers to Work' report (August 2023) and subsequent workshops and focus groups with employers in the private sector exploring how businesses can support in breaking barriers to work for young people who have experienced homelessness – and what barriers can only be removed through the implementation of key policy recommendations by YMCA.

Evaluation and learning

Through feedback, we expect to understand how effective one-to-one and group discussions with cost-of-living related support including energy efficiency and income maximisation advice to reduce fuel poverty alongside PSR, CO and gas safety guidance can further improve people's quality of life.

The opportunity to work with specialist partners at YMCA will provide GDNs with the chance to continue to learn:

- What approaches are the most effective for engaging young adults who stand to benefit most from safety messaging and advice
- Which resource and training is the most effective and engaging for young adults
- Learn energy-saving tips from families/individuals going through fuel poverty.



YMCA has always been at the heart of supporting vulnerable communities, and this expansion of the 'Cost of Living project' is a testament to our commitment to ensuring that no one is left to struggle alone. The success of the initial pilot project demonstrated just how vital this support is, and we are incredibly proud to be working alongside Cadent, SGN and WWU to scale up these efforts. Together, we are making a tangible difference in the lives of thousands, empowering individuals and families to overcome challenges and build a more secure future."

Denise Hatton

Chief Executive, YMCA England and Wales





Warm and Safe Homes (WASH)

Specialists in providing vital support to households living in fuel poverty

Project at a glance

Lead GDN:	Cadent
Participating GDNs:	NGN, SGN and WWU
Duration:	April 2023 – March 2025
Investment:	£731,325
Forecast SROI:	£3.20/£1
Status:	Complete

Why we're working together

The partnership with NEA and The Wise Group offered the opportunity to engage customers at scale, and target households most impacted by fuel poverty. The decision to work with NEA and The Wise Group allows us to partner with trusted, expert, and widely known organisations. NEA's partnership with Money Saving Expert Martin Lewis also means that an even greater number of households are aware of NEA and approach them when in crisis.

How we're working together

Through NEA's Warm and Safe Homes (WASH) and The Wise Group's Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) advice lines, we delivered advice on home energy efficiency, income maximisation, the Priority Services Register (PSR) and access to industry grants. This advice was also delivered face-to-face through targeted community events, hosted by specialist advisers, in areas of significant need; the level of need assessed by measures such as fuel poverty rates, index of multiple deprivation, scale of existing services and presence of customer demographics most impacted by fuel poverty. NEA and The Wise Group also offered in-depth case work support to customers experiencing complex issues, such as tariff and switching advice, billing and supplier enquiry resolution, condensation/dampness support, and access to industry grants such as the Warm Homes Discount.

Key achievements

7,089

customers assisted through the advice line and community events

414

customers assisted through NEA's Hardship Fund or The Wise Group Hardship Fund (fuel top-up vouchers) equating to £59,550





Warm and Safe Homes (WASH) continued

Partnership and community impact

This project is the product of a long-running collaboration between NEA, the Wise Group and the GDNs. Together we maximised the impact of VCMA funding, by providing outstanding energy advice and support to vulnerable and low-income households facing fuel poverty. The advice delivered often has life-changing impact on households, helping them to navigate a complex energy market or supporting them to maximise their income through claiming welfare benefits. Community events placed expert advisers in community venues where they are easily accessible to those seeking assistance. The hardship fund provided vulnerable householders with access to warmth when they would otherwise have been left in the cold.

Stakeholder support

Households are being forced to make impossible decisions with how to spend overstretched incomes and are reaching out for help. A recent review has shown that cases are becoming more desperate and complex therefore, it is vital NEA and the Wise Group are supported by the GDNs to enable a greater response to the increased demand on services.

The advice service is multi-channel, meaning clients can access support through the most convenient medium for them, whether that be by phone, online or in person at a community event. Accessibility and inclusivity are central to delivery of the activities so that all customers can access our services.



This winter was the single biggest challenge that NEA has experienced. Our support to households, and our partnerships were more important than ever."

Adam Scorer
CEO, National Energy Action

Evaluation and learning

The project has exceeded targets by supporting 7,089 customers. They have been assisted through the NEA WASH advice line and community events or The Wise Group's HEAT public facing advice line and face-to-face community events.

414 households have received immediate hardship fund support with measures such as prepayment vouchers, the clearing of energy debt and credit direct to suppliers, equating to £59,550.

This project has provided learning on the types of support that customers have required. Initially the advice given focused on the efficient use of appliances and behaviours, utility tariff services, and PSR registrations. However, during the two-year project the issue of debt and advice on income maximisation were also very prevalent.



Key achievements

7,089
energy conversations

2,128
PSR conversations

563
income maximisation conversations

327
CO conversations



Reach Out – Energy Support

Supporting at risk households with immediate advice on fuel debt and income maximisation

Project at a glance

Lead GDN:	WWU
Participating GDNs:	Cadent
Duration:	May 2024 – March 2026
Investment:	£1,400,000
Forecast SROI:	£12.36/£1
Status:	In progress



Why we're working together

This project has been designed to reach those 'slipping through the net' of conventional support.

Severn Wye Energy works closely with existing and new partners, to identify at risk communities and groups who will most benefit from support through this project across Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire, Powys and Herefordshire. In particular, this project focuses on working with refugees and asylum seekers, rural communities, houseboat communities and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

How we're working together

Through Severn Wye, the programme delivers home visits with interpreters, where needed, and a range of drop-in sessions at accessible and convenient locations such as community centres, food pantries and other community hubs. The services provided include support to engage with energy providers, to access relevant benefits and funding schemes, and to enhance energy efficiency and income maximisation knowledge.

Key achievements

2,348

customers reached directly by the programme*

£89,210

of actual savings created for customers with an additional £221,062 of potential savings*

*Since October 2024





Reach Out – Energy Support continued



An adviser visited a traveller in their caravan who was feeling extremely low and didn't know where to turn. As well as the energy advice, PSR and CO awareness they gave advice on who to contact for support – the GP for mental health support and DWP for benefit checks. He took their advice and is now financially better off and getting support with his mental health.

“I am so grateful for your help, this has been having a significant impact on my mental health, and I will feel the weight lifted from my shoulders, this will help me immensely over the next few months with your help, being able to have the heating on will help with my health conditions.”

Customer

Severn Wye Energy

Partnership and community impact

Severn Wye has strengthened collaborations with local councils to support the travelling community fostering trust through active engagement on traveller sites.

They have continued to foster partnerships essential for the successful implementation of our project. Notably, their engagement with the Resettlement Teams in Herefordshire and South Gloucestershire has led to the delivery of classroom sessions on energy services to the Ukrainian community with plans to extend to other communities.

The impactful work with the refugee community, and increased exposure of the project, has helped raise awareness of initiatives, which can be viewed here:

www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2gvgyrlrqq

As part of their commitment to continuous improvement, they have linked up with Mental Health UK, one of our VCMA partners. They have provided comprehensive staff training to enhance the ability to support clients effectively through their project. They have also attended events with the MS Society, through another VMCA project, and will be attending events to futureproof the ecosystems of partnership referrals.

Stakeholder support

GDN research with key stakeholders has shaped our approach, prioritising fuel poverty and energy affordability support among ethnic minority groups and those who are most in need.

Feedback from fuel poverty organisations highlights the necessity for diverse engagement strategies and approaches that can reach at-risk groups that continue to be excluded from the available support systems. Some of these groups were evidenced as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities, refugees and asylum seekers, and individuals struggling with mental health.

The partnership with Severn Wye Energy aims to support underserved communities, affected by fuel poverty and energy costs, offering tailored advice and access to hardship funding.

Evaluation and learning

Significant progress has been made in supporting refugees and asylum seekers through resettlement teams in two counties, highlighting the critical need for such services. Positive feedback reinforces the value of these collaborations, which we aim to build upon. Trust within the traveller community continues to grow through sustained engagement, with efforts focused on strengthening these relationships further.

Continuous training has boosted team confidence, while partnerships with other VCMA partners ensure a holistic support approach. Challenges remain in reaching the boat community, requiring targeted efforts to address this in the months ahead.

Key achievements

406

customers signed up to the PSR

1,041

customers reached with CO awareness



Live projects by commitment

Delivery Partner/Project Title/ Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project Status	Investment	Forecast SROI	Outcomes
Citizens Advice National – Energy Safeguarding and CO Safety Partnership 2023/24 – 2025/26	Lead GDN: SGN. Supported by NGN and WWU	Apr 23 – Mar 26/In progress	£2,446,627	£5.53/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIIO-2 to date: 17,012 households supported, all receiving CO awareness advice, and 4,875 benefiting from the full support of CA's established Energy Advice Program (EAP) • £10.9m of income gain identified and 4,053 CO and Energy advice packs issued that include a CO alarm • 23/24 – 8,620 clients supported; 5,816 with CO awareness discussions, 2,804 with CO and Energy Advice sessions/£5,422,362 income gain/1,982 CO + Energy Packs • 24/25 – 8,392 clients; 5,690 CO/2,783 CO + Energy/£5,525,466 income gain/2,071 CO + energy packs
Fuel Bank Foundation – Fuel Crisis Support	Lead GDN: SGN. Supported by Cadent, NGN and WWU	Jan 22 – Mar 26/In progress	£1,500,000	£2.88/£1	<p>Throughout the partnership we're providing 20,400 households with energy crisis vouchers in addition to providing support with energy debt, information on carbon monoxide safety and the Priority Services Register. Vouchers are budgeted against GDN network areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cadent: 10,160 • NGN: 2,358 • SGN: 5,523 • WWU: 2,359
Money Ready – Financial Inclusion and Energy Safeguarding School's Programme	Lead GDN: SGN. Supported by Cadent, NGN and WWU	Mar 22 – Aug 25/In progress	£377,000	£15.53/£1	<p>7,238 young people reached with the fuel finance programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22/23: 2,336 • 23/24: 2,787 • 24/25: 2,115
National Energy Action (NEA) – Warm Homes Healthy Futures	Lead GDN: NGN. Supported by Cadent, SGN and WWU	Mar 24 – Mar 26/In progress	£12,198,660	£2.66/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct beneficiaries: 4,771 • Energy casework delivered to 3,200 individuals • Benefit advice: 1,661 • Benefit entitlement check and claim support 691 • CO alarms distributed 3,426 • Reach during community energy efficiency and CO awareness events 3,843 • Individuals trained/up-skilled in energy and CO awareness 406



Live projects by commitment

Delivery Partner/Project Title/ Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project Status	Investment	Forecast SROI	Outcomes
Severn Wye Energy – Reach out – Energy Support	Lead GDN: WWU. Supported by Cadent	May 24 – Mar 26/In progress	£1,400,000	£12.36/£1	Oct 24 – Mar 25: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly supported: 2,384 individuals • PSR awareness: 1,253 individuals • PSR referrals: 406 individuals • Financial savings: £89,209.55 • CO awareness conversations: 1,041
IE Hub – Income and Expenditure Hub, support for customers in vulnerable circumstances and financial difficulties	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by NGN, SGN and WWU	Jul 24 – Mar 26/In progress	£743,932	£12.53/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSR awareness: 20,692 • CO awareness: 20,692 • Income max 15,923 • An average income increase of £5,435.66
Make Life Better	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by SGN	Jan 25 – Mar 26/In progress	£100,000	£31.50/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income max only: 46 individuals. This has only been delivering since Feb 25
YMCA – Cost of Living Project	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by SGN and WWU	Jan 25 – Mar 26/In progress	£1,392,800	£19.81/£1	Jan 25 – Mar 25: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of staff trained on topics of CO, PSR, energy efficiency and income max: 125 • No. of people receiving benefits and welfare support: 5,821 (unique reach 2,911) • No. of people receiving health and wellbeing support: 21,418 (unique reach 19,276) • No. of people receiving employment and education support 8,319 (unique reach 5,823) • No. of people receiving life skills support: 6,790 (unique reach 679) • No. of people receiving money management/budgeting support: 4,788 (unique reach 958) • No. of people receiving cooking/healthy eating/meal planning support: 5,816 (unique reach 1,163) • Total reach 53,077 & unique reach 30,935
Warm Homes Network – fuel poverty partner ecosystem 2023/24 (Birmingham and Cumbria pilots)	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by NGN, SGN and WWU	Apr 23 – Mar 26/In progress	£4,437,508	£21.75/£1	Nov 24 – March 25: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly supported 7,000 people • £1m in financial benefits achieved • 341 CO Awareness conversations • 1,130 PSR Awareness conversations • 41 PSR registrations



Live projects by commitment

Delivery Partner/Project Title/ Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project Status	Investment	Forecast SROI	Outcomes
National Energy Action – Empowered by Energy	Lead GDN: SGN. Supported by NGN	Apr 24 – Mar 26/In progress	£88,915	£1.76/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This year, 73 newly settled refugees across SGNs and NGNs regions have participated in face-to-face and online energy efficiency workshops to become energy ambassadors for their community. The majority of workshop participants this year have been from Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan, Syria and Ukraine
Money Ready – Fuelling Financial Independence	Lead GDN: SGN. Supported by Cadent	Nov 21 – Mar 26/In progress	£1,153,157	£2.27/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Money House is delivering across Birmingham, Glasgow, London and Southern England. We've equipped 461 care leavers and at-risk young people with the skills to manage their finances and household essentials so far
NEA and The Wise Group – Warm and Safe Homes – National Extension 2023-2025	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by NGN, SGN and WWU	Apr 23 – Mar 25/Completed	£731,326	£3.20/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7,089 Clients assisted through National Energy Action's Warm and Safe Homes (WASH) or Wise Group Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) Advice Line and Community Events 414 Clients assisted through National Energy Action's Hardship Fund or The Wise Group Hardship Fund (fuel top-up vouchers) equating to £59,550 327 conversations on the dangers of CO 2,128 conversations on the PSR 7,089 conversations on energy efficiency 563 conversations on how to maximise income



Supporting priority customer groups

Our supporting priority customer groups projects are designed to assist customers who qualify for the Priority Services Register (PSR). Through practical, accessible support, we aim to help communities across our network maintain safety and warmth in their homes.

Collaborative RII0-2

11

supporting priority customer group projects

£10.4m

investment to date

Over 5.9m

customers supported



For customers that qualify for the PSR, each will require different levels of assistance. It is therefore important that we provide tailored support, through trusted organisations, to customers living in vulnerable situations.

We continue to co-design solutions by engaging with our partners and vulnerable groups, to create valuable yet cost-effective projects which go further and building trust and identifying those living within communities who are PSR eligible.

By strengthening relationships we have within the communities we serve, we build trust, loyalty, and confidence in energy-related matters which ultimately help individuals maintain safe and warm homes.



Carers Trust – Carer Money Matters (CMM)

Alleviating the financial burden and fuel hardship that carers, their families and those that they care for experience

Project at a glance

Lead GDN:	WWU
Participating GDNs:	Cadent, NGN and SGN
Duration:	April 2024 – March 2026
Investment:	£4,075,770
Forecast SROI:	£42.03/£1
Status:	In progress

**CARERS
TRUST**

Why we're working together

This project extends WWU's initiatives with Swansea and Bridgend Carers Centres, offering energy-specific support to reduce carers' expenses, increase income via benefit checks, and ensure safety through PSR referrals and CO awareness. It alleviates financial and fuel hardships for carers, their families, and those they care for, targeting rural areas and those with extensive caring responsibilities. The project provides tailored information, advice and guidance to support carers across all targeted areas.

How we're working together

Through this project, we've been able to reach customers through one-to-one telephone support, locally delivered support and online. Across England, Scotland and Wales, the programme provides access to income maximisation and Welfare Advisers, financial management and resilience workshops and micro grants for immediate relief of energy associated debt.

Partnership and community impact

Carers Trust leads the largest UK-wide network of local carer organisations, promoting the well-being of unpaid carers. Through partnership working, Carers Trust have been able to extend their reach, delivering evidence-based programmes, delivering impactful outcomes to those most in need. Collaborating across England, Scotland and Wales, they enhance lives through support, advice, and resources. This project has strengthened their ability to assist those with extensive caring responsibilities. Through forums and community engagement, demonstration of the work in this space has amplified carers' voices on fuel poverty, working with government and MPs to spotlight the vital support for unpaid carers.

Stakeholder support

Through proactive business planning, stakeholders across our networks have emphasised the importance of prioritising support for vulnerable groups and addressing fuel poverty, especially given its strong connection to health – a pressing community issue. Continued collaboration with partners like National Energy Action and Citizens Advice, backed by fuel poverty statistics, reveals that despite decreasing energy costs, fuel poverty persists, severely impacting households. Those who care for others are particularly affected, and urgently need accessible advice and targeted support amidst this growing crisis.

Key achievements

10,271

carers reached directly by the programme

1,021

households signed up to the PSR

£6,935,708

of potential savings created for carers

4,602

carers reached with CO awareness and
4,625 reached with PSR awareness



Carers Trust – Carer Money Matters continued

Evaluation and learning

The complexity of support often needed by carers, particularly around understanding benefit entitlements, poses significant challenges. Advisers sometimes provide assistance over multiple sessions, liaising with other agencies, limiting their capacity to reach more carers. This is especially difficult for network partners in rural areas with poor transport links. Additional support is required for carers who are housebound, digitally excluded, or face literacy or language challenges.

In quarter four in 2024, meetings with network partners explored light-touch options for carers needing less intensive support and re-purposing under-spend from programme delays. While workshops have been effective for some, linking with existing carer groups has proven more successful for others. Network partners that upskilled their staff to deliver project elements reduced reliance on individual workers; one partner presented this approach at a quarterly CMM meeting. Budget reallocation efforts include increasing staff hours or redeploying staff to support the project.

This tailored and adaptive approach addresses the varied needs of carers, enhancing accessibility and impact, particularly in underserved and rural areas, ensuring that the project continues to support those who need it most.



Michaela is a single parent who cares for her 18-year-old son Reegan who has been diagnosed with Neurofibromatosis type 1, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, a mild to moderate learning disability and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Michaela supports him to take his prescribed medication and attend medical appointments. Michaela also suffers with migraines and is affected by anxiety and depression. She has no direct support from family and relies on benefits to support her and Reegan.

Michaela was offered a home visit, through the CMM programme, which included a benefits check and review of her monthly outgoings. During the visit, Michaela highlighted that both her fridge and cooker were broken. Michaela accessed support for her caring role, including successful applications for a grant for a new cooker and to replace the fridge, food vouchers and warm bag (with a wearable blanket, radiator foil, radiator key, heat pack and light bulbs), and referral to the Better Housing Better Health emergency fuel voucher assistance for residents with prepayment meters.

Reegan was also registered on to the Priority Services Register. Michaela said with the support has made a significant change to her life. She can plan and prepare healthy meals for her and Reegan and is able to keep food fresh in the new fridge. This has given her a renewed sense of well-being.

Caring for someone?

In partnership with
CARERS TRUST



You could get help to stay warm and safe

“I was unaware of the benefits that I was entitled to. The project supported me to claim a range of benefits for my children and myself, this has helped a lot as at the time, it was a difficult decision as to whether I put the heating on at home, this has made life more comfortable.”



Scope – Disability Energy Support (DES) with water advice

Delivering tailored energy advice and support for disabled people

Why we're working together

For the one in four people in the UK who are disabled, life costs more. According to updated research from Scope in 2024, disabled households need an additional £1,010 a month to have the same standard of living as non-disabled households.

With the extra costs of heating, equipment and therapies, disabled people are more likely to face financial vulnerability and increased energy costs. As a result, 38% of disabled families are living in fuel poverty. Disabled people also often find it more challenging to access information and support to manage these issues.

Building on SGN's successful regional pilot, we launched a national partnership in April 2022 to deliver tailored and targeted support to almost 22,000 households via the Disability Energy Support (DES) with water advice service.

In February 2024, we worked with Scope to embed the learnings from research and regional pilot projects to further enhance our partnership using the additional VCMA funding.

Key achievements

7,971

customers supported via the advice line this year

6,852

customers supported via DES this year

1,555

benefits checks provided

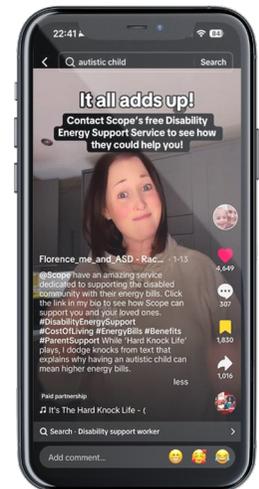
1,750

fuel vouchers provided

Project at a glance

Lead GDN:	SGN
Participating GDNs:	Cadent, NGN and WWU
Duration:	April 2022 – March 2026
Investment:	£3,515,000
Forecast SROI:	£7.03/£1
Status:	In progress

SCOPE
= Equality for disabled people





Scope – Disability Energy Support (DES) with water advice continued

How we're working together

When a disabled person contacts the DES helpline, an experienced utility adviser will assess their individual household needs during a one-on-one telephone appointment. Trained advisers provide support with understanding energy and water bills, managing energy and water debt, and accessing benefits and grants. These appointments are also an opportunity for advisers to raise awareness of CO.

Demand for the DES service has increased dramatically as a result of the cost-of-living crisis and we're seeing more households contact the helpline in crisis. We're addressing this urgent demand with emergency resources, such as crisis funding for households on credit meters and heated blankets for those who would benefit from targeted warmth.

Key achievements

1,309

CO alarms provided

3,151

CO awareness sessions

3,504

heated blankets given to customers

Partnership and community impact

We considerably increased the scale of our support for the DES service this year, investing an additional £3,275,000 in the much-needed service. With this additional investment, we're able to include emergency resources such as fuel credit, heated blankets and CO alarms.

This was a significant shift change in our programme and required extensive mobilisation ahead of the winter months, including training 17 Scope advisers on the energy safeguarding services.

On average, disabled people have three one-on-one appointments to work through their energy and water needs, helping them to confidently address often complex challenges with energy debt and health concerns impacted by energy rationing.

We'd also carried out 133% more benefits checks than last year, helping 1,555 households identify unclaimed benefits to maximise their income.

In addition to one-on-one appointments, we're helping thousands more people stay safe and warm at home through trusted information on the Scope website. Since working with Scope to redevelop its online resources, the energy and CO advice pages have been viewed 150,354 times.





Scope – Disability Energy Support (DES) with water advice continued

Stakeholder support

The number of disabled people needing help to stay safe and warm at home is growing. Customer debt is at an all-time high with 57% of disabled people in debt. Average Scope client debt has risen by 161% in the last 12 months from an average debt per household of £1,103 to £2,884. This is the highest level since the service began.

Our partnership with Scope has matured into a much-valued lifeline for disabled people. It's recognised as being designed for and delivering well for the target community. Our cross-sector partnership is a point of reference for regional and national stakeholders on effective engagement and support for disabled people from design to delivery.

Evaluation and learning

We've carried out research this year to better identify how people are reaching the DES service. Typically, disabled people are referred by utility companies, GPs and through direct marketing including social media. A high percentage of service users are referred by friends and family, cementing the service's value and reputation as a trusted advice provider.

To further raise awareness of our support for disabled people, we delivered multiple national campaigns to promote the service. This includes traditional channels such as posters in GP surgeries over winter, as well as a new social media channel. By engaging with social media influencers to share videos explaining the service on TikTok, we were able to reach a new community of disabled people. This was reflected in a 195% increase in applications for DES support the day after the videos were posted.



I have been stunned at how Scope helpline and disability energy support always give 110%, you are all efficient, thorough, and helpful. And show a care and compassion that I have not experienced from other services."

"Afternoon friends, I want to THANK YOU so much for the heated blanket just been delivered to me here at home. I'm writing this with a lump in my throat, that such good people like you are always there and helping us disabled people live independent lives much as possible. Thanks again so very much."

Customer





Marie Curie

Energy safeguarding and tackling fuel poverty for terminally ill people

Project at a glance

Lead GDN:	SGN
Participating GDNs:	Cadent, NGN and WWU
Duration:	December 2022 – March 2026
Investment:	£2,060,020
Forecast SROI:	£12.22/£1
Status:	In progress

Why we're working together

Thousands of people living with a terminal illness rely on home medical devices, such as ventilators and dialysis machines. This equipment plays a vital role in preserving people's health, comfort and dignity towards the end of their life.

With this comes an increase in energy bills. Recent Marie Curie research shows that a terminally ill person's energy bill can increase by as much as 75% over what they were paying before they were diagnosed. As a result, people diagnosed with a terminal illness are disproportionately at risk of falling into fuel poverty.

Together, we're supporting terminally ill people and their families across Britain who are in fuel poverty with dedicated support and advice services.

In 2024, Marie Curie's 'Dying in Poverty' report, based on research by Loughborough University, revealed a deeply concerning analysis of how many people are dying in fuel poverty – at least 128,000 each year. That's more than one in five of all people who die and includes 110,000 pensioners. Last winter, as many as 44,000 terminally ill pensioners lost their Winter Fuel Payment.

How we're working together

We've established an energy advice service as part of Marie Curie's Information and Support Line. Dedicated Energy Support Officers (ESOs) help terminally ill people access financial support to address the underlying causes of fuel poverty. The ESOs have also trained the wider adviser team on dealing with energy-related issues and providing benefit and income maximisation checks.

Key achievements

5,215

PSR Conversations (to date)

2,536

PSR Conversations (April 2024 – March 2025)

15,685

benefits checks (to date)

6,191

benefits checks (April 2024 – March 2025)

£2,905,781

financial benefits identified (to date)

£1,394,775

financial benefits identified (April 2024 – March 2025)





Marie Curie continued

We've raised awareness of this service through targeted multi-channel marketing campaigns. Our social media activity has generated over 188,000 views and we've also issued over 30,000 leaflets through Marie Curie charity shops.

Another integral part of our partnership is our co-designed training package for Marie Curie's community nurses, healthcare assistants and volunteers. This bespoke training helps frontline teams spot signs of a household in fuel poverty and empowers them to refer patients for further support.

Partnership and community impact

Since December 2022, our partnership has helped 5,884 people with support and information around energy bills and maximising household incomes via our dedicated ESOs.

We've carried out benefits checks for 15,685 households, helping customers identify an average of £185 per month in unclaimed benefits. Collectively, we've identified more than £2.9 million worth of benefits for people living with a terminal illness.

Key achievements

5,884

customers supported via ESOs (to date)

2,655

customers supported via ESOs (April 2024 – March 2025)

For Marie Curie's frontline teams, training on energy advice and fuel poverty awareness enables them to help people at end of life with access to tailored support that helps bring peace of mind and tangible financial benefits that help maintain a warm home.

This year we've trained 865 frontline Marie Curie nurses, clinical staff and volunteers, taking the total to 1,595 trained since 2022.

Stakeholder support

For many people with a terminal illness, their deteriorating health often means spending more to heat their homes. This significant increased cost is coming at a time when their income is likely depleted.

After receiving a terminal diagnosis, people shouldn't have to worry about whether they can afford to keep their home warm, but it's a stark reality for many.

Since co-design and throughout delivery, this partnership has been supported by stakeholders at both network and national level. It has been recognised as an industry-leading initiative within both the utility and charity sectors, and we've shared our approach at national conferences for cross-sector learning.

Evaluation and learning

Our monthly data experiences less seasonality than we might expect, showing us that fuel poverty remains a worry for people all year round, especially in the present economic landscape.

There is great demand among people living with a terminal illness for trusted information on energy and benefits. We're seeing this not just through calls to the Marie Curie advice line, but through the amount of people accessing their online resources. This year alone, there have been 24,220 visitors to the energy advice pages on the Marie Curie website.



...lots of people aren't registered on the PSR and when we explain what it is for, they are keen to sign up and see the importance, especially those with medical equipment reliant on electricity as it's not often something they have thought about before in the event of power cuts..."

Marie Curie team member

As our programme matures, we've identified opportunities to refine its delivery. For example, when palliative care nurses visit patients at home overnight, it's not always possible to have conversations with households about the PSR as the patient and family are asleep. Recognising a gap in our engagement, Marie Curie has developed bespoke resources to leave with families to make sure they still receive this information, alongside a 'quick guide' for nurses on how to verbally communicate the key value proposition of the PSR when handing it over, to ensure the interaction retains high value.



Energy safeguarding partnership

Helping older people live in safe and warm homes

Project at a glance

Lead GDN:	SGN and WWU
Participating GDNs:	Cadent and NGN
Duration:	February 2023 – March 2026
Investment:	£2,295,020
Forecast SROI:	£26.12/£1
Status:	In progress

Why we're working together

Older people are particularly vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold and damp home. Typically, they spend more time at home and often need to consume more energy to keep warm. Older people are also less likely to live in an energy-efficient home, have their gas appliances routinely serviced or be aware of energy support schemes.

Even before the cost-of-living crisis, around one million older people were living in fuel poverty. As energy bills and food costs continue to rise, even more older people are struggling to make ends meet. This has been exacerbated this winter, as millions of older people lost the help provided by the Winter Fuel Payment.

Recent Age UK research identified that older people would have to limit using their heating, choose between heating and eating, or risk getting into debt simply to afford to pay their energy bills. UK wide research revealed that three in four (equivalent to 9.1 million) aged 66 and over said that their homes were colder than they would like them to be some, most of or all of the time.

Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age UK are the country's leading charities for older people. Through our national partnership, we're providing energy safeguarding services tailored to meet the needs of older people who are in or at risk of fuel poverty.

How we're working together

We've set up dedicated teams at all three organisations to help older people address the underlying causes of fuel poverty and make sure that older people are aware of the help that's designed to help to keep them safe and warm. Trained advisers are on hand to help older people sign up for the PSR, increase their household income through benefit checks, improve their home energy efficiency and raise awareness of CO safety.

Key achievements

64,449

older people reached

384,194

benefit calculations completed

5,798

PSR conversations

Together with Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age UK, we've developed bespoke training for frontline engineers and customer service team advisers across all four networks on how to identify and engage vulnerable older people in need of support.

Partnership and community impact

To date, our programme has reached more than 64,449 older people nationwide.

Together with **Age Scotland**, we've helped 14,047 older people in the past 12 months through our dedicated energy advice line team. In addition, this year alone, we've hosted 83 community energy workshops, bringing together 954 older people to address their energy concerns. Launching in late 2024, our in-depth casework service, By Your Side, has supported 135 vulnerable older people to access unclaimed benefits that have increased their household income. To support older people in energy crisis we have issued warm packs, heated blankets and 532 crisis vouchers.





Energy safeguarding partnership continued

Recognising the high prevalence of digital exclusion among older people, we've introduced digital skills coaching to increase confidence in accessing support online using energy bills and registering onto PSR Scotland as new digital skills.

Meanwhile, with **Age Cymru** we have directly supported 3,872 older people over the past year with energy safeguarding and income maximisation. Our engagement efforts have been significantly enhanced by the distribution of 100 warm packs, and we have collaborated with warm hubs and food banks to ensure these packs reached those most in need.

Additionally, our teams have worked diligently to encourage those eligible for benefits to apply, particularly in light of misleading media reports suggesting that applying for Pension Credit is a difficult process and loss of trust following the Winter Fuel Payment cuts. We have been proactive in reframing this narrative, providing reassurance and practical support to those who may be hesitant to apply. These interactions have not only provided opportunities to introduce energy safeguarding measures to vulnerable households but have resulted in financial gains of £637,648.76.

In England, **Age UK** has supported 46,530 older people with personalised conversations designed to assess financial vulnerability. It's not just through one-to-one conversations that older people are benefitting from our support. We've seen demand for trusted energy information increase this year with Age UK providing 133,727 printed energy and benefits guides through local community hubs.

This year, we've seen 384,194 older people use the Age UK benefits calculator to check if they're eligible for additional household income.

Through additional funding provided by NGN, SGN and WWU, 261 older people have been supported with completing benefits applications as they were unable to do this for themselves. To help those in crisis these households were also provided with access to crisis funds to help in the interim.

Stakeholder support

Older people face barriers engaging with the energy market. Digital exclusion makes it challenging to know what's expected of them when it comes to policy changes and industry initiatives.

This year, news around the Winter Fuel Payment, smart metering and the Radio Teleswitch Service switch off has all dominated headlines. Yet without the ability to confidently access information and support digitally, older people are often left anxious and isolated. For some, the fear of not being able to afford their energy bills has pushed them into extreme energy rationing.

This highlights how trusted and tailored engagement, both over the phone and face-to-face is vital to ensure older people are not excluded from key services and support. Recognising this need, we've seen greater regional and national support to develop pathways to help older people with their energy needs.

Evaluation and learning

By bringing these organisations together, we've created a unique platform for engagement and sharing best practice around regional delivery models. While the three organisations operate across three different policy areas, the older people they support share the same major challenges.



Our partnership with SGN is made stronger by our mutual understanding of the needs of vulnerable older people across Scotland. We are delighted that SGN stand alongside us, with a flexible and supportive approach that allows us to respond to the challenges and changing needs of older people."

Katherine Crawford
CEO, Age Scotland

The complexity in applying for benefits is mirrored across all three regions, as is the increasing challenge in making ends meet. More than ever before, we're seeing people willing to open up about their financial difficulties and concerns. This is likely because financial difficulties are increasingly seen as a shared experience – particularly following the changes to the Winter Fuel Payment – lessening the stigma around needing help. As a result, we're hearing fewer comments about not wanting to claim benefits and more questions about entitlements.



NEA – Warm Welcome

Providing vital advice and support to new and expectant parents

Project at a glance

Lead GDN:	NGN
Participating GDNs:	SGN
Duration:	April 2024 – March 2026
Investment:	£164,473.06
Forecast SROI:	£11.93/£1
Status:	In progress

Why we're working together

The Warm Welcome project provides an opportunity to reach some of the most vulnerable families. The parents supported aren't just looking after children under five, they're balancing caring responsibilities, maintaining employment, managing health conditions and dealing with rising bills. Single-parent households have been identified as the most vulnerable to current fluctuations in the energy market and the wider cost-of-living crisis. Through our work in communities, developing partnerships, and delivering direct advice, we've been able to support these households to be more resilient to these changes.

This project was originally an SGN company specific project and was offered as a collaborative opportunity following recognition of the positive impact and outcomes for young and/or expectant families. At this point, NGN took over as the lead GDN.

How we're working together

Working in partnership with trusted and established organisations such as local family hubs and community groups, the project offers various levels of energy efficiency guidance and support, through one-to-one and event-based interventions. PSR information, CO awareness, warm packs and referrals on for further help to reinforce the impact of this project. The project delivers further and lasting impact by providing energy savings training to professionals and volunteers who work directly with families on a daily basis.

Key achievements

641

customers received direct energy advice

1,606

supported indirectly with information about fuel poverty and advice routes

39

families supported through hardship grants

8

webinars held, providing training to 73 frontline professionals

55

families supported with 1-1 advice during family fun day events

50

additional community events attended, reaching 659 people





NEA – Warm Welcome continued

Partnership and community impact

Embedding advice within family-based settings in local communities ensures that young children have the best opportunity to thrive in a warm and safe environment. The project works to reduce the risk of fuel poverty for a target group who are amongst the most vulnerable and susceptible to the impacts of living in a cold home. Funding GDNs have worked closely with NEA to support communications and messaging campaigns, to further awareness of this project.



Stakeholder support

Stakeholders have supported this project and encouraged the widening of support to enable the move to a collaborative approach. Both GDNs have had feedback regarding aims for better health outcomes amongst high-risk groups, including younger people.

The enduring impact of the cost-of-living crisis was also a relevant factor in supporting funding for this project. Young families have been adversely affected by higher energy costs as they are likely to be spending more time at home.

Evaluation and learning

Due to the targeted nature of this project, establishing relationships with partners in new areas was initially challenging, although once embedded, project progress has quickly accelerated.

Outcomes are reported through quantitative and qualitative information, with the quarterly narrative documenting any additional trends and demand for advice, to help shape future delivery.

Reported impact from first year of delivery:

- 49% said they worried less about paying their energy bills
- 55% said that the temperature in their home had improved
- 44% said their general physical health had improved
- 43% said their mental health improved.



Staff have really appreciated the information and advice you have shared with us and the families we support in our children centre. It was great to have your organisation come down and meet families giving out advice face-to-face.

Our families greatly appreciate your help and are very grateful for the support they get from your service and the items they have received which they are so thankful for and have shared with staff how much they have already benefited from having these items."

Vanessa Reid

Lambeth Early Action Partnership



Kidney Care UK – Safe and Warm

Providing a critical lifeline to dialysis patients across the UK

Project at a glance

Lead GDN:	WWU
Participating GDNs:	Cadent, NGN and SGN
Duration:	March 2024 – March 2026
Investment:	£ 2,577,376
Forecast SROI:	£16.45/£1
Status:	In progress

Why we're working together

Kidney failure has a profound impact on the quality of life. Life-sustaining treatment is delivered by three dialysis sessions every week, usually delivered in a hospital setting and frequently taking 6–12 hours out of a patient's day each time. As a result, patients are often unable to continue in employment and general poor health becomes a barrier to accessing the financial, practical and emotional means to maintain a good standard of living and mental well-being. Consequently, people receiving dialysis are among the most vulnerable in our society.

Kidney Care UK (KCUK) is the UK's leading patient support charity for people living with chronic kidney disease (CKD) and has been providing financial, practical and emotional support to kidney patients and their carers since 1975.

How we're working together

The programme is delivered through a range of Patient Support Advocacy Officers (PSAO) who provide face-to-face support, proactively contacting patients in dialysis units, Money and Energy Advisers who provide in-depth, non-regulated financial and energy support, and Helpline Operators who look after the Careline.

Key achievements

9,332

customers reached, including 7,180 dialysis patients

over 5,000

customers reached with energy efficiency, CO safety and PSR awareness

£2,694,000

in welfare benefits identified for patients to date





Kidney Care UK – Safe and Warm continued

Partnership and community impact

The project has expanded its reach across the UK for kidney patients, creating new opportunities to drive quality improvement initiatives and achieve better patient outcomes. By uniting medical professionals, consultants, and care assistants, it serves as a gateway to comprehensive patient care. Through diverse platforms and forums, the project supports strategy meetings and effectively represents the patient community, ensuring their needs and perspectives are at the forefront of care improvements.

KCUK has facilitated visits to renal units with GDN partners, ensuring new visitors are well-prepared with briefings on what to expect in the unique and often overwhelming environment of medical machinery filtering blood. Feedback from these visits has been extremely positive, with patients expressing appreciation for the genuine interest in their experiences and challenges making them feel heard and supported.

Stakeholder support

Dialysis patients often struggle to access financial and social support due to treatment-related exhaustion and brain fog. Traditional methods, such as phone calls or meetings, are impractical for many. A dedicated face-to-face approach by trusted professionals is vital to ensure they receive essential benefits.

Significant attention has been given to the connection between health and living in cold, damp homes, with kidney patients often among the most severely affected. GDNs continue to prioritise health projects ensuring that those in greatest need can access appropriate and timely support.

Evaluation and learning

This project has highlighted several key areas for evaluation and learning. Recruiting the right staff to deliver effectively proved time-intensive, with initial optimism about timelines underestimating the programme's scale. Adapting central activities to meet local needs has also been vital for effective delivery.

Many vulnerable customers reside in rented accommodation, complicating discussions on energy-saving measures and CO awareness. Additionally, overlap between the Support Line and PSAOs providing in-unit support may influence Support Line engagement, as regular PSAO contact effectively serves many patients.

To enhance future delivery, these lessons will be carried forward with the aim to further improve efficiency, extend impact, and better support vulnerable groups. We will continue to evaluate learning throughout the remainder of the project.





Live projects by commitment

Delivery Partner/Project Title/ Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project Status	Investment	Forecast SROI	Outcomes
SCOPE – Disability Energy Support (DES)	Lead GDN: SGN. Supported by Cadent, NGN and WWU	Apr 22 – Mar 26/In progress	£3,515,000	£7.03/£1	<p>Customers support so far: 11,402</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023: 1,963 • 2024: 1,468 • 2025: 7,971 • Customer supported via the Scope Advice Line this year in energy: 7,971 • Customers supported via DES this year with appointment sessions: 6,852 • Customers provided with income benefits checks: 1,555 • Customers provided with Fuel Vouchers: 1,750 • Customers provided with CO alarms: 1,309 • Customers provided with a CO conversation: 3,151 • Customers provided with a heated throw blanket: 3,504
Marie Curie – Energy Safeguarding and Tackling Fuel Poverty for Terminally ill people	Lead GDN: SGN. Supported by Cadent, NGN and WWU	Dec 22 – Oct 25/In progress	£2,060,019	£12.22/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People supported via ESOs (to date): 5,884 • People supported via ESOs (Apr 24 – Mar 25): 2,655 • PSR Conversations (to date): 5,215 • PSR Conversations (Apr 24 – Mar 25): 2,536 • Benefits checks (to date): 15,685 • Benefits checks (Apr 24 – Mar 25): 6,191 • Financial benefits identified (to date): £2,905,781 • Financial benefits identified (Apr 24 – Mar 25): £1,394,775
Age UK/Age Cymru/Age Scotland – Energy Safeguarding Partnership	Lead GDNs: SGN and WWU. Supported by Cadent and NGN	Feb 23 – Mar 26/In progress	£2,295,020	£26.12/£1	<p>Feb 23 – Mar 25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly supported: 67,513 individuals • Benefit checks/calculations: 613,508 individuals • PSR awareness: 5,798 individuals
Kidney Care UK – Safe and Warm: Providing a Critical Lifeline to Dialysis Patients Across the UK	Lead GDN: WWU. Supported by Cadent, NGN and SGN	Mar 24 – Mar 26/In progress	£2,577,377	£16.45/£1	<p>Jun 24 – Mar 25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly supported: 9,332 individuals • CKD patients supported: 7,180 dialysis patients • Patients supported through telephone support line: 2,393 careline callers • Financial savings: £425,000



Live projects by commitment

Delivery Partner/Project Title/ Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project Status	Investment	Forecast SROI	Outcomes
Carents Room	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by NGN	Nov 23 – Mar 26/In progress	£487,050	£10.27/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum 5,000 PSR referrals per annum (887,038 to date) • Increased CO awareness with 5,000 awareness surveys completed per annum (1,449,390 to date) • Increased energy efficiency awareness 200,000 visitors accessing website each year (1,115,522 to date) • Refer 750 elderly parents for locking cooker valves per year (521,620 to date) • Increased promotion of the website through targeted marketing and social media marketing • 1 million Carents to access the site over the course of the project (369,407 to date) <p>Successes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,000,000 Pharmacy bags delivered to pharmacies across the NGN and Cadent network • 7,000 GP Packs – sent to every GP in the UK • Number of people this project has reached (Direct and indirect) 19,751,891
Mental Health UK – Energy Safeguarding and tackle Fuel Poverty for people with Mental Health	Lead GDNs: SGN and WWU. Supported by Cadent and NGN	Apr 24 – Mar 26/In progress	£667,653	£9.07/£1	<p>May 24 – Mar 25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly supported: 2056 individuals • Financial savings: £441,108.00 • CO awareness: 1,480 individuals • PSR awareness: 1,176 individuals • PSR referrals: 105 individuals
Shelter – Working together to prevent homelessness and to support people to thrive in their home environment	Lead GDN: WWU. Supported by Cadent, NGN and SGN	Dec 24 – Dec 25/In progress	£1,121,711	£42.83/£1	<p>Dec 24 – March 25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly supported – 3,133 individuals • Refers to Shelter Helpline Plus: 116 individuals
Maggie's Cancer Centres – Safe and Warm	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported NGN and SGN	Sep 22 – Mar 26/In progress	£317,376	£18.82/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSR conversations: 5,443 co conversations: 17,508 energy efficiency advice: 17,508, income max: 17,508 SROI £37,438,117.15 from £132,182. This project was extended in Jan 25 by £105,336



Live projects by commitment

Delivery Partner/Project Title/ Description	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project Status	Investment	Forecast SROI	Outcomes
Crunch – PSR Digital Media Campaign	Lead GDN: WWU. Supported by Cadent, NGN and SGN	Nov 23 – May 25/In progress	£223,881	£79.04/£1	Nov 24 – Mar 25: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign reach: 727,150 (32% effectiveness rate applied) • PSR sign-ups: 5,767 (WWU only)
Carers Trust – Alleviating Unpaid Carers from Fuel Poverty	Lead GDN: WWU. Supported by Cadent, NGN and SGN	Apr 24 – Mar 26/In progress	£4,075,771	£42.03/£1	Jul 24 – Mar 25: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10,271: carers reached • 1,021: PSR registrations • £6,935,708: financial savings • 4,602: reached with CO awareness • 4,625: reached with PSR awareness
National Energy Action – Warm Welcome	Lead GDN: NGN. Supported by SGN	Apr 24 – Mar 26/In progress	£164,473.06	£11.95/£1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy advice delivered to families with young children 281 • Energy advice delivered via family fun days 55 • 353 families supported to sign up to PSR • 54 CO alarms provided to families with young children • 26 households supported with hardship grants

Looking ahead

As we enter the final year of RIIO-2, our VCMA funding has now been allocated through the continuation of our current portfolio and the addition of several select projects which will launch in year five.

We will see a few projects, which were highly successful with an individual GDN, launched as collaborative initiatives as well as new projects which will help us to work with specific customer needs and requirements.

Over the last four years, we've worked with a range of organisations who are the experts in their fields and from these relationships, we've been able to learn and tailor our strategies. This has allowed us to reach targeted customers across the UK and provide those who are most in need, access to key safeguarding support and services to provide a tangible difference to those living in vulnerable situations.

In December 2024, we successfully submitted our individual business plans, demonstrating our continued commitment to operating safe, resilient and reliable gas networks during the next price control period (2026-2031).

Part of our plans included the continuation and, in some instances, the expansion of our established services funded through the VCMA.

Within our individual business plans, we have been able to demonstrate our learning and how this has shaped our collective vision for the future. The VCMA in RIIO-2 has provided us with the flexibility to deliver an even greater positive impact to our customers and the communities we serve.

The Draft Determination, expected by summer 2025, will outline Ofgem's initial proposals for the next price control period (RIIO-3), which will run from April 2026 to March 2031. The Final Determination, expected by December 2025, will be the final decision on these proposals. This will directly influence the allowed revenues of GDNs, including the VCMA and the need for continued support for vulnerable consumers, including those living in fuel poverty.

Commitment	Delivery Partner	GDNs	Start date and end date/Project Status	Investment	Forecast SROI
Priority	Alzheimer's Society	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by SGN and WWU	Apr 25 – Mar 26	£1,129,104	£2.71/£1
CO	CO Partnership Ecosystem	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by SGN and NGN (WWU Data sharing only)	Apr 25 – Mar 26	£603,456	£2.97/£1
Fuel Poverty	Royal Association for Deaf People	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by WWU	Apr 25 – Mar 26	£194,721	£8.20/£1
Fuel Poverty	NEA and The Wise Group	Lead GDN: SGN. Supported by NGN	Apr 25 – Mar 26	£310,323	£4.14/£1

Completed projects

Commitment	Delivery Partner/Project Title	GDNs	Start date and end date/ Project Status	Investment	Forecast SROI
SBtM	Services Beyond the Meter Year 2	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by NGN	Apr 22 – Mar 23	£585,995	£0.71/£1
CO	Heavenly/Campus – Game Over Carbon Monoxide Young Persons Awareness Campaign	Lead GDN: SGN and WWU. Supported by Cadent and NGN	Oct 22 – Dec 23	£400,869	£12.84/£1
CO	Policy Connect (APPCOG) – CO Awareness Week – Autumn Campaign	Lead GDN: WWU. Supported by Cadent, NGN and SGN	Nov 22 – Dec 22	£20,000	£24.86/£1
CO	J Seven Media (AKA Coast Procurement Ltd) – CO Winter Awareness Campaign 2021–22	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by NGN, SGN and WWU	Dec 21 – Feb 22	£383,271	£39.30/£1
CO	Policy Connect (APPCOG) – CO Alarms Save Lives (safe 4 summer)	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by NGN, SGN and WWU	Jul 22 – Aug 22	£50,000	£34.51/£1
CO	Bonanza Creative – Carbon Monoxide Schools Education	Lead GDN: SGN. Supported by NGN and WWU	Jan 22 – Jul 22	£49,880	£1.56/£1
CO	Improving Performance in Practice (iPiP) – Identifying and Protecting Pregnant Women from CO Exposure	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by NGN, SGN and WWU	Apr 21 – Dec 23	£249,974	£0.02/£1
CO	SP Energy Networks (SPEN) – SPEN Priority Services Register and Carbon Monoxide Awareness Pilot	Lead GDN: SGN and WWU. Supported by Cadent and NGN	Mar 22 – Jun 22	£2,865	£13.18/£1
CO	SCOPE – CO Research engaging the Disabled Community	Lead GDN: SGN. Supported by Cadent, NGN and WWU	Jan 23 – Mar 23	£30,600	£1.82/£1
Fuel Poverty	Citizens Advice National – Energy Safeguarding and CO Safety Partnership	Lead GDN: SGN. Supported by Cadent, NGN and WWU	Jan 22 – Mar 23	£2,081,545	£5.76/£1
Fuel Poverty	NEA and The Wise Group – Warm and Safe Homes	Lead GDNs: Cadent and SGN	Apr 22 – Mar 23	£237,721	£8.05/£1
Priority Customers	Parsley Box/Latcham Direct Ltd – Parsley Box	Lead GDN: Cadent. Supported by NGN, SGN and NGN	Oct 23 – Jan 24	£20,452	£20.90/£1

Closing statement

Thank you to all our partners who have helped compile this year's report and who continue to work together to provide support to customers in vulnerable situations.

You can register to attend our showcase event [here](#).

To find out more about VCMA projects or opportunities to work together in your local area, you can visit our websites:

