

Energy One Stop Shop - Crisis, Prevention and Retrofit Readiness

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

Start Date: April 2026
PEA Reference: FP- WWU-005a



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Project Registration Table

Project Summary	
Project title	Energy One Stop Shop – Crisis, Prevention and Retrofit Readiness
Strategic area	Fuel Poverty & Energy Affordability
Lead partner name	PEC Trust
Lead GDN(s)	Wales & West Utilities (WWU)
Funding GDN(s)	N/A – company specific
New or updated	New
Collaborative VCMA Projects	N/A
Date of PEA submission	April 2026
Project start and end date	April 2026 – March 2028
Project location	Plymouth
Project Contact	
Name	Tom Robinson
Contact details	Tom.Robinson@wwutilities.co.uk
Project partners and third parties involved	
Organisation name(s) and role(s)	All delivery will be managed and completed by PEC; however, the project is embedded within Plymouth’s established fuel poverty and health partnerships. The project is supported by: Adult Social Care Access Teams and Wellbeing Hubs.
Sectors Involved	Gas Distribution Network Charitable Organisation
Costs and Funding (£k)	
Total cost	£601,628.12
Total VCMA funding required	£600,800.93
Total BAU vulnerability and CO safety activity baseline allowance funding by activity	CO alarms - £827.19

Problem(s)

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

Plymouth continues to experience rising demand for support with energy affordability and fuel poverty, with many households living in cold, damp and unhealthy homes throughout the year rather than just during winter. Ageing and inefficient housing stock, coupled with high energy prices and ongoing cost-of-living pressures, mean residents are still facing impossible choices between heating their homes and paying for other essentials. These pressures are reflected in the people PEC supports, where we see worsening respiratory and physical health conditions, increased anxiety, growing fuel debt and widening inequality. PEC remains at the frontline of responding to this reality.

During the last 2 years, funding has enabled PEC to build a coordinated, city-wide response to fuel poverty. It allowed acute energy services to work alongside health partners and integrate within Adult Social Care, supporting households where cold homes directly affect physical and mental health. It created structured, ongoing advice and casework rather than isolated one-off conversations, and it established a visible city-centre Energy Hub where any resident could walk in and receive practical, trusted support. Outreach sessions across neighbourhood and health venues brought services closer to communities, while training for frontline professionals increased confidence in recognising and responding to fuel poverty.

This investment did more than expand activity, it made help easier to find and easier to trust. Residents were no longer passed from service to service. Health, housing and community partners gained a dependable, skilled service to refer into. Frontline staff across the city developed greater confidence in having sensitive conversations about energy vulnerability, and the Hub itself became a recognised anchor point for both residents and organisations seeking coordinated, practical support.

PEC has now built a strong local reputation and is regarded as essential infrastructure in Plymouth's domestic energy landscape, with national recognition for practical, place-based support that strives for a fair transition. We understand the realities of supporting residents through crisis, the frequency of repeat contact before issues are resolved, and the role skills-building plays in improving long-term resilience. Our reporting is robust and insight-driven, and our work is increasingly aligned with wider city systems.

Demand has not reduced and without continued funding, parts of this trusted support risk contracting at a time when families remain under immense pressure. This project requires a more targeted focus: retrofit casework will be delivered through alternative funding streams, and intensive support will be prioritised for those at greatest risk. What continues is core and essential: trusted access through the Energy Hub and phone service, structured casework, embedded health work, targeted home visits and continued training to strengthen capacity across the city.

Scope and Objectives

Outline the scope and objectives of the VCMA project linked to the problem statement above. This should be clearly defined, including the benefits which would directly impact customers on the participating GDNs' network(s), and where the benefits of the VCMA Projects lie.

PEC's Energy One Stop Shop project will provide comprehensive, person-centred support to households across Plymouth who are facing, or are at risk of, fuel poverty, cold homes and energy insecurity. In line with the challenges highlighted in the problem statement, the project brings together crisis support, preventative advice, in-depth casework and community-focused energy awareness to address both immediate hardship and the structural issues that place vulnerable residents at risk.

The delivery approach will address the key drivers of fuel poverty: low-income, high-energy costs and poor energy efficiency, while ensuring residents receive coordinated and holistic support. This includes on-site advice through the PEC Home Hub, structured casework, targeted home visits and drop-ins across health and community venues, alongside campaigns focused on cold, damp and mould.

Through this programme, PEC will:

- Support individuals to reduce expenditure, strengthen income and help households manage energy bills, arrears and affordability challenges.
- Advise communities on energy efficiency
- Raise awareness on CO safety and the Priority Services Register
- Provide interventions that reduce cold, damp and unhealthy housing conditions
- Deliver structured casework and advocacy
- Strengthen early prevention, through proactive outreach, citywide energy awareness and training for frontline workers so more professionals can recognise and respond to signs of fuel poverty earlier.

The project will deliver clear and meaningful benefits for residents across Plymouth, with impacts that extend far beyond immediate energy support. By combining crisis intervention, tailored advice, structured casework and community engagement, the programme strengthens both household resilience and the wider system's ability to respond to fuel poverty effectively.

Key benefits include:

- Improved financial stability for vulnerable households
- Greater confidence and understanding of energy use
- Healthier, safer living conditions,
- Increased awareness of CO safety and the Priority Services Register
- Reduced crisis escalation

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- Stronger community resilience
- Greater reach and inclusion
- Long-term improvements in wellbeing

Project Design Engagement

Targeting vulnerability support: This must describe how the GDN(s) identified the vulnerability need being addressed through the VCMA project, including the use of consumer research, stakeholder engagement, and data and technology.

Evidence of stakeholder and/or customer support: Information regarding all stakeholder and/or customer engagement which has contributed to the development of the VCMA Project.

Stakeholder project design input: How stakeholders were actively involved in the project design, and how their input and feedback were incorporated to shape the project design. Where stakeholders disagree about the project design, justification must be provided for why the current project design is deemed preferable.

The design of this project is shaped by clear evidence of vulnerability in Plymouth and by extensive engagement with residents, health partners, local authorities and the wider VCSE sector. WWU's analysis of fuel poverty across its network, combined with PEC's frontline insight, demonstrates a growing need for targeted support as more households live year-round in cold, damp and unhealthy homes. Rising energy costs, stagnant incomes and poor housing conditions continue to force residents into impossible choices between heating and other essentials. PEC's day-to-day work reflects this reality, with increasing numbers of people presenting with respiratory issues, anxiety, fuel debt and deepening inequality.

Customer and community insight has directly influenced the project design. Demand for PEC's services is clear through high referral levels, repeat visits, walk-ins at the Energy Hub and strong word-of-mouth trust. More than 140 organisations across the city refer into PEC because of its established reputation and proven impact. Health partners — particularly Adult Social Care, Wellbeing Hubs and hospital-linked teams — consistently highlight how cold, damp homes are driving poor health outcomes and hospital readmissions, reinforcing the need for an accessible and responsive citywide energy advice service. Residents also repeatedly tell us that being able to walk into a safe, visible space and receive practical, immediate help — not just signposting — is essential to them.

Stakeholders have been actively involved in shaping the Energy One Stop Shop approach. Input from Adult Social Care, Public Health, Plymouth City Council Housing Standards, the Cold & Damp Homes Task Force and more than 140 community partners confirmed PEC's central role within the city's wider support system. Their insight made clear that without PEC's integrated energy advice, casework and home visits, Plymouth would lack a single, trusted route for coordinated action on cold homes. Partners also guided decisions about where limited GD3 capacity should be focused — helping to balance acute support, long-term casework, outreach, and the continued operation of the Energy Hub

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as a key access point. Their feedback directly influenced the final design, prioritising interventions that prevent crisis, reduce health risks and strengthen multi-agency collaboration.

Why the project is funded through VCMA

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

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

As a trusted delivery partner, PEC plays a critical role in helping WWU achieve its ambition by supporting households who are both most in need and least likely to access help without targeted, community-based support.

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

- Strengthening community capacity to identify and support households with energy-related vulnerabilities.
- Enhancing access to essential energy-safeguarding support for households
- Engaging underserved communities through trusted local partners best placed to reach those most in need

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

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

How VCMA funding complements or supplements BAU activities

Where the VCMA Project is being delivered alongside a BAU vulnerability and/or CO safety activity or activities funded through the GDN's baseline allowance, the GDN must provide sufficient evidence that the VCMA Project complements or supplements the BAU activity or activities to prevent the risk of double funding.

The Energy One Stop Shop project will deliver a holistic package of support to vulnerable individuals, alongside VCMA-funded activity. Any support delivered beyond the VCMA scope will be funded through WWU's business-as-usual (BAU) allowance.

PEC may refer customers into WWU where they identify individuals who could benefit from BAU-funded measures, such as locking cooker valves.

WWU will also supply PEC with CO alarms to distribute to eligible customers engaged through VCMA activities. This approach enhances customer outcomes by pairing fuel-poverty-focused VCMA support with vital CO safety measures.

Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

Details of the VCMA Project outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these, interim milestones and how the Funding Licensee will evaluate whether the project has been successful. Each action should have a proportion of the funding allocated.

This project will directly support 16,386 people and enable residents to access early advice through a combination of PEC's Home hub, phone advice, community drop-ins and outreach, helping prevent issues escalating into crisis.

For households with complex or acute needs, structured casework and targeted home visits will stabilise energy situations, improve safety and support affordability. Carbon monoxide awareness and Priority Services Register support will be embedded throughout delivery.

Alongside direct support, the project will work with health, housing and voluntary sector partners to improve referral pathways, deliver frontline worker training and coordinate a joined-up local response, ensuring risks associated with cold, damp homes and fuel poverty are identified earlier and addressed more effectively.

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Key outcomes expected from this project:

Outcomes	Total Individuals
Unique Reach	16386
Face-to-Face through PEC Hub	2212
In-depth energy advice calls	2844
Partner events and community engagement	1896
Core long-term casework	758
Acute long-term casework	336
Face-to-Face drop-in appointments at health and wellbeing venues	190

Success Criteria

Over the two-year delivery period, PEC's Energy One Stop Shop will provide accessible, practical energy advice and targeted assistance to help residents remain warm, safe and financially resilient. Success will be demonstrated through effective early engagement, sustained stabilisation of household energy situations, and reduced escalation into acute crisis.

Acute casework will support 210 households facing immediate or high-risk situations where energy issues are contributing to serious harm or crisis, primarily identified through health and social care pathways. Core casework will provide preventative, longer-term support to 400 households with complex but less immediately critical needs, helping resolve issues and avoid escalation. Together, these approaches ensure proportionate, effective support aligned to household risk.

PEC will achieve these outcomes by:

- Delivering structured, in-depth energy advice by phone
- Embedding carbon monoxide safety and Priority Services Register promotion within all advice interactions.
- Delivering targeted damp, mould and cold-home awareness campaigns
- Providing community drop-ins and attending partner events

Potential for new learning

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

Through a decade of energy advice delivery, PEC has learnt how quickly people become overwhelmed, confused or lost when facing energy problems. Bills, energy debt, home environment and health concerns often collide at once and people need clarity, dignity and the ability to act, not to be passed between services.

Feedback from staff, residents and partners highlighted the need for a visible, accessible point of support in Plymouth. The Hub has shown that this is both true and beneficial. When someone walks in, sits down and talks things through at the PEC hub, they regain a sense of control. Advice becomes practical and manageable for vulnerable customer as PEC continue to support individuals with actionable steps and sustained guidance.

We have learned to be honest about complexity and the scale of need. Many residents return more than once before issues stabilise. Tracking repeat contact and modelling unique households properly has improved transparency and our own learning, helping us recognise patterns and improve services. We know we are not reaching everyone who needs us. Some groups – including men, private renters and digitally excluded residents – are more likely to come to us in crisis. We are mapping these gaps and adjusting outreach and partnerships to address them.

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

Learnings will also provide further insight into:

- Levels and patterns of fuel debt across Plymouth.
- How often residents return to PEC before their situation stabilises, and what this tells us about complexity and crisis cycles.
- The lived experiences of households in cold, damp homes and how these conditions link to health, income and housing insecurity.
- Barriers preventing residents - particularly private renters, men and digitally excluded people—from accessing support earlier.
- The effectiveness of multi-agency pathways developed through the Cold & Damp Homes Task Force.
- What models of prevention (such as resident workshops) could reduce repeat crises and build long-term resilience.

Aligning with and supporting wider vulnerability approaches

Details of how the project supports or aligns with approaches to vulnerability taken by the wider energy industry, other utilities and/or consumer organisations; local, national or devolved governments; or evidence innovation or a gap in vulnerability support provision. For example, this could include evidence of collaboration beyond the VCMA, non-VCMA joint funding of the initiative, or identified gaps in the provision of vulnerability services which the project seeks to address. The GDN should show how the project fits within broader approaches to vulnerability.

This project strongly aligns with wider vulnerability strategies across the energy sector, health services, local government and the third sector by addressing clear gaps in fuel poverty support and strengthening Plymouth's coordinated approach to identifying and assisting vulnerable households.

PEC's Energy One Stop Shop model responds directly to the growing number of residents living in cold, damp and unhealthy homes, and provides accessible, person-centred energy advice, crisis intervention and practical support to those experiencing energy affordability challenges and worsening health outcomes.

The project complements existing support schemes and enhances the cross-utility and multi-agency partnership working already well established in Plymouth. PEC maintains strong referral and signposting pathways with local authority teams, housing associations, retrofit providers, Wellbeing Hubs, Adult Social Care, hospital-linked teams and more than 140 community organisations across the city. These connections ensure that households can access grants, efficiency measures, retrofit support and wider specialist services that sit outside the scope of VCMA funding, while enabling coordinated and seamless support across energy, housing and health needs.

PEC is a member of the Southwest Energy Advice Forum, chaired by the SW Net Zero Hub. As part of this group, they have regular meetings with partners Bath & West Community Energy, Centre for Sustainable Energy, Community Energy Plus, Ridgewater Energy, Severn Wye Energy Agency, Sustainable Community Solutions t/a ECOE Advice and The Environment Centre (tEC). The Forum has recently published a joint document defining a suite of shared principles that constitute best practice within the sector. These provide a foundation for strengthening quality, consistency and trust and help to articulate PEC's shared view on the essential role of local delivery within wider national strategies on fuel poverty and net zero. They will maintain regular dialogue with partners regarding GD3 project delivery in the SW and will work to uphold these principles across all projects.

Monitoring and evaluation

Details of how the GDNs will work with their project partners to monitor the impact of the VCMA project and evaluate its effectiveness and success.

WWU will work closely with PEC to monitor the delivery, impact, and effectiveness of the project throughout its duration. PEC will provide WWU with monthly performance reports detailing progress against agreed outcome measures, including the number of households and individuals supported, the nature of interventions delivered, financial gains achieved, and any emerging trends in vulnerability or fuel poverty. These reports will enable WWU to track delivery against the PEA and respond quickly to any areas requiring adjustment. Where households are referred into services delivered under separate funding streams (e.g. retrofit), these activities will not be included in VCMA outcome reporting and will be referenced only in narrative as wider system impact.

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

PEC will provide anonymised case studies and beneficiary testimonials, where appropriate, to help evidence the lived experience impact of the project and demonstrate the value of VCMA-funded interventions. WWU will summarise project performance and learning annually within its company-specific VCMA reporting, ensuring transparency and accountability. These insights will also be used to inform future project development, refine service delivery, and support continuous improvement in WWU's wider approach to identifying and assisting vulnerable customers.

Scale of VCMA project and SROI calculations, including NPV

Justify the scale of the VCMA project – including the scale of the investment relative to its potential benefits. As part of this, the Funding Licensee(s) should provide the SROI calculation, including NPV. Note: The value in numbers of the SROI and NPV must be provided, rather than confirmation of positive impact.

Together with the other Gas Distribution Networks we worked with leading social impact research consultancy SIRIO Strategies on the development of the Industry Standard Social Value Framework and supporting GDN Rulebook. We have used that GDN Rulebook to carry out an assessment of financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to our services for vulnerable households included in this partnership.

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We've incorporated social value based on the deliverables and associated targets detailed above. Carrying out an assessment of these predicted outcomes we forecast a positive net Social Return on Investment of £13.84 for every £1 spent

Social value measurement - GDN Rulebook v. September 2024

Total cost*	£599,973.75
Total gross present value	£4,301,641.45
Net Present Value (NPV)	£4,011,700.58
SROI	£13.84

*Accounting for inflationary factors over the term of the project.

Internal governance and project management evidence

Provide a description of GDN(s) review of proposal and project sign off, with details on how the project will be managed.

Project management for this partnership will be led by WWU, with clear governance arrangements in place to oversee delivery, performance, and risk throughout the duration of the project. A structured contract framework between WWU and PEC will ensure that any material changes remain aligned with customer need, regulatory expectations, and the responsible use of VCMA funds.

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

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

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

Eligibility criteria

Eligibility Criteria	Description	Project qualifies Yes / No
Positive SROI	Have a positive, or a forecasted positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI) calculated in accordance with a model which the GDNs have developed and submitted to Ofgem including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA Project	Yes
Positive NPV	Have a positive, or a forecasted positive Net Present Value (NPV)	Yes
Support Criteria	Either: i. provide support to consumers in Vulnerable Situations and relate to Energy Safeguarding, or ii. provide support for those most at risk of being left behind in the transition to net zero, or iii. provide awareness of, and education on, the dangers of CO beyond the activities funded as business as usual (BAU) through baseline allowances, or iv. reduce the risk of harm caused by CO	Yes
Defined Outcomes	Have specific, measurable, and time-bound outcomes which align with relevant Consumer Vulnerability Strategy objectives to achieve the requirements set out in paragraph b;	Yes
Beyond Other Funding	Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s), including baseline allowance funding, or required through licence obligations	Yes
Support or Align	Support or align with approaches to vulnerability taken by the wider energy industry, other utilities and/or consumer organisations, and local, national and devolved government, or evidence innovation or a gap in vulnerability support provision;	Yes
No Other External Funding	Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding	Yes
BAU vulnerability and CO safety activities	Where a GDN's BAU vulnerability and CO safety activities are funded through baseline allowances, these are not suitable for funding through the VCMA. The GDN is permitted to use VCMA funds to supplement or complement its BAU activities, however, it must ensure that its reporting provides sufficient evidence to prevent double funding.	N/A

Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing

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Eligibility Criteria	Description	Project qualifies Yes / No or N/A
Servicing must meet the following criteria:	Either: i. A GDN has had to isolate and condemn an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role; or ii. A GDN or its Project Partner has identified an essential gas appliance which has not been serviced in the last 12 months in the owner-occupied home of a customer in a Vulnerable Situation where an occupier of the property suffers from a permanent or temporary health condition¹² that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes; or iii. A GDN or its Project Partner has identified an essential gas appliance which has not been serviced in the last 12 months in a tenant-occupied home of a customer in a Vulnerable Situation where it is the tenant's responsibility to maintain the essential gas appliance, where an occupier of the property suffers from a permanent or temporary health condition that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes	N/A
Affordability	The household cannot afford to service the essential gas appliance, as assessed against the affordability criteria set out in the VCMA governance document	N/A
Funding	Sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including a social or private landlord and national, devolved, or local government funding) to fund the essential gas appliance servicing	N/A

Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance repair and replacement

Eligibility Criteria	Description	Project qualifies Yes / No or N/A
Unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance repair or	Either:	N/A

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replacement must meet the following criteria:	i. GDN has had to isolate and condemn unsafe pipework or an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role; or ii. ii. iii. A GDN or its Project Partner has had to condemn unsafe pipework, or an essential gas appliance, following an essential gas appliance service (as described in 3.19 of the VCMA governance document)	
Health condition	Either: i. The occupier of the property suffers from a permanent or temporary health condition that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes and has a household income of £31,000 or below in 2025/26 prices, adjusted for inflation using Consumer Price Index with Housing costs (CPIH) 13, or ii. the household cannot afford to service the essential gas appliance, as assessed against the affordability criteria set out in Appendix 1 of the VCMA governance document	N/A
Funding	Sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including national, devolved, or local government funding) to fund the unsafe pipework or the essential gas appliance repair or replacement.	N/A