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PEA reference: FP-Collab-023a

YMCA – Safe and Well Communities

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







UK GAS DISTRIBUTION NETWORKS

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<tr><td>Project title</td><td>YMCA - Safe and Well Communities</td></tr>
<tr><td>Strategic area</td><td>Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability</td></tr>
<tr><td>Lead partner name</td><td>YMCA</td></tr>
<tr><td>Lead GDN(s)</td><td>Cadent</td></tr>
<tr><td>Funding GDN(s)</td><td>Cadent, SGN & WWU</td></tr>
<tr><td>New/Updated</td><td>New</td></tr>
<tr><td>Collaborative VCMA Projects
Specific role(s) of GDN(s) participating in a collaborative VCMA Project</td><td>Cadent lead
SGN and WWU – delivery</td></tr>
<tr><td>Date of PEA submission</td><td>May 2026</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project start and end date</td><td>May 2026 – April 2028</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project location</td><td>England, Scotland and Wales</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Project contact</td></tr>
<tr><td>Name</td><td>Phil Burrows</td></tr>
<tr><td>Contact details</td><td>Email address: Phil.m.burrows@cadentgas.com</td></tr>
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<tr><td>Organisation name</td><td>Role</td></tr>
<tr><td>YMCA</td><td>Lead delivery Partner</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Costs and funding</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total cost (£k)</td><td>£964,906.50</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total VCMA funding required (£k)</td><td>Total VCMA costs: £946,443.60
<table>
<tr><th>GDN</th><th>YMCA Costs</th><th>Materials Cost</th><th>Total</th></tr>
<tr><td>Cadent</td><td>£598,938.00</td><td>£34,176.00</td><td>£633,114.00</td></tr>
<tr><td>SGN</td><td>£195,699.00</td><td>£7,107.60</td><td>£202,806.60</td></tr>
<tr><td>WWU</td><td>£100,889.00</td><td>£9,634.00</td><td>£110,523.00</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total</td><td>£895,526.00</td><td>£50,917.60</td><td>£946,443.60</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>Total BAU vulnerability and CO safety activity baseline allowance funding by activity (£k)</td><td>Cadent alarms: £12,267.90
SGN alarms: £6,195.00</td></tr>
</table>

Problem(s)

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

Rising energy costs, fuel poverty and energy debt continue to place severe pressure on households across the UK. Since 2021, energy prices have almost doubled, and millions of people are now struggling to afford the energy required to heat and power their homes. Recent national data shows that around 6.7 million households are living in fuel poverty, with many more experiencing acute affordability pressures or carrying growing levels of energy debt. In England alone, an estimated 2.7 million households meet the official fuel poverty definition, while wider research suggests that as many as 12.1 million households are struggling with their energy bills, with millions spending more than 10% of their income on gas and electricity.

Energy debt has reached record levels, with households owing more than £4 billion collectively. The impact of this crisis is not felt evenly. Fuel poverty and energy debt fall disproportionately on low-income households, young people in insecure or poor-quality housing, and individuals experiencing poor mental health. Low-income households spend a far higher proportion of their income on energy, leaving little room to absorb price rises or unexpected costs. People experiencing mental health challenges are also at heightened risk, the stress of managing bills, navigating complex energy systems, or living in cold homes can worsen mental health conditions, reduce capacity to seek help, and increase vulnerability to energy debt. As these pressures accumulate, the risk of rent arrears, eviction, and homelessness grows, with energy affordability now recognised as a significant and escalating driver of housing insecurity across the UK.

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 elderly people. 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.

With 9,466 beds across England, Scotland 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.

While YMCA housing upholds safety regulations and provides a safe and positive space for vulnerable people, YMCA knows that some accommodations they move on to are unfortunately often not of the same quality, with issues of dampness, poor insulation, and other factors affecting fuel efficiency, as well as sometimes having the absence of functioning smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

Furthermore, we understand that YMCA residents often lack awareness of housing regulations and the responsibilities of their landlord regarding their safety, so they may not question any inadequacies or identify hazards. Amongst those supported in YMCA accommodation are asylum seekers and care leavers, whose understanding of the issues would be significantly lower.

In addition to supported accommodation, the YMCA also has a chain of charity shops. Many of those visiting the shops are on a low income and may be struggling financially due to the rising cost of living. They may not

have access to advice regarding energy efficiency, the PSR or Carbon Monoxide awareness. YMCA is a trusted name, and individuals are more likely to accept advice from a member of staff at one of the YMCA charity shops.

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.

Building on the proven success of the YMCA Cost of Living pilot and its subsequent scale across GDN regions, this project seeks to further extend delivery in response to the ongoing need for targeted energy education and support for vulnerable customers.

From April 2026 to March 2028, the programme will expand the Safe and Well Communities model into additional GDN regions. This expansion will enable more local YMCAs to support individuals and households at risk of fuel poverty, poor home safety outcomes, and wider vulnerability.

The programme will:

- Extend access to trusted, tailored energy education and advice for vulnerable households
- Support fuel poverty reduction and improved home safety outcomes
- Strengthen financial, emotional, and physical wellbeing

Delivery will provide holistic, wrap-around support, including:

- Income maximisation support
- Energy efficiency advice and behavioural change
- Carbon monoxide (CO) safety awareness

In addition, the programme will deliver practical interventions to promote affordability and resilience, including:

- Cooking sessions to encourage low-cost, energy-efficient meal preparation
- Provision of slow cookers for use in shared kitchens and move-on accommodation where available

This expansion builds on existing YMCA infrastructure, trusted community relationships, and delivery expertise, ensuring high-quality and consistent support across regions. By scaling an established and effective model, the programme will maximise reach and impact while delivering measurable benefits for vulnerable customers and communities.

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 GDNs and the YMCA ran a 'Cost of Living Project' over 14 months, which came to an end in February 2026, this was a continuation of a 6-month pilot that Cadent carried out[1]. The collaboration project was a huge success, reaching over 300,000 unique individuals with a range of cost-of-living support[2].

As a result of this success, we have chosen to extend and integrate both projects, working together to design a coordinated continuation programme. This collaborative approach draws on the strengths, learning, and proven methodologies of each initiative. By aligning delivery, we will maximise impact, build on established community relationships, and create a more cohesive programme that better responds to the needs identified across our customer base and partner networks.

The project has been co-designed with YMCA, assuring that the appropriate measures are being proposed based on previous experience.

The partnership was strengthened by a range of engagements that deepened collaboration between the GDNs and participating YMCAs. Staff attended GDN-led conferences and learning sessions, helping frontline teams stay informed about available resources and share project insights. Meanwhile, GDN site visits to local YMCAs provided a valuable first-hand understanding of delivery and the impact on staff and service users.

The YMCA Collaborative Cost of Living Project has demonstrated the strength of a well-established partnership that brings together national reach with trusted local delivery. Across all regions, the programme has exceeded its targets, strengthened capacity across the YMCA federation, and supported hundreds of thousands of people to better manage ongoing cost-of-living pressures.

The first phase also provided valuable insight into what works at scale, how we best reach those most in need, and how partnerships between GDNs and community organisations can adapt in response to changing circumstances. As we move into this next phase, this learning, alongside the strong foundations already in place, gives us a clear platform to build on impact, deepen reach, and continue responding effectively to the needs of communities across the regions.

Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

This should include an explanation of why the VCMA project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria and how it aligns with the GDN's VCMA collaborative strategy.

This project meets this eligibility criteria, as the project aligns with the GDN's collaborative vulnerability strategy, in which we have a clear ambition to keep our communities safe and warm, and to support those most in need by helping vulnerable households not just today but as we invest in a green energy future.

This project aligns with two of the objectives of our collaborative vulnerability strategy:

- Help more vulnerable households access energy safeguarding services
- Support our customers' move towards net zero, tailored according to their needs and circumstances

[1] Cadent_Report_Template_One Column_Option3.docx
[2] Cadent_Report_Template_One Column_Option3.docx

To achieve our strategic ambition and realise our objectives, we've set four priority delivery areas:

- Providing direct services for customers
- Reducing carbon monoxide harm
- Supporting priority vulnerable groups
- Tackling fuel poverty and affordability

This initiative is aligned with the strategic pillar of Tacking Fuel Poverty and Affordability'.

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.

This project complements BAU activities as the CO advice is delivered as part of a wider initiative to support those who have been identified as having specific vulnerabilities and therefore in need of a package of support which includes offering a holistic approach to staying safe and warm in their homes.

This collaboration ensures that issues affecting vulnerable individuals, particularly those who may struggle to access or navigate utility services are identified early and directed to the appropriate support from their utility companies.

As a trusted organisation, the YMCA is well placed to engage effectively with vulnerable individuals and refer eligible people for BAU funded support. This includes access to carbon monoxide alarms, and other measures that help maintain safety and independence in the home.

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.

Key outcomes expected from this project:

	Cadent	SGN	WWU	Total
Number of YMCA's	29	25	10	64
No. of conversations on CO Awareness (Through Supported Accommodation, Youth Clubs/Community Hubs and Food Banks/Community Cafes)	10,866	5,578	1,890	18,334
No. of households/people receiving CO Awareness Advice (via hard copy or email)	141,920	40,744	37,953	220,617
No. of households/people receiving CO Awareness Advice (via Social Media)	107,000	0	0	107,000
No. of CO Alarms distributed	1,737	590	N/A	2,327

No. of conversations on PSR Awareness (Through Supported Accommodation, Youth Clubs/Community Hubs and Food Banks/Community Cafes)	10,866	5,578	1,890	18,334
No. of households/people receiving PSR Advice (via hard copy or email)	141,920	40,744	37,953	220,617
No. of households/people receiving PSR Advice (via Social Media)	107,000	0	0	107,000
No. of people supported to sign up to PSR (PSR registration completed)	249	487	N/A	940
No. of conversations on Energy Efficiency (Through Supported Accommodation, Youth Clubs/Community Hubs and Food Banks/Community Cafes)	10,866	5,578	1,890	18,334
No. of households/people Energy Efficiency Advice (via hard copy or email)	141,920	40,744	37,953	220,617
No. of households/people receiving Energy Efficiency Advice (via Social Media)	107,000	0	0	107,000
No. of conversations on Income Maximisation (Through Supported Accommodation, Youth Clubs/Community Hubs and Food Banks/Community Cafes)	10,866	5,578	1,890	18,334
No. of households/people receiving Income Maximisation Advice (via hard copy or email)	141,920	40,744	37,953	220,617
No. of households/people receiving Income Maximisation Advice (via Social Media)	107,000	0	0	107,000
No. of staff trained on topics of CO, PSR, Energy Efficiency and Income Maximisation	138	108	77	323
No. of people attending slow cooking workshops/conversations on cost and energy efficiency of slow cooking	9,103	5,062	1,744	15,909

Retail Top Up Project Cadent Only:

Energy Hub Project Reach and Cost	**Total Cadent Reach**
In-store promotions (55 stores): Printing at the back of the receipts, swing tags and posters	8,354
No. of households/people receiving CO, PSR, energy safety and efficiency and income maximisation related advice (via hard copy - gift aid data)	14,000

No. of households/people receiving CO, PSR, energy safety and efficiency and income maximisation related advice (via web link from vans)	4,351
No. of meetings/conversations between customers and retail staff covering topics of CO, PSR, energy safety and efficiency and income maximisation	1,540
No. of carbon monoxide alarms distributed	165
PSR Registration	770

Success Criteria

During this 2-year project, YMCA will provide meaningful support by;

- Training frontline staff and volunteers so they have the skills to offer extra help through the service, which includes CO safety messaging
- Help for the most vulnerable households so they remain safe, warm and connected, with a reduced risk of self-disconnection
- Improved affordability through debt resolution, billing support and income maximisation
- Increased access to Priority Services Register protections for eligible customers
- Improved customer confidence, stability and ability to manage energy-related issues

Potential for new learning

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

Recently published mixed methods research undertaken on behalf of DESNZ indicates that those most in need of energy-related advice due to additional vulnerabilities are of the most difficult to connect with. The issues of trust in the information provider and a preference for in-person advice were cited as examples. The study itself was based on a questionnaire completed by individuals from an existing database, with in-person interviews with a small number of respondents. Whilst the data gathered from this study provides a starting point, it does not resolve the issue of providing in person advice at scale. The partnership with YMCA would allow an opportunity to obtain qualitative feedback from a much wider demographic, whilst also understanding any similarities or differences with the existing research which could be explored further during the course of the project.

This feedback would be particularly helpful when identifying future VCMA partners both in terms of reach but also methods of delivery for example the impact of in person advice as opposed to digital or written communication. It would also support the Social Return on Investment (SROI) calculated projections based on sector specific information.

Our intention is to continue to share insights from our partnership and actively seek opportunities to raise awareness of the support available and effective ways to engage those most in need.

For the past three years, Cadent has followed the real-life experiences of consumers, exploring their feelings about energy amidst the cost of living crisis and the ongoing push for sustainability.
In collaboration with Thinks Insight, our 2024 research *'Energy Diaries: Voices of the future'* shines a spotlight on young people aged 18-30, uncovering their perspectives on energy.

Key Findings:

- Heating is seen as a Luxury for some people: Nearly three-quarters (71%) of young people now view heating as a luxury for some people, rather than a basic necessity.
- Fuel Poverty and Energy Anxiety: These issues are becoming the norm for those under 30, highlighting the urgent need for inclusive support as the cost-of-living crisis persists.

Traditionally, fuel poverty concerns have focused on older people. However, our findings reveal growing fears about its impact on young people's views on energy, their disconnection from the industry, and their understanding of fuel poverty.

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 with YMCA is closely aligned with Ofgem's Vulnerability Strategy, the promotion of key safeguarding services such as the Priority Services Register (PSR), and the fuel poverty strategies of England, Scotland and Wales, as well as the newly launched Warm Homes Plan. Ofgem's strategy emphasises early identification of vulnerability, improved accessibility of support, and stronger partnerships with organisations that can reach people at risk, principles that sit at the heart of this programme.

By embedding energy safeguarding conversations within YMCA's trusted support services for young people, the project strengthens awareness of the PSR among groups who are significantly under-represented and often unaware of their eligibility. It also reflects the direction set by national and devolved fuel poverty strategies, which prioritise targeted, community-based interventions for households facing multiple disadvantages, including insecure housing, low income and poor mental health.

The programme's focus on practical, preventative support mirrors the Warm Homes Plan's commitment to reducing energy hardship, improving home safety, and ensuring that vulnerable households can maintain warm, healthy living environments.

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.

The GDN's have worked alongside YMCA to co-design this partnership and ensures that it aligns to the delivery of our Collaborative Vulnerability Strategy and the VCMA governance criteria.

The networks will hold quarterly online meetings with the YMCA project led to discuss successes, problems and best practice to ensure any obstacles are highlighted in due course.

We have agreed a monthly progress report and project visits arranged where appropriate.

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.

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 £42.33 for every £1 spent.

Social value measurement

Total cost*	£913,660.46
Total gross present value	£39,592,491.64
Net Present Value (NPV)	£38,678,831.18
SROI	£42.33

*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.

The SROI for this project has been calculated utilising the information shared by YMCA. We have based the SROI on those figures, which has generated a forecast SROI of £42.33 using the GDN rulebook.

The GDN's will meet quarterly to review outcomes, learn, share best practice, ensure the correct customers are being supported, and address any delivery issues.

The PEA has been reviewed and approved through each network's internal governance processes and formally signed off by the relevant senior leaders.

GDN	Approver (Name and Role)	Date
Cadent	Phil Burrows, Head of Social Programmes	26/05/2026
SGN	Maureen McIntosh, Director of Customer Services	05/06/26
WWU	Gwyn Thomas, Communications & Customer Senior Manager	18/09/2026

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 'Support Criteria' above;	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.	Yes

Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing

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

Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance repair and replacement

Eligibility Criteria	**Description**	**Project qualifies Yes / No or N/A**
Unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:	Either: i. GDN has had to isolate and condemn unsafe pipework or an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role; or ii. A GDN or its Project Partner has had to condemn unsafe pipework, or an essential gas appliance, following an essential gas appliance service (as described in 3.19 of the VCMA governance document)	N/A
Health condition	Either: i. The occupier of the property suffers from a permanent or temporary health condition that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes and has a household income of £31,000 or below in 2025/26 prices, adjusted for inflation using Consumer Price Index with Housing costs (CPIH) 13, or ii. the household cannot afford to service the essential gas appliance, as assessed against the affordability criteria set out in Appendix 1 of the VCMA governance document	N/A
Funding	Sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including national, devolved, or local government funding) to fund the unsafe pipework or the essential gas appliance repair or replacement.	N/A