

WALES & WEST UTILITIES

# Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

Annual Report  
2025-26



# Welcome

I am pleased to introduce our final Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Annual Report for the RIIO-GD2 period. Over the past five years, we have seen unprecedented challenges across our communities, from the lasting impacts of Covid-19 to the cost of living crisis and rising energy costs, all of which have increased the number of households experiencing vulnerability and fuel poverty.

Throughout RIIO-GD2, our focus has remained clear: to put customers at the heart of everything we do and to go beyond our core responsibilities to provide meaningful, targeted support to those who need it most. This report reflects the meaningful impact of our VCMA programme, demonstrating how we have worked in partnership with trusted organisations, stakeholders, and communities to deliver support that helps people stay safe, warm, and independent in their homes.

We are incredibly proud of the progress made over this price control period. Through strong collaboration, insight-led targeting, and continuous learning, we have built a diverse portfolio of projects that respond to evolving customer needs and deliver tangible outcomes. This report not only celebrates the impact achieved across RIIO-GD2, but also sets the foundation for the future, as we look ahead to RIIO-GD3 with a renewed commitment to innovation, partnership working, and delivering lasting social value for the communities we serve.

Graham Edwards,  
CEO



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## How to use our interactive report

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# Helpful terms

These are some key terms you'll see in our report. In case you haven't encountered them before, we've added explanations.

VCMA	<b>Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance.</b>
RIIO-GD2	This describes the price control period from 2021–2026, relating to how Ofgem divides funding for GDNs to carry out their work in five-year cycles. It stands for <b>Revenue = Incentives + Innovation + Outputs</b> . GD2 represents the second gas distribution period since the current system was introduced.
RIIO-GD3	As above, and this describes the price control period from 2026–2031.
GDN	<b>Gas Distribution Networks</b> are the companies like us, that are responsible for transporting gas to homes and businesses and looking after the gas pipelines.
Ofgem	Ofgem is the UK Government <b>Office of Gas and Electricity Markets</b> . Their role is to protect consumers by working to deliver a greener, fairer energy system. They set the rules and regulations for GDNs and allocate funding.
UIOLI	The <b>“Use It or Lose It”</b> classification, means that if we don't spend this allowance on VCMA projects, unused funding is returned to all customers.
FPNES	The <b>Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme</b> is delivered by the GDNs in partnership with other organisations to help tackle fuel poverty, by supporting off-grid, fuel poor households to connect to the gas network.
PSR	The <b>Priority Services Register</b> is held by energy and water companies to aid identification of customers' additional needs and the support they may require.
Fuel poverty	Homes in fuel poverty pay a disproportional amount of their household income on heating their home (different definitions in England and Wales).
CO	<b>Carbon Monoxide</b> is a poisonous gas released when fuels like wood, gas, coal, and oil burn incompletely. Known as the silent killer, it is highly toxic yet due to being colourless, odourless, and tasteless it can be inhaled without detection.
SROI	<b>Social Return on Investment</b> is a framework for measuring and accounting for a much broader concept of value than money alone. It seeks to reduce inequality and environmental degradation and improve wellbeing by including social, environmental and economic costs and benefits.
LCV	<b>Locking Cooker Valves</b> are safety devices fitted to a gas cooker pipework that prevents the gas supply from being turned on when locked. This feature helps ensure that vulnerable individuals, such as those with dementia or neurological differences, do not unintentionally turn on or leave the cooker on, which can be a significant safety risk.
Stakeholders	These are any interested parties, for example UK, Welsh or local governments, consumer groups, charities or environmental groups that need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to be informed by our business and/or</li><li>• have an influence on the delivery of our operations and/or</li><li>• have an impact on decisions affecting our business.</li></ul>

# Who we are and what we do

As a regulated Gas Distribution Network (GDN), we don't sell gas; instead, we operate the network of pipes that transport gas to homes and businesses throughout Wales and the south-west of England.

Our network covers an area that stretches from Wrexham to Redruth, from the mountains of North Wales to the cliff tops of Cornwall.

Our Business Plan for the period 2021 to 2026 provides more detail of our commitments to supporting those who are most in need, including our commitment to use the British Standard ISO 22458 (previously BS18477) to test and continually improve our Inclusive Service Provision making sure no customers are disadvantaged when they are impacted by our works.



**35,000+**

kilometres  
of gas pipes  
maintained

**2.5 million**

households  
and businesses  
supplied  
with gas

**7.5 million**

people  
served

**1,900**

colleagues  
keeping  
customers  
safe and warm

**100,000**

homes  
worked in  
every year by  
our engineers

**926,356**

homes on the  
Priority  
Services  
Register (PSR)



**926,356**

households  
on the PSR in  
our network

**251,714**

with chronic/  
serious  
illness

**114,885**

with mental  
health  
conditions

**68,338**

families with  
children  
under five



# Introducing VCMA

## What is VCMA and how does it help communities?

The Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) is a dedicated funding mechanism that enables us, as a Gas Distribution Network (GDN), to go beyond our core role of safely transporting gas to homes and businesses across our network. Through our day-to-day interactions, we encounter a wide range of customer circumstances, including instances of vulnerability and hardship, which place us in a unique position to provide additional support.

Recognising the important role that GDNs play within communities, and following extensive stakeholder feedback, Ofgem introduced the VCMA in April 2021.

The fund is designed to support the delivery of initiatives that address vulnerability, fuel poverty, and carbon monoxide (CO) safety, allowing us to work in partnership with organisations across our network and beyond to deliver meaningful support where it is most needed.

Throughout RIIO-GD2, the VCMA has enabled us to develop and expand a diverse portfolio of projects, focused on improving outcomes for our customers and communities. These initiatives are designed not only to respond to immediate needs but also to deliver longer-term benefits that enhance wellbeing, safety, and resilience.

### This funding has enabled us to:

- **Reach individuals who may otherwise go unsupported**, connecting them with trusted services through established community partnerships.
- **Deliver targeted and accessible support**, including energy advice, income maximisation, and safeguarding interventions.
- **Address gaps in provision**, ensuring vulnerable households can access the help they need to remain safe and warm.
- **Strengthen communities**, helping to build resilience through joined-up, locally delivered solutions.
- **Raise awareness of carbon monoxide risks**, promoting safety and preventing harm through education and practical support.

Our projects range from large-scale partnerships to smaller, community-led initiatives. Together, these partnerships enable us to deliver support at both scale and local level, ensuring we meet the diverse needs of the communities we serve.

Further detail on our projects and outcomes can be found throughout this report, with activities aligned to our four key delivery pillars.

# VCMA funding key facts

Introducing VCMA

A total of  
**£60m**  
of VCMA funding  
was allocated for the  
GDNs use during  
**2021-2026**

In July 2023,  
**£111m**  
of funding was redirected  
from the Fuel Pool Network  
Extension Scheme (FPNES)<sup>2</sup>,  
increasing the original GDN  
allowance from £60m to  
**£171m**

The allowance  
is classed as “Use  
It or Lose It” (UIOLI)  
which means that  
if we don’t spend it  
on VCMA projects,  
unused funding  
is returned to all  
customers.

Ofgem detail  
the eligibility  
criteria for VCMA  
projects in their  
[governance  
document](#), in  
addition to the  
requirements  
for registering  
projects,  
for annual  
reporting, and  
for a compulsory  
annual showcase  
event.

At Wales & West Utilities,  
we were originally  
allocated just under a  
**12%** share  
which is **£7m**<sup>1</sup> reflecting our  
proportion of UK  
households connected  
to the gas network.

Our share was  
**£13m**<sup>3</sup>  
bringing our total to  
**£20m**<sup>4</sup>

At least **25%** of an individual GDN allowance  
had to be spent on projects that reach a UK-wide  
footprint and are carried out in collaboration  
with one or more of the other GDNs.

The remaining **75%** of each  
GDN allowance was spent on  
network-specific projects that  
provide localised support.

<sup>1</sup> Allowance in 2018-19 prices – 2025-26 prices with inflation are £9.5m.

<sup>2</sup> You can read more about the redirection of the FPNES in our 2023-24 VCMA Report [here](#).

<sup>3</sup> Allowance in 2018-19 prices – 2025-26 prices with inflation are £17.6m.

<sup>4</sup> Allowance in 2018-19 prices – 2025-26 prices with inflation are £27.1m.

# What qualifies as a VCMA project?

## Introducing VCMA

The VCMA is governed by criteria set by Ofgem to ensure all funded projects deliver meaningful, targeted support to customers in vulnerable situations. It is designed to support initiatives that go beyond our core licence obligations, enabling us to provide additional services that improve safety, wellbeing, and access to support for those most in need.

## VCMA project eligibility

To qualify, projects must:

- Demonstrate a positive, or forecast positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI).
- Deliver clear outcomes, with defined activities and measurable benefits.
- Provide support in at least one of the following areas:
  - Supporting customers in vulnerable situations, particularly relating to energy safeguarding
  - Raising awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO)
  - Reducing the risk of harm caused by CO.
- Go beyond business-as-usual activity, meaning they are not funded through existing regulatory mechanisms or licence obligations.
- Avoid duplication, ensuring they are not funded through other government or external sources.

The above criteria ensures that VCMA funding is used effectively to deliver additional value where it is most needed.

VCMA projects typically include support such as energy advice, income maximisation, and targeted interventions for fuel poverty, alongside initiatives to improve CO awareness and safety. Delivery is largely partnership-led, working with trusted organisations embedded in communities. While direct energy efficiency measures are not funded, advice and support to access them is permitted.

The framework also enables targeted interventions, including support for essential gas appliance servicing, repair, and replacement, as well as projects that respond to emerging or crisis needs.

All projects are subject to robust governance, including a Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA), ensuring funding decisions are transparent, evidence-based, and aligned with our Consumer Vulnerability Strategy.

# Our commitments

## Making a positive impact

This section highlights how we have supported communities, bringing together key data, achievements, and progress made against the commitments outlined in our RIIO-GD2 business plan since 2021.

### RIIO-GD2 Commitments and Achievements

#### What we committed to:

1. Investing **£750,000** per annum to identify vulnerable customers and reduce the risk of CO
2. Funding first time gas connections via our Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES), delivering at least **2,500** new connections
3. Helping at least **1,200** homes per year with fuel poverty and energy efficiency support
4. Maintaining our Institute of Customer Service (ICS) accreditation and British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision
5. Increasing our customer satisfaction scores
6. Signing **12,000** people up to the Priority Services Register (PSR) per year and campaigning for one PSR for all utility services
7. Reaching **250,000** homes each year with CO awareness messaging
8. Issuing **5,000** free CO alarms to the most vulnerable homes
9. Expanding our schools programme, with a target of **4,000** pupils each year

#### What we've achieved since 2021:

- Invested **£5.2m** per annum. We have been able to support more organisations through the VCMA allowance
- Funded **1,572** FPNES connections
- Directly reached **456,741** individuals (over 193,000 homes) with fuel poverty, energy efficiency support services
- Maintained our ICS ServiceMark accreditation with distinction status  
Achieved re-accreditation against British Standard BS ISO22458 Vulnerable Customers
- Increased customer satisfaction scores to 9.14/10 (with priority customers at 9.27/10)
- Signed **78,590** customers up to the PSR
- Reached **3.6m individuals (over 1.5m homes)** with CO awareness messaging
- Issued **35,282** CO alarms
- Grown our schools programme, reaching more than **43,000** young people to date

#### Key

- = Behind target
- = At risk
- = On target

# VCMA investment

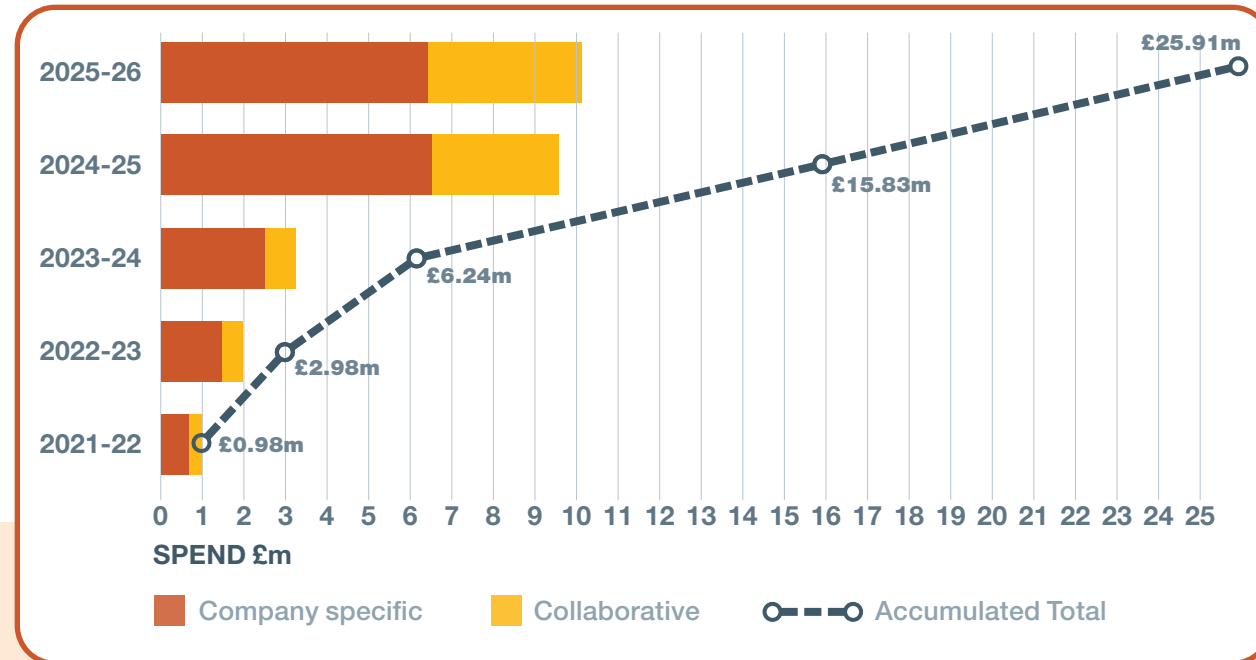
Our VCMA for the RIIO-GD2 period has been fully allocated, enabling the delivery of fuel poverty and carbon monoxide initiatives across our network in collaboration with trusted partners.

## Introducing VCMA

Here is a year-by-year summary of our VCMA investment:

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Total
<b>Company specific</b>	£733,524	£1,483,752	£2,594,395	£6,405,151	£6,340,943	£17,557,765
<b>Collaborative</b>	£250,721	£508,191	£671,533	£3,177,778	£3,742,357	£8,350,581
<b>Total</b>	<b>£984,245</b>	<b>£1,991,943</b>	<b>£3,265,928</b>	<b>£9,582,929</b>	<b>£10,083,300</b>	<b>£25,908,346</b>

\*Costs in the above table have been rounded





## Introducing VCMA

Our investments have funded the following total number of projects.



These projects have resulted in financial savings of **£56m** for customers, in addition to the added value, measured by SROI.

**£11.19** Average forecast SROI for WWU specific projects

**£12.61** Average forecast SROI for WWU and collaborative projects

Our collaborative investment represents

**32%**

of our total spend, shaped by input from regional stakeholders to ensure the projects we support are strongly rooted in our area and aligned with the wider goals of our Consumer Vulnerability Strategy.

Almost half

**45%**

of the projects within our VCMA portfolio are delivered in collaboration with at least one other GDN covering a broader geographical footprint.



To enhance the insights provided in this report, it should be read alongside the **collaborative VCMA report**, which explores the collective efforts and partnerships of GDNs, helping to avoid a postcode lottery and ensure services are consistently accessible to communities across the UK.

# Year 5 delivery update (2025-26)

In the final year of RIIO-GD2 delivery, our focus has shifted to ensuring the effective allocation of the remaining VCMA allowance, supporting projects through to completion and maximising impact for our customers and communities.

Building on the significant investment and expansion seen in previous years, we have continued to support a broad portfolio of initiatives, ensuring they are fully resourced, closely managed, and aligned to delivering tangible outcomes. This approach has allowed us to consolidate our delivery, strengthening partnerships and embedding services within communities to ensure lasting benefits beyond the lifetime of individual projects.

Throughout this period, we have seen sustained demand for support, with many customers continuing to experience the effects of high energy costs, fuel poverty, and health-related vulnerabilities. Our partnerships have played a critical role in responding to this need, providing trusted, accessible support and helping to break down barriers for those who may otherwise struggle to engage with services.

## Introducing VCMA

We have remained committed to addressing the impact of living in cold and damp homes, making sure that projects continue to deliver both immediate assistance and longer-term improvements associated with health and wellbeing. Alongside this, we have maintained a strong focus on governance and oversight, ensuring robust monitoring, reporting, and evaluation processes are in place as projects reach completion.

As we close out RIIO-GD2, this approach ensures that VCMA funding is fully utilised, delivering maximum value and leaving a strong foundation to build upon in RIIO-GD3.

Invested  
**£10.1m**  
in VCMA projects



**524,308**

People reached directly



**3.9m**

People reached through campaigns



**£23.1m**

Savings for our customers



**31**

LCV installations



**23,234**

PSR sign ups



**7,405**

CO alarms issued



**196**

Accessible CO alarms



**16,766**

CO Awareness surveys with results showing an average increased awareness among participants of 57%



**41**

In flight VCMA Projects





# VCMA in practice

## Our approach and impact across RIIO-GD2

Our aim has been to deliver a strong, balanced portfolio of VCMA projects that provide meaningful and lasting support to those most in need. Throughout RIIO-GD2, we have achieved this by working in partnership with trusted organisations and collaborating with other gas networks to extend our reach and maximise impact.

As we conclude our current price control period, we have focused on consolidating delivery, making sure projects have been completed successfully and that intended outcomes have been realised. This has enabled the lasting benefits of our work to extend beyond individual initiatives and has resulted in more joined up working between our partners. Guided by our values and strategic priorities, we have translated insight, partnership working, and investment into tangible improvements in safety, wellbeing, and energy accessibility for the communities we serve.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to building on this strong foundation as we transition into RIIO-GD3. We will continue to evolve our approach to meet the changing needs of the communities we serve, while making sure that stakeholder and customer voices remain at the forefront in shaping how we invest and deliver support.

# Project delivery: From idea to evaluation



## VCMA in practice



### 1. Idea generation

We welcome project proposals from new and existing partners, alongside ideas developed through stakeholder engagement, procurement activity, and industry working groups.



### 2. Scoping and selection

Proposals are reviewed against VCMA eligibility criteria and our strategy, ensuring alignment with stakeholder priorities and our four key delivery pillars.



### 3. Assessment and approval

Projects are assessed through a structured process, including development of a Social Return on Investment (SROI) forecast, budget review, and internal governance approval.



### 4. Refinement and development

Projects are co-developed with delivery partners to ensure they are targeted, effective, and ready for implementation.



### 5. Launch and onboarding

Once approved through a Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA), projects are formally registered and partners are supported through onboarding and mobilisation.



### 6. Delivery and monitoring

Projects are delivered in partnership, with ongoing monitoring of progress, outcomes, and learning to ensure effective delivery.



### 7. Evaluation and close

At completion, projects are evaluated to validate outcomes, capture learning, and inform future delivery.



# Our Consumer Vulnerability Strategy

During RIIO-GD2, we published our Consumer Vulnerability Strategy, bringing together our vulnerability and VCMA approaches into a single, cohesive framework. This strategy has been shaped through extensive stakeholder engagement, customer insight, and research, ensuring it reflects the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

We developed our approach through a broad range of engagement activities, including deliberative sessions with our Citizens Panel, stakeholder workshops, ongoing collaboration with trusted partners, and in-depth research with customers in vulnerable situations. This has been complemented by wider industry engagement and alignment with Ofgem's Consumer Vulnerability Strategy and national vulnerability priorities, ensuring consistency and best practice across the sector.

In addition to our internal strategy, we have worked collaboratively with other gas networks to develop a joint GDN Consumer Vulnerability Strategy. This sets out shared areas of focus, including stakeholder engagement, use of Priority Services Register data, best practice working groups, and delivery across core themes such as fuel poverty, priority customer groups, carbon monoxide safety, and services beyond the meter.

As we complete RIIO-GD2, our experience and learning over the past five years have shaped a clear and targeted set of strategic priorities moving forward:



Local Grassroots  
Delivery & Community  
Partnership



PSR Alignment  
& Data-Led  
Targeting



## VCMA in practice



Healthy  
Homes



Handheld  
Support

These priorities include strengthening local grassroots delivery and community partnerships, improving PSR alignment and data-led targeting, and focusing on healthy homes by addressing the link between housing conditions, fuel poverty, and health outcomes. We are also placing greater emphasis on personalised, “handheld” support, ensuring customers receive tailored, accessible assistance that reflects their individual circumstances.

Alongside this, we are prioritising a more joined-up, holistic approach to energy support, connecting services across organisations to better meet customer needs. This includes supporting connected communities, enabling stronger referral pathways, and ensuring harder-to-reach groups are effectively identified and supported.

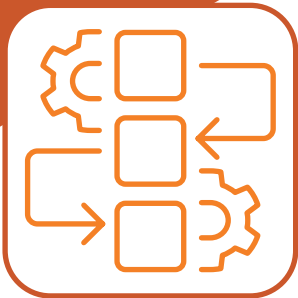
Looking ahead to RIIO-GD3, our priorities also reflect the need to support customers through wider system change. This includes a continued focus on a just energy transition, ensuring no customers are left behind as the energy system evolves, alongside increased investment in insight-led innovation to improve how we identify need, design services, and measure impact.

These priorities are closely aligned with our wider organisational commitments, including our Sustainability Strategy and Social Impact, ensuring a consistent approach to delivering social value, supporting long-term resilience, and improving outcomes for customers and communities.

As we move into RIIO-GD3, we recognise that the external landscape will continue to evolve, with ongoing pressures such as high energy costs, an ageing population, and increasing vulnerability. We have therefore committed to reviewing and updating our Consumer Vulnerability Strategy on a biennial basis, ensuring it remains responsive, evidence-led, and shaped by ongoing stakeholder engagement.

# Strategic alignment

During our project selection process and delivery we align with the following six important features of our VCMA Strategy, to make sure we're being consistent and thorough in our support.



## VCMA in practice

**Geographical coverage:** Our broad range of partnerships extends the geographical reach of our projects, and we are always looking for ways to grow our reach.

**Data-driven approach:** Equipping us to help those most in need, we consult a wide range of data from the Office of National Statistics through to Citizens Advice.

**Supporting disadvantaged communities:** Bridging gaps in assistance, we are committed to going the extra mile for the most vulnerable in our communities.

1.

**PSR needs codes:** By aligning with the codes that categorise customers who require additional support, we ensure individuals receive the targeted help they need.

2.

3.

**Strategic key pillars:** To drive impactful change, all of our VCMA work is underpinned by our four key pillars.

4.

5.

**Fuel poverty and CO focus:** Addressing critical issues, we have multiple measures in place to support customers experiencing fuel poverty and to protect everyone in our communities from the dangers of CO.

6.

# How we work with partners

Following the successful launch of our VCMA Partners Network Event in 2024, we have now embedded this into our business-as-usual engagement activity. Over the past year, we have delivered two further successful networking sessions, reinforcing our commitment to engaging with partners and key stakeholders on the issues that matter most to the communities we serve. These events provide valuable opportunities to share learning, strengthen relationships, and gather insight to inform both ongoing delivery and future strategy. They also enable our partners to come together to identify collaborative opportunities and explore ways of working that help future-proof support beyond VCMA funding.

Our most recent event focused on celebrating the impact of RII0-GD2, offering stakeholders the opportunity to reflect on delivery over the past year and across the full five-year period. This included a dedicated timeline tunnel, showcasing the journey from the early foundations of VCMA through to scaled impact and key moments of change, highlighting headline achievements, outcomes, and bringing projects to life through physical resources developed by partners, such as care packages, CO safety materials, and support tools.

The session was further supported by a series of interactive activities, including an impact quiz and gratitude wall, alongside partner-led presentations and video content, enabling partners to share their experiences and achievements directly. These elements were complemented by facilitated roundtable discussions and





## VCMA in practice

idea-generation sessions, such as the “Fuel for Thought” activity, which encouraged collaboration, reflection, and forward-thinking dialogue on future priorities.

The event also looked ahead to RIIO-GD3, exploring emerging challenges and priorities identified by partners, including the ongoing impact of energy affordability, the need for more joined-up support services, and the importance of reaching under-served communities. These insights will play a key role in shaping our future approach, ensuring our programmes remain responsive, targeted, and aligned to stakeholder and customer needs.

“

*I just wanted to say my huge thanks for yesterday's event. It was not only really valuable in terms of information sharing and networking – but it was also really fun!*

*It was great to see the extent of work that has been delivered. Hearing the different practical ways partners have delivered different projects has also given me ideas for possible ways we can extend our impact for our RIIO-GD3 proposal – lots to think about there. It was also just inspiring to be in a room filled with people all aligned in wanting to better understand and help people facing poverty and hardship.*

”

Bryony Lewis, Shelter Cymru



# Our Independent Stakeholder Group

## VCMA in practice

Our Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG) has continued to play a critical role throughout Year 5 and the close of the RIIO-GD2 period, providing robust challenge, insight, and guidance as we consolidate learning and shape our future approach. Drawing on expertise from across the public and private sectors, the ISG has helped ensure our activities remain responsive, impactful, and aligned with both stakeholder needs and regulatory expectations.

### During this final reporting year of RIIO-GD2, our ISG has:

- Provided ongoing challenge and input into the development and refinement of our RIIO-GD3 Business Plan, ensuring that vulnerability and carbon monoxide priorities are effectively embedded within our future investment proposals.
- Played an active role in our business planning process, offering independent scrutiny and helping to shape our strategic direction for RIIO-GD3.
- Engaged with and supported our approach to Ofgem, including providing insight and challenge in relation to consultations on the future of VCMI governance and how this should evolve for RIIO-GD3.
- Continued to bring external context on the challenges faced by customers in vulnerable circumstances, including those experiencing fuel poverty, health inequalities, and wider cost of living pressures.
- Reviewed progress against our Consumer Vulnerability Strategy, maintaining focus on the delivery of commitments and the implementation of service improvements identified through RIIO-GD2.
- Encouraged the ongoing development and strengthening of our Social Promise, reinforcing our role as a responsible business delivering positive social impact.

Their input over RIIO-GD2 has been instrumental in strengthening our approach, ensuring we are well positioned to deliver a more ambitious, transparent, and impactful programme as we continue to work closely with our ISG in RIIO-GD3.

*“Deepening fuel poverty and vulnerability is due to spikes in energy costs, mounting debt and a persistent cost of living crisis. Declining household incomes, coupled with energy inefficient cold damp housing stock, compound these pressures. This crisis unfolds alongside the critical challenge of decarbonisation and making sure the most vulnerable households are included and benefit from a just energy transition. WWU have worked hard with their partners to expand and scale up their VCMA initiatives during RIIO-GD2. These efforts successfully delivered vital energy-efficiency and fuel poverty support services to over 193,000 homes and over 1.5m homes with CO awareness messaging. The ISG have been delighted with the outcomes and the learnings being taken into RIIO-GD3, to amplify the positive impact across the communities that WWU serves, moving closer to their ultimate goal; warm, safe homes for all.”*



Peter Haige, Wales & West Utilities ISG Chair

# 2025-26 Stakeholder engagement and research

## VCMA in practice

We have maintained a comprehensive and evolving stakeholder engagement programme throughout 2025-26, ensuring we remain focused on the priorities that matter most to the communities we serve across Wales and the south-west of England. In this final year, our engagement has also played a key role in shaping our future plans and approach as we transition into RIIO-GD3.

Alongside the Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG), we engage with a wide range of stakeholders through established forums, panels, and targeted research. This includes both ongoing engagement mechanisms and insight-led activity to support business planning, inform decision-making, and strengthen the delivery of our VCMA initiatives.

We continue to engage stakeholders through a variety of formats, including in-person sessions and virtual events, such as:

- **Regional stakeholder workshops**
- **Customer and Stakeholder Panels**
- **VCMA partnership forums**
- **Coalition memberships**
- **Government Fuel Poverty Advisory Groups**
- **Partnership events (including NEA, Care & Repair Cymru and Utility Week)**
- **GDN workgroups and steering groups**
- **VCMA Showcase Event**

In Year 5, stakeholder engagement has been particularly important in helping us reflect on RIIO-GD2 delivery, capture learning, and shape our RIIO-GD3 Business Plan. This has ensured our future approach is grounded in stakeholder insight, evidence, and best practice.

Below are some of the key challenges and themes raised by stakeholders in relation to our VCMA activities during RIIO-GD2, along with the actions we have taken in response:

#### VCMA in practice

##### You said:



*Support should be available across the whole country, not concentrated in certain areas, so that all communities can access help regardless of where they live.*



##### We did:

**We ran competitive tenders to ensure an equitable spread of VCMA projects across Wales and the south-west, enabling support across our region. We brought partners together to share learnings, develop complementary projects, establish regional consortiums, and prevent duplication of funding.**

##### You said:



*More needs to be done to raise awareness of the Priority Services Register, ensuring eligible customers understand the benefits and are supported to sign up.*



##### We did:

**We delivered a national digital media PSR campaign targeting eligible demographics and embedded PSR awareness across all projects, ensuring consistent promotion, increasing visibility, and supporting more customers to access and register for available support.**

##### You said:



*Vulnerable customers risk facing rising costs and being left behind in the transition to new energy systems, and that we have an important role to play in educating and supporting them.*



##### We did:

**We worked collaboratively with Ofgem, the GDNs and key stakeholders through our RIIO-GD3 business planning to shape future VCMA governance, ensuring projects support vulnerable customers, helping them navigate a just transition to net zero.**

# Outcomes, benefits and lessons learned

## VCMA in practice

While the quantitative data presented earlier in this report provides an important measure of the scale and reach of our VCMA activities, this section focuses on the qualitative insights gathered throughout RIIO-GD2, which provide an invaluable measure of the true impact of our work. In the next section we will turn to case studies that bring this impact to life, highlighting the real experiences of individuals and communities we have supported.

Through our key learnings, we reflect on the insight gained over RIIO-GD2 and how this will be used to strengthen and enhance the design and delivery of our programmes in RIIO-GD3.



## Outcomes

- We recognise that no single metric can fully capture the impact of our VCMA activities. Quantitative measures, such as Social Return on Investment (SROI), provide an essential indication of scale and value for money. However, it is the richer, qualitative evidence including case studies, customer voices, and feedback from delivery partners that brings this impact to life. Together, these measures provide a more holistic view, combining data-driven insight with authentic lived experiences to demonstrate the real difference our programmes make. This balanced approach is strongly supported by our stakeholders, who value the combination of robust metrics alongside personal and community-level impact.
- Targeted and tailored interventions delivered by our partners are generating meaningful and lasting outcomes for vulnerable communities. By addressing individual needs, these programmes are helping to reduce health inequalities, improve overall wellbeing, and tackle social isolation and loneliness. They are also supporting better mental health outcomes, while enabling access to warmer homes that are safer and more resilient to the risks of carbon monoxide. Through this personalised approach, we are seeing both immediate and longer-term benefits that enhance quality of life and strengthen community resilience.



## Benefits

- Our VCMA-funded projects deliver sustained, life enhancing outcomes for those most in need, through targeted and person-centred interventions. These include support to manage chronic health conditions, the provision of potentially life saving gas safety awareness, and tailored assistance for individuals experiencing mental health challenges. Together, these interventions contribute to safer, healthier, and more resilient households and communities.
- As trust and engagement within communities continue to grow, we are seeing increasing demand for these services. This reflects both the effectiveness of our delivery model and the value of accessible, locally delivered support, enabling more households to come forward and benefit from the assistance available.
- The dedication and impact of our partners and colleagues continue to be recognised both internally and externally. Nominations and shortlisting at prestigious awards, including the Utility Week Awards and Business Charity Awards, highlight the strength of our collaborative approach and the meaningful, lasting benefits being delivered through our VCMA programme.

## Key Learning

- **Evolving and deepening vulnerability:** Rising energy costs and wider cost of living pressures have not only increased the number of households in fuel poverty but also intensified the complexity of need. Vulnerability is becoming more dynamic, with more customers experiencing multiple and overlapping challenges, requiring more flexible and holistic support responses.
- **Sustained and growing demand for support:** Demand for VCMA-funded services remains consistently high and continues to grow, reinforcing the importance of maintaining provision into RIIO-GD3, while ensuring services remain accessible and responsive to emerging needs.

- **Value of tailored, person-centred interventions:** Targeted, bespoke support continues to deliver the most meaningful outcomes, particularly for those with complex needs. However, this also highlights the importance of balancing intensive support models with efficiency and scalability to maximise reach and long-term sustainability.
- **Importance of early intervention and prevention:** There is increasing evidence that earlier engagement, particularly around energy advice, CO safety, and health-related interventions, can prevent issues from escalating; reducing longer-term impacts on individuals and services.
- **Strength and maturity of partnerships:** Established, trusted partnerships are critical to effective delivery. In Year 5, collaboration has matured further, with partners playing a key role in identifying need, delivering tailored interventions, and providing valuable insight to continuously improve service provision.
- **Enhanced collaboration across GDNs and stakeholders:** Ongoing collaboration across gas networks, delivery partners, and wider stakeholders has strengthened consistency, reduced duplication, and enabled the sharing of best practice, ultimately improving outcomes for customers.
- **Improved service provision through insight and feedback:** Continuous stakeholder engagement, customer insight, and partner feedback have driven improvements in service design and delivery across RIIO-GD2, ensuring interventions remain relevant, inclusive, and impactful.
- **Flexibility of the VCMA model:** The VCMA framework continues to demonstrate its value by enabling responsive, partnership-led approaches that can adapt quickly to changing external pressures, supporting communities more effectively than more rigid delivery models.



# Our projects in 2025-26

Summary of company specific projects and case studies





## Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability

**Many households face significant financial pressures, often forced to make difficult choices between heating their homes, paying essential bills, or purchasing food. We designed our fuel poverty and energy affordability projects to provide critical support to customers struggling with rising energy costs. The increasing cost of living has placed further strain on vulnerable communities, making affordable energy access and the support our projects provide more urgent than ever.**

Through these programmes, we offer expert guidance, financial assistance, and practical energy-saving solutions to help customers manage their bills and

improve their quality of life. By ensuring that support is accessible and tailored, we help those facing the greatest challenges to stay warm and secure in their homes.

Collaboration is key to delivering meaningful impact. By engaging with policymakers, industry leaders, and community partners, we shape initiatives that effectively reach those most in need. Strengthening these partnerships enhances service delivery, and drives sustainable, long-term improvements for vulnerable households across our network and beyond.

### Key Stats 2025-26

£4.1m

Invested in company specific projects

£1.8m

Invested on collaborative projects

£5.9m

Total investment for Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability projects

£12.63

Average forecast SROI

307,867

People reached directly

£7.2m

Financial savings



## CASE STUDY 1

Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability



# Sustainable Community Solutions (ECOe Advice) Healthy Homes for Wellbeing

## Project at a glance

**Investment:** £992,000

**Forecast SROI:** £2.86/£1

**Duration:** January 2024 – March 2026

**Status:** Complete

## Achievements

Directly reached **23,579** individuals

**10,840** PSR sign-ups

Financial savings of more than **£5.5m**

## Need

Across Devon and the wider south-west, rising levels of fuel poverty are being driven by a combination of low incomes, high living costs, and a large proportion of older, energy inefficient housing stock. Many households live in hard-to-heat homes, with high fuel costs and limited access to support services.

The growing complexity of the energy market, alongside gaps in accessible and consistent information on energy efficiency and energy use, makes it difficult for many vulnerable households to make fully informed decisions. This is further compounded by low trust in energy suppliers, difficulty accessing grant funding, and risks from rogue traders offering misleading advice.

Rural isolation and limited transport links create additional barriers, leaving many people unsure where to turn for help. For vulnerable and older populations in particular, the pace of change associated with new energy technologies risks leaving them behind, exacerbating both financial hardship and health inequalities linked to cold, damp homes.

## Approach

Through this partnership, ECOE delivers a holistic, community-based energy advice service designed to reach low-income and vulnerable households through multiple channels.

The project provides in-depth, one-to-one advice and practical support, delivered via telephone, home visits, outreach activities, and two dedicated energy advice centres, one in Exeter, one in Paignton. This blended delivery model ensures accessibility for both urban and rural communities.



ecoe  
advice





## CASE STUDY 1 | Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability

ECOE Advice integrates energy advice with money and debt support, helping households maximise income, manage bills, and improve overall financial resilience. In addition, the service supports behavioural change by improving understanding of energy usage and efficiency.

The project also includes:

- Development of tailored advice services, including Smart Energy Plans and heat loss surveys
- Creation of a Home Safety Advice programme and pilots such as the “Heat Doctor” and handyman services
- Delivery of community education and awareness programmes, including training for frontline workers and community energy champions
- Strong partnership working with local authorities, public health teams, NHS Devon, and community organisations.

*Funding from Wales & West Utilities’ VCMA Fund has transformed what we can offer vulnerable households. Families are warmer, safer and more confident managing their energy use, and the project has enabled us to reach people who previously had no access to trusted, in-depth home energy support.*

**Hannah Devine-Wright, CEO, ECOE Advice**

## Impact

ECOE Advice has helped residents increase household income, reduce financial stress, and avoid crisis situations through the integration of financial, energy, and health-related advice. This holistic approach addresses the root causes of fuel poverty rather than treating symptoms in isolation.

Improved access to services, particularly through physical advice centres, enabled engagement from more vulnerable individuals, including those unable to access digital channels. This contributed to increased confidence, trust, and improved wellbeing.

Alongside this, the project strengthened local systems by:

- Increasing awareness and uptake of the Priority Services Register (PSR)
- Improving access to safe, reliable services, particularly in rural areas
- Strengthening referral pathways and partnership working across health, local authority, and community organisations.

Together, these outcomes ensured that households received coordinated, effective support, while building longer-term resilience within communities.



## Engagement

The project is built on strong local partnerships and stakeholder insight, responding directly to identified needs around fuel poverty, health inequalities, and access to support services.

ECOE Advice works closely with the Energy Saving Devon consortium, including local authorities, public health, trading standards, and NHS partners, ensuring a coordinated and trusted approach to engagement.

Outreach activity is targeted towards vulnerable groups, including those in rural or isolated locations, while the new advice centre provides a central, accessible hub for support.

Training programmes and community toolkits enable frontline workers and local champions to extend the reach of the project, ensuring that support is embedded within communities and accessible through existing trusted networks.

## Learning

The project continues to generate valuable learning about delivering effective, inclusive energy advice services:

- **Demand remains consistently high**, particularly during winter, requiring flexible and scalable delivery models.
- **Case complexity is increasing**, highlighting the importance of integrated, multi-disciplinary support.
- **Face-to-face engagement remains critical**, particularly for vulnerable or digitally excluded households.
- **Trusted, community-based delivery** is key to building confidence and encouraging engagement.

Operationally, co-locating teams and improving internal processes has strengthened coordination, enabling the project to maintain strong response times despite sustained demand.

Looking ahead, adapting services to a changing energy landscape, including evolving low-carbon technologies, will be essential to sustaining and scaling impact.

## CASE STUDY 2

### Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability



# YES Energy Solutions – A holistic, wrap-around energy advice service

## Project at a glance

**Investment:** £492,820

**Forecast SROI:** £21.29/£1

**Duration:** May 2024 – March 2026

**Status:** Complete

## Achievements

Reached **4,258** individuals

Distributed **4,257** Home Energy Support Packs

More than **2,800** individuals received energy efficiency advice

## Need

The cost of living crisis significantly increased the number of households struggling to afford energy, with many experiencing fuel poverty for the first time. A growing proportion of these households were unfamiliar with available support and lacked confidence in where to seek advice.

At the same time, rising energy costs compounded wider financial pressures, including housing and food, creating more complex and interrelated challenges. As a result, many households required support across multiple areas rather than single-issue interventions, highlighting the need for a more integrated advice model.

## Approach

Through this partnership, YES delivered a structured, tiered advice service that adapted to the level of need and engagement of each household.

All participants received an initial interaction focused on practical energy-saving actions, supported by the provision of a Home Energy Support Pack. This ensured every household gained immediate, usable guidance alongside physical tools to support behaviour change.

For those requiring additional support, the service progressed to more detailed consultations, including tailored assessments of household circumstances, energy use, and financial pressures. These sessions explored opportunities for efficiency improvements, tariff optimisation, income maximisation, and access to external funding or specialist services.

A further element of the service introduced households to low-carbon technologies, helping them understand future energy options and the steps required to prepare for transition.

Delivery was primarily telephone based, supported by an evolving engagement strategy that prioritised flexibility and responsiveness. A key feature of delivery was the move towards maximising support within each interaction, reducing reliance on staged processes and improving overall engagement.





## Impact

The service enabled households to make more informed decisions about their energy use, with a focus on practical, achievable changes that could be implemented quickly. The inclusion of advice packs and behavioural guidance provided immediate benefits, while more detailed support facilitated longer-term improvements.

By combining energy, financial, and wider support, the service helped households address the underlying drivers of fuel poverty rather than isolated issues. This reduced financial pressure and improved overall stability for many participants.

The project also increased awareness of available support mechanisms, including the Priority Services Register (PSR), and strengthened links between households and relevant services.

## Engagement

Engagement was shaped by continuous adaptation throughout delivery. Early activity highlighted challenges in building awareness and trust, particularly in less densely populated or less familiar areas.

In response, YES refined its approach by increasing brand visibility and tailoring marketing activity to better reflect local characteristics. These changes contributed to improved engagement over time, particularly during the final phases of the project.

Internally, the shift to a more flexible delivery model – focused on maximising each interaction – helped reduce drop-off between stages and maintain momentum with households.

Strong collaboration with external organisations supported onward referrals and ensured that households with more complex needs could access specialist support where required.

## Learning

The project highlighted key lessons for future delivery. Establishing trust and recognition in new areas required sustained, targeted engagement, while delivery models had to remain adaptable to changing demand and engagement levels. Consolidating support into fewer interactions improved engagement and outcomes, reinforcing the importance of making each contact effective. Fuel poverty is rarely experienced in isolation, highlighting the need for integrated advice, strong referral pathways and effective partnership working to enable coordinated support. These insights will inform future programmes, supporting responsive, accessible services and a collaborative RIIO-GD3 approach with other GDNs to reduce postcode disparities and ensure consistent support.

*The partnership between YES Energy Solutions and Wales & West Utilities has delivered meaningful support to thousands of households, combining practical energy advice with tailored interventions. Together, we've helped residents reduce costs, improve comfort, and build long-term resilience during a challenging cost of living crisis.*

**Matt Harvey, Advice Client Manager,  
YES Energy Solutions**



Company specific

Collaborative

Delivery partner(s) – Project title – Description	Start date	End date	Forecast SROI	WWU committed spend	Status	Link
<p><b>Warm Wales – Healthy homes, healthy people</b>                      Delivering energy efficiency and fuel poverty programmes; this Wales-wide project provides support with accessing unclaimed benefits and maximising income for households in fuel poverty, making the link between health and social prescribing.</p>	2024	2026	£19.76	£2,314,275		
<p><b>Centre For Sustainable Energy (CSE) – WHAM: Warm homes, advice and money</b>                      Providing advice and support to vulnerable households by tackling all the causes of fuel poverty. The help delivered by WHAM includes improving financial skills and understanding, and making homes warmer by tackling houses with damp and mould.</p>	2024	2026	£10.74	£1,055,264		
<p><b>MoneyReady (formerly MyBnk) – Tackling fuel poverty through financial education</b>                      This project delivers financial and energy education to young people across Wales and the south-west of England.</p>	2024	2026	£11.78	£495,478		
<p><b>Exeter Community Energy (ECOE) – Healthy homes for wellbeing</b>                      By providing expert and in-depth one-to-one advice and practical support for low income and vulnerable households, this project aims to improve energy efficiency, behaviour and understanding in order to combat fuel poverty.</p>	2024	2026	£2.86	£992,000		
<p><b>PEC Trust – PEC home hub</b>                      Through a home hub; energy advice calls; home visits; and fuel poverty first aid training for frontline workers, this project supports vulnerable people in the Plymouth area.</p>	2024	2026	£15.70	£999,752		
<p><b>YES Energy Solutions – A holistic, wrap-around, energy advice service</b>                      With a tiered advice service for fuel-poor householders, support includes signposting people to essential services and to funding opportunities that can deliver property improvements.</p>	2024	2026	£21.29	£492,820		
<p><b>ACE – Action in Caerau &amp; Ely – The Hafan project</b>                      Support includes: face-to-face advice sessions with vulnerable households; home visits to assess energy usage, efficiency, behaviour and home safety; income maximisation through benefit entitlement checks, and signposting to the PSR.</p>	2024	2026	£23.38	£49,990		

CONTINUED

PROJECT STATUS KEY:



In Progress



Extended



Complete



Hyperlink



Company specific

Collaborative

Delivery partner(s) – Project title – Description	Start date	End date	Forecast SROI	WWU committed spend	Status	Link
<p><b>Auriga Services – Somerset warm connections advices service</b>                      This money-advice project builds on and enhances existing partnerships in Somerset, to support vulnerable communities with fuel poverty and energy efficiency services - including income maximisation and benefits guidance.</p>	2024	2026	£0.79	£414,000		
<p><b>National Energy Foundation (NEF) – Better housing, better health: Fuel poverty support</b>                      Delivering vital fuel poverty advice and long-term intervention, this project makes sure that households in need receive tailored support to improve their circumstances, enhance the warmth in their home, and promote overall wellbeing.</p>	2024	2026	£12.15	£306,010		
<p><b>Home Start Cymru – Supporting Wales’ most vulnerable families: via improved wellbeing, financial security and safety at home</b>                      The aims of this project are to alleviate financial hardship of families supported across Wales; to address the health and wellbeing risks of fuel poverty; to raise awareness of carbon monoxide, and to improve parental mental health and family wellbeing.</p>	2025	2026	£15.98	£49,747		
<p><b>Healthy Homes Solutions (HHS) – Vulnerability registration service</b>                      A self-registration service that provides information on the PSR, grant checks and other information that helps to identify why a person may be feeling vulnerable.</p>	2024	2026	£6.63	£1,000,495		
<p><b>Shelter Cymru – Preventing homelessness</b>                      Through expert in-house debt and benefits advice, this project helps people maximise their income, build financial resilience and stay in a safe home.</p>	2023	2026	£43.60	£146,000		
<p><b>BCB – Winter warm support: Supporting vulnerable people in warm spaces</b>                      Providing winter warm packs to customers within our network.</p>	2023	2026	£2.47	£453,000		
<p><b>Warm Wales – Healthy homes, healthy people: Energy efficiency and fuel poverty programmes</b>                      This is a national project covering our Wales &amp; West Utilities regions that aims to provide holistic support – including help for households in fuel poverty to access unclaimed benefits and maximise income.</p>	2021	2025	£10.00	£1,254,000		

CONTINUED

PROJECT STATUS KEY:



In Progress



Extended



Complete



Hyperlink



Company specific

Collaborative

Delivery partner(s) – Project title – Description	Start date	End date	Forecast SROI	WWU committed spend	Status	Link
<p><b>Frame Ltd – Fuel poverty and CO awareness project</b>                      These community-led support services are focused on raising awareness of energy efficiency, the PSR, and the dangers of CO, while helping carers to access relevant benefits and maximise their incomes.</p>	2022	2026	£1.67	£115,778		
<p><b>Centre Sustainable Energy (CSE) – Heat ability</b>                      Targeted support services for disabled and low income households, focused on raising awareness of energy efficiency, the PSR, and the dangers of CO, while helping carers to access relevant benefits and maximise their incomes.</p>	2022	2024	£41.58	£100,000		
<p><b>Adra – Prosiect sero net Gwynedd (Project net zero Gwynedd)</b>                      Targeted support services for rural communities in North Wales, delivered by energy wardens.</p>	2023	2025	£15.72	£100,000		
<p><b>Hope4U/Newquay Food Bank – Newquay crisis support</b>                      Newquay foodbank refer their service users to Hope4U, where they can receive in-depth support to access unclaimed benefits, hardship grants, and support to maximise their income.</p>	2022	2024	£5.65	£97,000		
<p><b>WWU, National Grid, Bristol Water &amp; University of the West of England – Resource West</b>                      This project brings local utility companies together to provide single consistent messages about how to make savings, and how to get help to do so. Their purpose is to encourage the public to save money and help protect the environment by reducing energy and water consumption while maintaining warm homes.</p>	2022	2023	£3.00	£9,950		

CONTINUED





Company specific

Collaborative

Delivery partner(s) – Project title – Description	Start date	End date	Forecast SROI	WWU committed spend	Status	Link
<p><b>Citizens Advice National – Energy safeguarding and CO safety partnership 2023-24 – 2025-26</b>                      This project assesses the impact of an 'Energy and CO Safety pack' for at-risk customers; offering alarms, safety guides, and energy-saving advice, while providing tailored support to help vulnerable households stay safe and warm.</p>	2023	2026	£5.54	£675,575		
<p><b>MoneyReady (formerly MyBnk) – Financial inclusion and energy safeguarding: Schools programme</b>                      Delivering financial education to primary-age children through MyBnk; with a dedicated module on energy safety, usage, and efficiency. Designed to foster a lasting partnership with tangible outcomes.</p>	2022	2025	£15.53	£43,605		
<p><b>National Energy Action (NEA) – Warm homes, healthy futures</b>                      Evidence-based initiative linking health professionals and public health bodies to energy advice and specialist services, to tackle health inequalities and fuel poverty together.</p>	2024	2026	£2.66	£1,408,193		
<p><b>Fuel Bank Foundation Extension – Fuel crisis support</b>                      Providing direct financial aid and practical support to help vulnerable households stay safe and warm, identified through community partners or direct funding referrals.</p>	2024	2026	£2.88	£115,664		
<p><b>Severn Wye Energy – Reach out: Energy support</b>                      Designed to reach those 'slipping through the net' of conventional support by providing fuel poverty and energy efficiency services including income maximisation and behavioural changes around energy usage.</p>	2024	2026	£12.36	£1,108,000		
<p><b>Shelter – Working together: To prevent homelessness and to support people to thrive in their home environment</b>                      Targeted to prevent homelessness among fuel poor communities; the project offers support services that are tailored, in-depth, and delivered through a suite of activities.</p>	2024	2025	£42.83	£180,015		
<p><b>IE Hub – Income and expenditure hub: Support for customers in vulnerable circumstances and financial difficulties</b>                      Facilitates access to an expert, online tool that enables vulnerable communities to check benefit entitlement, specialised support and financial management.</p>	2024	2026	£4.73	£86,046		

CONTINUED

PROJECT STATUS KEY:



In Progress



Extended



Complete



Hyperlink



Company specific

Collaborative

Delivery partner(s) – Project title – Description	Start date	End date	Forecast SROI	WWU committed spend	Status	Link
<b>Fuel Bank Foundation – Fuel crisis support</b> Providing direct financial aid and practical support to help vulnerable households stay safe and warm.	2022	2026	£5.95	£57,832		
<b>NEA and Wise Group – Warm and safe homes: National extension 2023-2025</b> Providing support to fuel poor communities through a wide range of services that include energy efficiency advice, and income maximisation.	2023	2025	£3.20	£72,893		
<b>Citizens Advice National – Energy safeguarding and CO safety partnership 2022-23</b> Offering expert debt and benefits advice to boost income, strengthen financial resilience, and ensure safe housing. Also assessing the impact of 'Energy and CO Safety packs' for at-risk households, providing alarms, safety guides, and energy-saving support.	2022	2023	£5.76	£288,725		





## Supporting Priority Customer Groups

Our projects dedicated to supporting priority customer groups make sure that customers who are eligible for the Priority Services Register (PSR) receive accessible, hands-on support to stay safe and warm at home. Living in unsuitable conditions can worsen existing medical conditions, particularly for vulnerable individuals. That's why we've designed our projects to address the critical link between cold, damp homes and poor health. These communities often face complex challenges, making tailored assistance essential in addressing their needs.

Through engagement with on-the-ground delivery partners, we've gained valuable insights into the most effective methods of support, with handheld, face-to-face assistance

proving to be the most impactful. This makes sure vulnerable customers receive support they otherwise wouldn't have known was available or how to access, and what's more it is tailored and personalised to improve their quality of life. While crucial and proven, this approach is time-intensive, requiring dedicated resources to maximise its reach and effectiveness.

Supporting priority customer groups remains a key focus for us at Wales & West Utilities, strengthened by research and stakeholder collaboration. This year, we've expanded partnerships and initiatives to enhance our ability to reach those most in need, alongside adapting our approach based on lived experiences.

### Key Stats 2025-26

£1.3m

Invested in company specific projects

£1.9m

Invested on collaborative projects

£3.2m

Total investment for Supporting Priority Customer Groups

£16.71

Average forecast SROI

147,456

People reached directly

£12.7m

Financial savings



## CASE STUDY 3

Supporting Priority  
Customer Groups



# Care & Repair – Older Not Colder

## Project at a glance

**Investment:** £1,355,000

**Forecast SROI:** £6.09/£1

**Duration:** January 2024 – March 2026

**Status:** Complete

## Achievements

Reached **5,023** individuals and **3,953** households

Financial savings of more than **£2m**

**Winners** of Regional Vulnerable Customer Support  
Award at Wales Energy Efficiency Awards 2026

## Need

Older people across Wales are disproportionately impacted by fuel poverty, with many living in older, inefficient homes that are difficult and costly to heat. The cost of living crisis and rising energy prices have further intensified this issue, with estimates showing a significant increase in older households spending a high proportion of their income to stay warm.

Those supported through Older Not Colder are typically aged 60+ (or 50+ with health conditions such as dementia, sensory loss or stroke), often living on low incomes, managing multiple health conditions, and in many cases living alone. These factors increase vulnerability to cold-related illness, financial hardship, and reduced wellbeing.

Stakeholder engagement and priority customer research have consistently identified older people as a key group requiring targeted support, with a clear link between poor housing conditions, health outcomes, and fuel poverty.

## Approach

To address this need, Wales & West Utilities partnered with Care & Repair Cymru to deliver Older Not Colder, a person-centred programme helping older people stay safe, warm, and independent at home.

A network of Home Energy Officers provided tailored, face-to-face support, including:

- Income maximisation through benefit entitlement checks
- Energy advice, including tariff switching and behavioural change



**Care & Repair  
Gofal a Thrwsio**



- Support accessing grants for heating, insulation, and home improvements
- Carbon monoxide (CO) safety advice and provision of CO alarms
- Referrals to the Priority Services Register (PSR), health services, and wider support organisations.

The service was integrated with broader Care & Repair provision, enabling a coordinated, “one-stop-shop” approach that ensured individuals receive comprehensive support suited to their circumstances.

## Impact

The project has delivered significant and measurable impact for older households across Wales, supporting thousands of individuals through tailored, in-home interventions that address both immediate needs and longer-term resilience.

Through targeted in-home support, the project has:

- Distributed CO alarms and warm packs, improving household safety
- Enabled access to financial entitlements and grants, generating significant and ongoing financial gains
- Reached individuals who may not otherwise seek support, including those experiencing isolation or health-related barriers.

An emergency fund introduced during delivery further strengthened impact, enabling urgent boiler repairs and replacements where no alternative funding was available.

As a result, households have experienced improved affordability, warmer living conditions, increased awareness of CO risks, and greater confidence managing their energy use and finances.

The holistic nature of the service has been particularly effective, ensuring that customers receive coordinated support across financial, housing, and health needs rather than fragmented interventions.

## Engagement

Strong partnership working has been central to the project’s success. Collaboration with national and local organisations, including Welsh Government schemes, local contractors, and third-sector partners, has created effective referral pathways and improved access to wider support services.

Locally based Home Energy Officers play a vital role in building trust within communities, enabling the project to engage individuals who may not actively seek help and ensuring support reaches those most in need.

This approach has been further strengthened through a strategic quarterly steering group involving Wales & West Utilities, Care & Repair Cymru, and Warm Wales. These sessions provide a forum to review progress, share insights and best practice, and align delivery across key fuel poverty programmes. This collaborative approach supports the development of a coordinated ecosystem of services across Wales, reducing duplication of reach and funding, ensuring customers receive the right support at the right time.



## 6D Learning

The project has generated valuable insights that will shape future delivery and strategy. It has reinforced that demand for personalised, face-to-face support remains high, particularly among older people with complex needs, and that this type of tailored intervention delivers the greatest impact. The introduction of flexible funding mechanisms, such as the emergency fund, demonstrated the importance of being able to respond quickly where other schemes are unavailable, ensuring no vulnerable household is left unsupported.

The project has also highlighted the strength of integrated, partnership-led delivery, where collaboration with trusted organisations enables more effective and holistic outcomes for customers. In addition, practical considerations, such as the time required for staff recruitment, training, and travel across rural areas, have emphasised the need for realistic target setting and delivery expectations. Opportunities have been identified to streamline reporting processes and enhance early mobilisation, supporting more efficient delivery and maximising impact.

These insights will directly inform future VCMA programmes and the development of Wales & West Utilities' RIIO-GD3 vulnerability strategy, ensuring that support remains responsive, targeted, and accessible to those who need it most.

*/// This new boiler has changed everything. I don't have to sit in a cold room wrapped in a blanket anymore. I feel safer and healthier. ///*

**Client A, Older Not Colder**



## Company specific

## Collaborative

Delivery partner(s) – Project title – Description	Start date	End date	Forecast SROI	WWU committed spend	Status	Link
<b>Care &amp; Repair Cymru – Older not colder</b> Supporting the older people in our communities in Wales with targeted services that include income maximisation, and energy and debt advice.	2024	2026	£6.09	£1,355,000		
<b>MS Society – Community connections</b> The project will connect people with local services and activities, offering guidance on finances, energy, and safety through MS Society partnerships.	2024	2026	£0.15	£213,734		
<b>Mind – Cost of living emergency response</b> Designed to provide funding to local Mind organisations across Wales and the South West, to enhance support for service users and communities during the cost of living crisis.	2024	2026	£0.14	£492,543		
<b>Advocates &amp; Angels – Hospital to home confidence support</b> This project provides targeted messages to raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide, and signposts to the PSR.	2023	2026	£3.40	£89,000		
<b>Kidney Care UK – Auriga Services – Welsh Kidney Network – Vulnerable patients with kidney disease in Wales</b> Targeted support services for patients diagnosed with chronic kidney disease; focused on raising awareness of energy efficiency, the PSR, and the dangers of CO, while helping carers to access relevant benefits and maximise their incomes.	2023	2026	£8.87	£825,503		
<b>Maggies Cancer Trust – Reducing fuel poverty and maximising household income: For people with cancer and their carers across South Wales</b> Targeted support services for patients diagnosed with cancer; focused on raising awareness of energy efficiency, the PSR, and the dangers of CO, while helping carers to access relevant benefits and maximise their incomes.	2022	2026	£22.00	£292,874		
<b>Crunch – PSR Facebook campaign</b> A targeted social media campaign to raise awareness of and increase referrals to the PSR.	2022	2024	£50.22	£48,678		

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## Company specific

## Collaborative

Delivery partner(s) – Project title – Description	Start date	End date	Forecast SROI	WWU committed spend	Status	Link
<b>Care &amp; Repair – 70+</b> Delivering support to older people in our communities throughout Wales with in-depth, holistic support to access unclaimed benefits, maximise income, and access small-to-large energy efficiency measures.	2022	2023	£40.82	£85,000		
<b>Swansea Carers Centre – Swansea carers: Fuel poverty/income maximisation project</b> Targeted carer-specific support services; focused on raising awareness of energy efficiency, the PSR, and the dangers of CO, while helping carers to access relevant benefits and maximise their incomes.	2022	2024	£21.51	£59,980		
<b>Bridgend Carers – Welfare benefits advice service for unpaid carers and their families</b> Targeted carer-specific support services promoting energy efficiency, PSR awareness, and carbon monoxide safety, also helping carers to access relevant benefits and maximise household income.	2022	2024	£19.25	£50,000		
<b>Women Connect First – Advice and advocacy</b> Targeted support for BAME women's group in Cardiff, focused on energy efficiency and raising awareness of CO safety.	2022	2023	£5.10	£46,978		
<b>Rhondda Cynon Taff Council &amp; Partners – Lower Cynon pilot</b> A partnership led by RCTCBC and working with local community groups to raise awareness of CO safety.	2022	2022	£8.26	£28,150		

CONTINUED





Company specific

Collaborative

Delivery partner(s) – Project title – Description	Start date	End date	Forecast SROI	WWU committed spend	Status	Link
<b>Kidney Care UK – Safe and warm: Providing a critical lifeline to dialysis patients across the UK</b> Support for chronic kidney disease patients; to promote energy efficiency, PSR awareness, and carbon monoxide safety, including maximising household income.	2024	2026	£16.45	£472,081	✓	
<b>Carers Trust – Alleviating unpaid carers from fuel poverty</b> Tailored energy support from experts to help carers reduce costs, boost income, and stay safe through PSR referrals and CO awareness.	2024	2026	£42.03	£1,159,011	✓	
<b>Mental Health UK – Energy safeguarding and tackling fuel poverty for people with mental health</b> Providing access to support services, to help people living with poor mental health remain safe and warm in their homes.	2024	2026	£9.07	£189,933	✓	
<b>SCOPE – DES extension</b> Providing support and advice to raise awareness of CO dangers, and signpost to the PSR.	2024	2026	£7.03	£378,800	✓	
<b>Age Collection Extension – Energy safeguarding partnership</b> An extension of support for older people to make sure they are safe and warm at home. Services are provided at a national and localised level to help tackle fuel poverty.	2024	2026	£26.12	£357,718	✓	
<b>YMCA – Cost of living project</b> Designed to support vulnerable households with a single point of contact for independent, bespoke support, to help people keep their homes safe and warm for less.	2025	2026	£16.01	£316,800	✓	
<b>RAD – Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD)</b> Targeted awareness raising of the PSR, while offering support and advice to deaf people in financial hardship, and increasing understanding of CO safety.	2025	2026	£8.20	£65,000	✓	
<b>Alzheimer's Society</b> Tailored to making sure that people living with dementia can maintain a safe and warm home, with a range of bespoke support services designed to help tackle fuel poverty.	2025	2026	£2.71	£200,000	✓	

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Company specific

Collaborative

Delivery partner(s) – Project title – Description	Start date	End date	Forecast SROI	WWU committed spend	Status	Link
<b>Crunch – PSR digital media campaign</b> A targeted and collaborative social media campaign to raise awareness of and increase referrals to the PSR.	2023	2026	£79.04	£60,000		
<b>SCOPE – Disability energy support</b> Support and advice to raise awareness of the dangers of CO, and signpost to the PSR.	2022	2026	£12.48	£27,759		
<b>Marie Curie – Energy safeguarding and tackling fuel poverty for terminally ill people</b> A targeted support service for patients and their families during end of life care. Focused on raising awareness of energy efficiency, the PSR, and the dangers of CO.	2022	2026	£12.22	£237,785		
<b>Age UK/Age Cymru/Age Scotland – Energy safeguarding partnership</b> Helping older adults to stay safe and warm at home, while providing advice on relevant benefits to maximise incomes, and signposting to the PSR.	2023	2026	£8.38	£46,011		
<b>Parsley Box/Latcham Direct Ltd – Parsley Box</b> Delivering easy-to-store microwave meals across the UK to a primary customer base of over 65s, and providing PSR details for sign up.	2023	2024	£20.90	£2,398		





## Services Beyond the Meter

**Going beyond standard operations, our programmes defined as Services Beyond the Meter provide direct operational assistance to the most vulnerable households identified through our work, helping people to stay both safe and warm in their homes.**

Under our licence obligations, we respond to gas emergency call-outs, including gas escapes and suspected carbon monoxide incidents. While we ensure internal pipework and appliances are safe, responsibility for repairs falls to the customer via a Gas Safe Registered (GSR) engineer, often leading to financial strain for vulnerable households. This can result in prolonged loss of heating, hot water, and cooking

facilities, making access to support critical.

Through the allowance, we partner with organisations who can support servicing, repair or replacement of gas appliances for eligible customers. We've also trained customer-facing teams to identify those in need, ensuring appropriate referrals.

To further support at-risk households, we've upskilled engineers to conduct enhanced carbon monoxide checks and are developing an in-house HyperCare team, that connects customers with additional tailored support.

### Key Stats 2025-26

**£253k**

Invested in company specific projects

**£4k**

Invested on collaborative projects

**£257k**

Total investment for Services Beyond the Meter

**£8.62**

Average forecast SROI

**3,252**

People reached directly

**32**

Appliances repaired

**31**

Appliances replaced

**15**

Additional safety checks

## CASE STUDY 4

Services Beyond  
the Meter



# National Energy Action (NEA) – Gas Appliance Referral Scheme

## Project at a glance

**Investment:** £806,492.75

**Forecast SROI:** £10.00/£1

**Duration:** July 2021 – March 2026

**Status:** Complete

## Achievements

**598** interventions

**89** appliances/pipework repaired

**188** appliances/pipework replaced

More than **£538,000** financial savings

## Need

When gas appliances are identified as unsafe during emergency or planned works, Wales & West Utilities isolates the gas supply to ensure immediate safety. However, responsibility for resolving the issue then falls to the customer.

For low-income and vulnerable households, this can result in prolonged periods without heating, hot water, or cooking facilities. Customers may struggle to afford repairs or replacements or may not know how to arrange the appropriate support. This can lead to increased risk of fuel poverty, poor health outcomes, and reduced wellbeing, particularly for those already in vulnerable situations.

Stakeholder feedback and customer insight have consistently highlighted the need for practical, funded solutions to ensure customers are not left without essential services once Wales & West Utilities' core safety responsibilities have been fulfilled.



## Approach

To address this gap, Wales & West Utilities partnered with National Energy Action (NEA) and Warm Wales to deliver the Gas Appliance Repair and Replacement Scheme. This partnership model provides a clear and supported pathway for customers who require additional help following a safety-related disconnection.

Eligible customers are referred directly into the scheme, where NEA coordinates a rapid response. A Gas Safe Registered engineer is arranged, typically within 24 hours, to assess the issue and carry out repairs where possible.

Where appliances cannot be repaired, the scheme supports replacement through a combination of funding sources. Wales & West Utilities funding is used to bridge gaps where households are unable to access existing schemes such as ECO or Nest, ensuring that cost is not a barrier to restoring essential services.



The model is designed to provide a seamless experience for the customer, removing the need to navigate complex systems independently and ensuring swift resolution.

### Impact

The scheme has delivered targeted, practical outcomes for vulnerable households, ensuring timely restoration of heating, hot water, and cooking facilities following disconnection.

Through this partnership approach, the project has:

- Enabled the repair or replacement of essential gas appliances for households in financial hardship
- Reduced the time customers spend without access to gas following safety-related disconnections
- Alleviated financial pressures by funding works that would otherwise be unaffordable
- Improved living conditions by restoring safe, functional heating and cooking appliances.

This has contributed to improved health and wellbeing outcomes, particularly for customers at risk from cold homes. Replacement appliances have also provided longer-term benefits, including improved efficiency and reduced energy costs where applicable.

By providing a direct and supported resolution, the scheme ensures customers are not left to manage complex repairs alone, delivering meaningful, immediate impact at a critical point of need.

### Engagement

Strong partnership working is central to the success of the scheme. NEA provides specialist expertise in supporting fuel-poor households, while Warm Wales brings additional capability in securing funding and delivering wider support services.

Wales & West Utilities engineers and Priority Customer teams also play a critical role in identifying eligible households, using in-home interactions to recognise vulnerability, understand individual circumstances, and provide reassurance through direct, face-to-face engagement. This enables





immediate referrals into the scheme, ensuring customers receive tailored support aligned to their specific needs at the point of contact.

The scheme has been shaped by stakeholder feedback calling for more intervention beyond the emergency response, particularly to prevent vulnerable households being left without heating. This collaborative model ensures support is both practical and aligned to customer needs, while maintaining appropriate boundaries within regulatory requirements.

The project also connects with Wales & West Utilities' wider network of partners, creating onward referral opportunities where additional support is required, such as energy advice or income maximisation services.

## 6. Learning

The scheme has highlighted the importance of providing funded, practical solutions alongside advisory support, particularly in emergency situations. Ensuring that customers can access timely repairs or replacements significantly improves outcomes and reduces the risk of prolonged hardship.

It has also demonstrated the value of partnership-led delivery, where specialist organisations can coordinate support efficiently and provide reassurance to customers at a critical time.

Ongoing learning will focus on strengthening referral pathways, increasing awareness among customers and partners, and maximising the use of complementary funding sources to extend the reach of the scheme. These insights will inform the continued development of Wales & West Utilities's Services Beyond the Meter approach and wider vulnerability strategy.

*It's been a programme that has been truly life changing for customers who are often denied support from mainstream energy efficiency programmes by being a pound or two over thresholds for means-tested benefits. This programme has ensured these customers, who are often vulnerable, are supported to live in a warm and healthy home.*

**Jo Boswell, Project Development Manager, NEA**

## CASE STUDY 5

Services Beyond  
the Meter



# Wales & West Utilities – CMDDA1

## Project at a glance

**Investment:** £40,239.92

**Duration:** December 2023 – March 2026

**Status:** Complete

## Achievements

**15** additional CO safety checks  
(CMDDA1 investigations)

**10** engineers trained

## Need

As a gas distribution network, Wales & West Utilities' primary responsibility is to make gas supplies safe in the event of an emergency. However, once this has been achieved, responsibility for internal appliances and repairs sits with the customer, often leaving vulnerable households without heating, hot water, or cooking facilities.

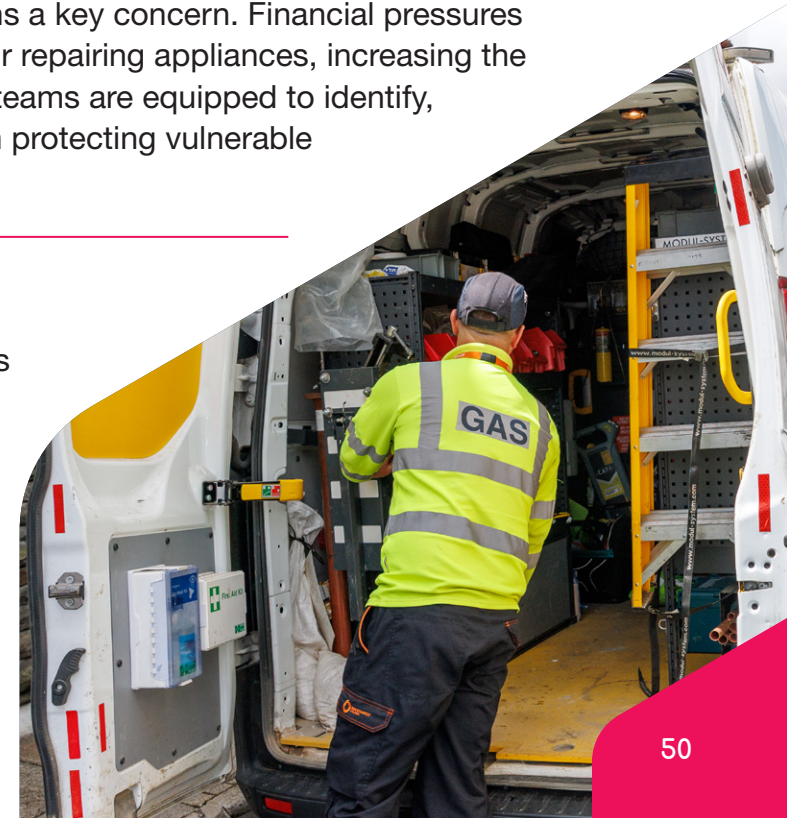
This can present significant challenges, particularly for low-income and vulnerable customers who may be unable to afford repairs or lack the knowledge or confidence to navigate the next steps. Stakeholder feedback and customer insight have consistently highlighted the need for Wales & West Utilities to go beyond its core obligations, particularly where customers face prolonged periods without gas or are at increased risk due to unsafe or poorly maintained appliances.

In addition, carbon monoxide (CO) risk remains a key concern. Financial pressures mean that some households delay servicing or repairing appliances, increasing the likelihood of CO exposure. Ensuring frontline teams are equipped to identify, assess and respond to these risks is critical in protecting vulnerable households.

## Approach

To respond to this need, Wales & West Utilities developed the CMDDA1 initiative to enhance the capability of its frontline colleagues, enabling them to provide additional support beyond the meter during emergency visits.

Through this programme, engineers receive specialist training to carry out



*/// I'm just doing my job. It's become a process – what we should offer our vulnerable customers. It's the right thing to do. ///*

**Robert Carr, First Call Operative, Wales & West Utilities**

enhanced carbon monoxide checks, diagnostics, and minor interventions when attending properties. This builds on Wales & West Utilities' existing role and ensures that potential risks are identified early, with appropriate actions taken to safeguard customers.

The initiative forms part of a broader Services Beyond the Meter approach, complementing existing partnerships such as the Gas Appliance Referral Scheme delivered with National Energy Action (NEA). Where issues cannot be resolved directly, engineers are able to refer customers into a wider network of support, ensuring a seamless pathway to further assistance.

By embedding this enhanced capability within frontline roles, Wales & West Utilities is better positioned to provide immediate, practical support in the moment, while also connecting customers to longer-term solutions through its wider VCMA project portfolio.

## Impact

CMDDA1 is strengthening Wales & West Utilities' ability to respond effectively to the needs of vulnerable customers during emergency visits, providing earlier identification of risks and reducing the likelihood of prolonged disruption or unsafe living conditions.

Through enhanced training and capability, the initiative has:

- Improved detection and assessment of potential CO risks
- Enabled engineers to carry out additional checks and minor interventions where appropriate
- Reduced reliance on customers to independently resolve complex or urgent issues
- Strengthened referral pathways into wider support services, including appliance repair and financial support.

This approach ensures that customers receive more comprehensive support at a critical point of contact, particularly during emergency situations when they may be most vulnerable. It also contributes to improved safety outcomes by increasing awareness of CO risks and promoting preventative action.

By aligning operational delivery with vulnerability support, CMDDA1 is helping to minimise the risk of customers being left without heating or exposed to unsafe conditions, supporting both immediate safety and longer-term wellbeing.



## Engagement

CMDDA1 builds on extensive stakeholder feedback, which has consistently called for Wales & West Utilities to extend its role beyond traditional network responsibilities to better support vulnerable customers in crisis situations.

The initiative has been developed alongside wider Services Beyond the Meter activity, including collaboration with partners such as NEA and Warm Wales, ensuring that customers identified through CMDDA1 are able to access additional tailored support where required.

Internal engagement has also been key, with frontline engineers playing a central role in shaping and embedding the approach. By equipping colleagues with additional skills and knowledge, Wales & West Utilities is strengthening its ability to respond to vulnerability at the point of need.

## Learning

CMDDA1 has reinforced the important role frontline colleagues play in identifying and responding to vulnerability, particularly during emergency and in-home interactions. Providing engineers with enhanced skills and confidence enables more proactive support, improving outcomes for customers at the earliest opportunity.

The initiative has also highlighted the value of integrating operational activity with wider partnership support, ensuring that customers receive both immediate assistance and access to longer-term solutions.

As delivery progresses, further learning will focus on how this enhanced capability can be scaled across the network, alongside continued evaluation of its impact on customer safety, experience, and outcomes. These insights will help inform the development of Wales & West Utilities' future Services Beyond the Meter approach and wider RIIO-GD3 vulnerability strategy.

*I really enjoy giving this great service, and to see how happy customers are afterwards is so rewarding!*

**Alun Jones, First Call Operative,  
Wales & West Utilities**

*Customers rely on their gas supply to keep them safe and warm – switching it off is inconvenient. CMDDA1 is a great service we can offer our customers and it's quick and easy to find a Wales & West Utilities trained engineer to carry out the checks. Our customers are always over the moon.*

**Gemma Kennedy, Priority Customer Team,  
Wales & West Utilities**



Company specific

Collaborative

Delivery partner(s) – Project title – Description	Start date	End date	Forecast SROI	WWU committed spend	Status	Link
<b>National Energy Action (NEA) – Gas appliance referral scheme</b> Helping to repair or replace gas appliances for low income and fuel-poor households, following emergencies where they have been found faulty, or not fit for use.	2021	2026	£10.00	£806,493		
<b>Wales &amp; West Utilities – Locking cooker valves</b> Facilitating access to additional safety equipment for vulnerable customers enabling them to retain independence and keep safe and warm.	2021	2026	£14.00	£25,000		
<b>Wales &amp; West Utilities (CO appliance training) – CMDDA1</b> Enabling access to additional CO safety checks for vulnerable customers through the support of upskilled Wales & West Utilities engineers.	2023	2026	N/A	£66,500		
<b>Age UK (South Gloucestershire) Pilot – Improving homes and wellbeing</b> A three-pillared approach to help alleviate fuel poverty and support older people through prevention, education and awareness, with a focus on proactive servicing.	2024	2026	£5.45	£41,508		

Company specific

Collaborative

Delivery partner(s) – Project title – Description	Start date	End date	Forecast SROI	WWU committed spend	Status	Link
<b>NSPCC – Collaborative safeguarding and gas safety services</b> Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and their families. This will be delivered through three sub-projects focusing on safeguarding, eLearning and awareness.	2023	2025	£5.01	£59,554		





# Carbon Monoxide Awareness

With the aim of educating communities about the dangers of CO, our carbon monoxide awareness programmes provide essential safety guidance – and highlight the impact on different age groups and vulnerable individuals. By increasing awareness, we empower people to take precautions and stay protected.

As a gas distribution network, responding to gas emergencies – including suspected carbon monoxide exposure – is a key part of our daily operations. Raising awareness of CO dangers remains a top priority for us at Wales & West Utilities, with strong support from our stakeholders to make sure communities understand the risks and stay protected.

Our Gas Safety Ambassador programme is successfully engaging young people across our network through creative safety messaging. As the initiative continues to grow and evolve, we will continue to refine and expand its impact, incorporating new learning and opportunities to further strengthen awareness and education.

While the cost of living crisis continues to strain household budgets, servicing or replacing appliances often becomes a lower priority for low-income households. This increases the risk of carbon monoxide exposure, putting vulnerable individuals at greater risk.

## Key Stats 2025-26

£186k

Invested in company specific projects

£72k

Invested on collaborative projects

£258k

Total investment for Carbon Monoxide Awareness

57,616

People reached directly (excluding campaigns)

7,405

CO alarms

£13.44

Average forecast SROI



## CASE STUDY 6

Carbon Monoxide Awareness



# Wales & West Utilities – Gas Safety Ambassadors

## Project at a glance

**Investment:** £37,770

**Forecast SROI:** £0.29/£1

**Duration:** April 2021 - March 2026

**Status:** Ongoing

## Achievements

Reached more than **43,000** individuals

**30** colleague Gas Safety Ambassadors recruited

**124** school sessions delivered

## Need

The Gas Safety Ambassadors programme was originally developed in response to the ongoing risk posed by carbon monoxide (CO) – often referred to as the “silent killer” due to its colourless, odourless and potentially fatal nature.

The initial focus was on educating children and young people, embedding simple, memorable “for-life” safety messages that they could carry into adulthood and share with their families. This early intervention approach ensured that vital CO awareness reached households through trusted, relatable channels.

As the programme matured, it became clear that there was a broader need to expand understanding not just of carbon monoxide, but of gas safety more widely – particularly in communities affected by infrastructure works or where awareness or access to safety advice may be lower.

## Approach

We leverage colleague volunteers as Gas Safety Ambassadors, harnessing their local knowledge, skills and passion to deliver impactful, relatable safety messaging that maximises their expertise while strengthening community connections.

Building on its strong foundation in carbon monoxide education, the programme has evolved to deliver expanded gas safety messaging while maintaining CO awareness at its core.





Gas Safety Ambassadors now incorporate a wider range of topics – including safe appliance use, recognising risks, and what to expect during gas mains replacement works – into the sessions.

Crucially, the programme now aligns with our gas mains replacement activity, using these projects as key opportunities to engage directly with communities. Ambassadors deliver targeted, place-based engagement either before, during, or after works, ensuring residents receive timely, relevant safety information.

Sessions continue to prioritise children and young people, while also extending to families and the wider community through schools, events, and local partnerships.

## Impact

The programme retains its strong focus on carbon monoxide awareness, ensuring that life-saving messages continue to reach young audiences and households. At the same time, the expanded content and alignment with infrastructure works have significantly increased its reach and relevance.

Communities are now better informed not only about the dangers of CO, but about gas safety more broadly, helping to reduce risk, build confidence, and create safer home environments.

By integrating engagement with mains replacement projects, the programme also enhances the overall customer experience, turning essential works into opportunities for meaningful education and support.

## Engagement

Gas Safety Ambassadors engage with communities through a blended delivery model:

- Schools and youth settings – embedding carbon monoxide awareness through interactive, memorable sessions
- Community events and Crucial Crew – reinforcing safety messages with practical demonstrations





## CASE STUDY 6 | Carbon Monoxide Awareness

- Gas mains replacement projects – providing targeted, localised engagement linked to ongoing works
- Partnership working – collaborating with local organisations to reach wider and more diverse audiences.

This approach ensures consistent messaging across multiple touch points, with CO awareness remaining a central theme throughout.

### 6.0 Learning

- Early education is highly effective in embedding long-term carbon monoxide awareness.
- Expanding content beyond CO adds context and relevance without diluting the core safety message.
- Aligning engagement with gas mains replacement projects increases visibility and impact.
- Community-based, face-to-face engagement builds trust and encourages behavioural change.
- Integrating operational and engagement activity delivers greater overall value.

*/// I didn't realise how dangerous carbon monoxide could be until this session – now I know what to look out for and how to stay safe. ///*

**Teacher**

*/// It's a privilege being a gas ambassador, meeting the kids. You never know what questions they're going to ask. ///*

**Jenny Hill, Gas Safety Ambassador,  
Wales & West Utilities**



## Company specific

## Collaborative

Delivery partner(s) – Project title – Description	Start date	End date	Forecast SROI	WWU committed spend	Status	Link
<b>DangerPoint – CO heroes</b> Specialist support targeted at raising the awareness of the dangers of CO for children, using life-like settings.	2021	2026	£5.51	£32,017		
<b>Care &amp; Repair – Managing better with CO monitors</b> Supporting older people in our communities in Wales; with targeted support aiming to raise awareness of the PSR, of CO safety, and to provide free CO monitors where appropriate.	2022	2026	£13.00	£200,000		
<b>Wales &amp; West Utilities – CO alarms</b> Various programmes focused on providing free CO alarms to the most vulnerable in our network, and raising awareness of the dangers of CO.	2021	2026	£1.07	£567,826		
<b>RoSPA – Carbon monoxide hub</b> Raising awareness of the dangers of CO through the creation of a CO hub; alongside a targeted communications campaign to promote and signpost to these resources.	2023	2025	£2.88	£100,000		
<b>Life Skills Bristol – Adults with learning difficulties and special educational needs programmes</b> Specialist support targeted at raising awareness of the dangers of CO for adults and children with learning difficulties, using life-like settings.	2021	2026	£0.37	£82,500		
<b>Wales &amp; West Utilities – Gas safety ambassadors</b> A programme delivered by our colleagues, to raise awareness of the dangers of CO throughout primary schools in our Wales & West Utilities regions.	2022	2026	£0.29	£37,770		
<b>Heavenly – Game Over campaign</b> Designed to reach young people aged 16–25 with CO awareness messaging, through the proven route of the Game Over creative campaign run by Heavenly Media.	2021	2022	£4.09	£30,000		
<b>South Wales Fire &amp; Rescue – CO alarms for the profoundly deaf</b> Supporting households where profoundly deaf occupants reside, by providing specialist CO alarms, wearable tech, and assessing the impact of the equipment.	2022	2023	£0.13	£5,000		

CONTINUED





Company specific

Collaborative

Delivery partner(s) – Project title – Description	Start date	End date	Forecast SROI	WWU committed spend	Status	Link
<b>Improving Performance in Practice (iPiP) – Preventing harm from environmental exposure to carbon monoxide (PHECO): E-learning for health</b> An educational module to help a broad range of health and social care staff better understand the harm caused by exposure to CO, how to identify those at risk, and how to protect them from harm.	2024	2026	£18.63	£22,081		
<b>Eleven Miles – Collaborative GDN winter and summer awareness campaigns</b> Targeted collaborative social media campaign to raise awareness of CO and the PSR.	2023	2026	£120.42	£115,664		
<b>Gas Safe Charity – Think CO app development</b> A targeted project to identify potential CO risks and provide CO safety information to vulnerable households. Helping to increase CO awareness and reduce the risk of CO harm.	2023	2026	£0.51	£4,953		
<b>EGNIDA – Raising CO awareness using augmented reality</b> Targeted at university students to raise awareness of CO dangers and prevention, to protect themselves and others.	2023	2026	£3.51	£20,000		
<b>Scouts – Badge sponsorship</b> Empowering young people through a collaborative project to raise awareness of CO dangers and prevention, to protect themselves and others. The project extension also includes activities designed to educate about energy efficiency.	2021	2026	£1.81	£60,145		
<b>SCOPE – CO research engaging the disabled community</b> Support and advice to raise awareness of the dangers of CO, and signpost to the PSR.	2023	2023	£1.82	£3,539		
<b>Heavenly / Campus – Game Over carbon monoxide: Young persons awareness campaign</b> Engaging young people with CO awareness messaging through a creative campaign.	2022	2023	£12.84	£46,366		
<b>Policy Connect (APPCOG) – CO awareness week: Autumn campaign</b> A seasonal targeted campaign to raise awareness of CO and the PSR.	2022	2022	£24.86	£2,313		

CONTINUED





Company specific

Collaborative

Delivery partner(s) – Project title – Description	Start date	End date	Forecast SROI	WWU committed spend	Status	Link
<b>J Seven Media (AKA Coast Procurement Ltd) – CO winter awareness campaign: 2021-22</b> A seasonal targeted campaign to raise awareness of CO and the PSR.	2021	2022	£39.30	£44,151		
<b>Policy Connect (APPCOG) – CO alarms save lives (Safe 4 summer)</b> A seasonal targeted campaign to raise awareness of CO and the PSR.	2022	2022	£34.51	£5,783		
<b>Bonanza Creative – Carbon monoxide schools education</b> Engaging young students through a collaborative campaign that promotes carbon monoxide safety awareness in schools.	2022	2022	£1.56	£13,810		
<b>Bonanza Creative – Carbon monoxide schools education: Year 2</b> Engaging young students through a collaborative campaign that promotes carbon monoxide safety awareness in schools.	2022	2023	£2.35	£53,060		
<b>Improving Performance in Practice (iPiP) – Identifying and protecting pregnant women from CO exposure</b> A targeted collaborative survey study which directly monitors the homes of the pregnant women who are participating. The aim is to better understand the prevalence of exposure, how such exposure occurs, and to provide awareness of CO.	2021	2023	£0.02	£28,913		
<b>SP Energy Networks (SPEN) – SPEN priority services register &amp; carbon monoxide awareness pilot</b> Raising awareness of CO safety, and reducing CO-related harm for customers.	2022	2022	£13.18	£895		



# The future of VCMA and support for those most in need

The future of VCMA and support for those most in need

## Looking ahead to RIIO-GD3

As we transition from RIIO-GD2 into RIIO-GD3, our focus is shifting towards delivering a more strategic, collaborative and outcomes-driven programme of support, underpinned by the updated [VCMI Governance framework](#). This reflects the learning gained over RIIO-GD2 and responds to the evolving needs of customers, particularly in the context of rising fuel poverty, increasing complexity of vulnerability, and the transition to a low-carbon energy system.

The RIIO-GD3 framework introduces several important developments which will shape how we design, deliver and evaluate our VCMA activities going forward.

### **Strengthened eligibility criteria and a clearer focus on net zero**

VCMA projects in RIIO-GD3 must meet enhanced eligibility criteria, ensuring a strong focus on delivering measurable outcomes and wider societal value. Projects must continue to demonstrate a positive Social Return on Investment (SROI) and Net Present Value (NPV), alongside clear, time-bound objectives. Importantly, the updated framework introduces a greater emphasis on supporting those most at risk of being left behind in the transition to net zero, ensuring that VCMA activity contributes to a fair and inclusive energy transition while continuing to address fuel poverty and carbon monoxide safety.

### **Greater emphasis on cross-sector and whole-system collaboration**

Collaboration remains central to RIIO-GD3 delivery. A minimum of 25% of VCMA funding will continue to be ring-fenced for collaborative projects across GDNs,

supporting greater consistency, shared learning and economies of scale. In addition, a new 3% ring-fenced allowance for cross-utilities collaboration has been introduced, enabling partnerships with



organisations beyond the gas networks, including electricity, water and telecommunications providers, to deliver more integrated, whole-system support for customers.

### **Introduction of a more robust governance and assurance framework**

RIIO-GD3 introduces a strengthened national governance structure to provide enhanced oversight, challenge and coordination of VCMA activity. This includes the establishment of the National Steering Panel (NSP) and Delivery Group (DG).

The NSP, led by Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG) representatives, will act as a strategic advisory body, providing independent challenge,

setting national vulnerability priorities, and ensuring alignment with wider government and cross-sector initiatives.

The DG will focus on operational coordination, supporting the co-design, delivery, and continuous improvement of projects, alongside facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing across networks.

Together, these groups will strengthen assurance, transparency and consistency, while maintaining the flexibility needed to respond to emerging challenges.

### **Enhanced monitoring, evaluation and learning**

RIIO-GD3 places increased emphasis on outcomes-focused monitoring, evaluation and reporting, supported by common data standards and improved comparability across networks.

While SROI remains a key tool, the framework promotes a broader approach to evaluation, ensuring both quantitative and qualitative insights are captured. There is also a stronger requirement to systematically capture, share and embed learning, improving efficiency, reducing duplication, and driving continuous improvement across the VCMA programme.

### **Clearer distinction between BAU and VCMA activity**

A key development in RIIO-GD3 is the clearer separation between business-as-usual (BAU) vulnerability and CO safety activities and VCMA-funded projects.

A range of core activities will now be funded through baseline allowances, embedding them as standard services delivered consistently across all networks. These include:

- **Priority Services Register (PSR) promotion and education**

- **Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness campaigns and education**
- **Provision of CO alarms and follow-up safety checks**
- **Customer safeguarding measures (e.g. locking cooker valves, accessible emergency control valves)**
- **Dedicated support teams for vulnerable customers during works**
- **Personalised welfare support, including emergency heating, food and accommodation**
- **Training for frontline staff to identify and support vulnerability.**

By moving these essential services into BAU funding, RIIO-GD3 provides greater certainty for long-term planning and ensures a consistent baseline level of support for vulnerable customers.

This shift also enables VCMA funding to be more targeted towards innovative, partnership-led and gap-filling interventions, focusing on emerging needs, complex vulnerability, and areas where additional value can be delivered beyond standard provision.

### **Stronger alignment with strategies and national priorities**

Under RIIO-GD3, VCMA delivery will be more closely aligned with both individual GDN Consumer Vulnerability Strategies and the Joint GDN Consumer Vulnerability Strategy, ensuring consistency while maintaining regional flexibility.

These strategies must be informed by stakeholder engagement and consumer research, and respond to National Vulnerability Priorities set by the NSP. There is also an increased expectation to align with wider

government, devolved, and cross-sector initiatives to maximise impact and avoid duplication.

### **A continued focus on impactful, inclusive outcomes**

At its core, the RIIO-GD3 framework reinforces the importance of delivering targeted, inclusive and outcomes-focused support for customers in vulnerable situations. This includes a continued focus on:

- **Supporting households in or at risk of fuel poverty**
- **Improving health and wellbeing outcomes**
- **Reducing the risks associated with carbon monoxide**
- **Tackling social isolation and inequality**
- **Enabling a fair and inclusive transition to net zero.**

Building on the strong foundations established during RIIO-GD2, the RIIO-GD3 VCMI governance provides a more structured, collaborative and accountable model for delivery. The introduction of enhanced eligibility criteria, dedicated cross-sector funding, clearer separation of BAU and VCMA activities, and strengthened governance arrangements will enable us to maximise the impact of our programmes, while ensuring transparency and alignment with wider societal goals.

Through this approach, we are well positioned to deliver a more ambitious and integrated programme of support, ensuring that vulnerable customers and communities are supported not only to stay safe and warm today, but to benefit from a cleaner, more sustainable energy future.

# Closing statement

As we reflect on another year of delivery, and close out our RIIO-GD2 regulatory period, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our dedicated team, our delivery partners, key stakeholders, and the other GDNs. This work would not have been possible without your continued collaboration, shared commitment, and expertise.

It has been a privilege to work alongside such passionate and driven partners, and to see first-hand the meaningful difference our collective efforts have made to the lives of the customers and communities we serve.

We are proud of what has been achieved together and remain grateful for the trust and partnership that underpins this work. As we look ahead, we are excited to see the VCMA continue to evolve and strengthen as we move into the next price control period, building on these foundations to deliver even greater impact in the years to come.

Sophie Shorney,  
Engagement and Social Impact Manager



# How to work with us

Do you have an idea for a collaboration with us?

Do you have a vision for ways we could partner with your organisation?

We're always looking for new ideas that align with our VCMA strategy and aims.

## Get in touch



If you think you have something of interest, please read our report section above on page 18 – **How we work with partners**. You can submit your ideas to the email address below.

You can also sign up to our newsletter for further information and read Ofgem's VCMA Governance for a full look at the funding criteria and approach to projects.

Email your ideas to:

[VCMA@wwutilities.co.uk](mailto:VCMA@wwutilities.co.uk)

Sign up to our stakeholder newsletter for news and opportunities

[Stay in touch](#)

Read Ofgem's VCMI Governance

[Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Initiatives \(VCMI\) governance | Ofgem](#)



# Final word from our partners

*“ VCMA’s continued support has been invaluable in enabling Warm Wales to reach more vulnerable households across Wales. Through innovative affordable warmth and income maximisation services, this partnership is helping families stay warm, reduce financial pressure, and build greater resilience during challenging times. ”*

Jonathan Cosson, Warm Wales

*“ Thanks to the generous funding from Wales & West Utilities, Kidney Care UK has been able to provide transformational support to thousands of kidney patients across Wales and the south-west, making a tangible difference to vulnerable households. The enduring practical, financial and emotional services we have established will continue long into the future and make a profound impact on the lives of people affected by kidney disease. ”*

Laurie Cuthbert, Kidney Care UK

*“ Thank you to Wales & West Utilities for your incredible funding of Mind’s Cost of Living Programme. Together, we have supported thousands of people facing financial hardship, fuel poverty and poor mental health during the ongoing cost of living crisis. Thanks to your support of the Mind federation, local Minds across Wales and south-west England have provided support to individuals in their communities, to help break the link between poverty and mental health problems. You have helped Mind to fight for mental health and to ensure that no mind is left behind. Thank you. ”*

Dr Sarah Hughes, Mind

*“ Through this partnership, we’ve been able to reach older people who may otherwise have gone without the support they desperately needed. Together, we’ve helped people access vital advice, improve their financial wellbeing, and feel less isolated at times when life has felt overwhelming. The impact has been genuinely transformative. ”*

Gavin Thomas, Age Cymru

*“ Over the last year, we have continued to support people in extremely difficult and stressful situations. The rising cost of living has impacted some a lot more than others and the WHAM partnership has received more referrals for our casework support than ever before. With this funding from VCMA we are able to support those most in need. ”*

Lisa Evans, Centre Sustainable Energy (CSE)

*“ Working in partnership with VCMA has been transformational for Advocates and Angels. It has helped us reach more families while creating opportunities to collaborate with health boards, councils, businesses and communities across Wales and south-west England. The support has enabled us to build stronger connections and expand our impact, ensuring more parent carers and families facing unimaginable journeys can access practical and compassionate support. ”*

Bethan Germon, Advocates and Angels

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