

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

Information required	Description
Contact Name	Sophie Shorney
Contact Number	07583 076147
Contact Email	<a href="mailto:sophie.shorney@wwutilities.co.uk">sophie.shorney@wwutilities.co.uk</a>
Address	Wales & West House, Spooner Close, Celtic Springs, Coedkernew, Newport, NP10 8FZ
Project title	Shelter Cymru Preventing Homelessness
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£100,000 (£50k per annum over 2 years)
Problem	<p>Shelter Cymru supports vulnerable people across Wales through advice and practical support. The groups worst affected by the cost-of-living crisis include those who may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have mental health problems</li> <li>• Have physical health problems</li> <li>• Be on a low income/benefits (ranging from single parents with young children to pensioners)</li> </ul> <p>These groups are the most vulnerable to any small increases in living costs pushing them into a downward cycle of poverty. Mental and physical challenges mean they are typically less able to cope with domestic disruptions – such as interruptions to fuel and they are less equipped to source the best fuel rates or manage mounting fuel debt – resulting a fuel premium and further debt.</p> <p>In the last twelve months Shelter Cymru has helped a record number of people – 1 in every 142 households in Wales went to them for help. In the last year Wales has seen the highest rent rises in the UK outside London, while housing benefits have remained static. The cost of renting privately has skyrocketed, and 6 out of 10 people fear they will be unable to pay their energy bills and will have to cut back on grocery essentials. Many are already relying on food banks. Around 4 million households are likely to face higher mortgage payments in 2023, with the average monthly mortgage payment rising from £750 to £1,000,</p>

## Criteria

	<p>equivalent to 17% of pre-tax income. More than 8,500 people are living in temporary accommodation in Wales, including over 2,500 children. As more people are living hand to mouth and are faced with the real prospect of losing their home this year, the pressures on housing services across Wales will be immense.</p> <p>More and more renters are losing their homes. Whilst housing benefit is meant to provide a safety net, it has been frozen by the UK Government since March 2020. In the meantime, rents have spiralled out of control – on average, people have to make up a shortfall of £151 a month. Private renters who fall short of their rent have little to cut back on and face terrible choices. For a family to avoid falling into arrears, they have to use money from their limited income meant for feeding their children and keeping the lights on, just to keep a roof over their heads. Budgets are being squeezed beyond breaking point and the severe shortage of social rented homes means that, if private rents are unaffordable to homeless households, people are likely to end up in expensive and unregulated temporary accommodation. Welfare reforms over the past decade have left almost 120,000 UK households with impossible choices between paying the rent or buying food. The household benefit cap disproportionately affects single parent families, including women fleeing domestic abuse and people who have formerly slept on the streets, leaving some of the most vulnerable citizens at the sharpest end of the cost-of-living crisis.</p> <p>Shelter Cymru provides free, independent advice and support to individuals and families who are either living in poor housing or are facing homelessness. Their frontline support services deliver housing, debt, benefits and legal advice to enable people to keep a safe and warm home.</p>
<p>Scope and Objectives</p>	<p>Shelter Cymru will extend their frontline service and triage teams to meet the unprecedented levels of people seeking help. They will expand their expert inhouse debt and benefits advice from 4 of the 22 authorities in Wales to cover all of Wales. This advice will help people to maximise their income, build financial resilience</p>

## Criteria

	<p>and stay in a safe home. In addition to increasing the capacity of the team, a new Welfare Benefits Adviser role will be created to keep colleagues updated on available benefits, ensuring we are giving relevant advice to those in housing need. This national service will integrate energy saving advice, give support on home insulation and heating, make sure people can access unclaimed benefits, and provide the best energy tariffs and fuel debt assistance – supporting some of the most vulnerable people across Wales. Support staff will receive specialist training and resources, alongside carbon monoxide safety information to proactively include this in interactions.</p> <p>Shelter Cymru will develop specialist pages and resources for their website which reinforce carbon monoxide and priority service register messaging. This messaging will also be included in Shelter Cymru’s training for delegates from a wide range of housing associated companies, as well as the advice surgeries Shelter Cymru provide throughout Wales.</p> <p>Wales &amp; West Utilities will sponsor Shelter Cymru’s People and Homes Conference. VCMA messages will be spread throughout the conference.</p>
<p>Expected outcomes and the associated actions.</p>	<p>Wales &amp; West Utilities will fund this project at a cost of £100,000 for a 2-year period. We anticipate at least 10,000 individuals will be helped with general debt and energy efficiency advice, as well as becoming more aware of the Priority Service Register and the dangers of Carbon Monoxide (CO). At least 265 individuals per annum will be referred on for in-depth debt advice and support services which include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unclaimed welfare benefit entitlement and subsequently assist the household/ individual with the application and form filling process.</li> <li>• Appropriate utility company social tariffs and schemes and help with the application process.</li> <li>• Support to access relevant charitable organisations that can help reduce utility and general debt.</li> </ul>

## Criteria

	<p>Shelter Cymru will provide follow on services to include registration to the Priority Services Register (PSR), Carbon Monoxide (CO) safety advice and access to free CO alarms.</p> <p>Shelter Cymru will utilise their network of support organisations to deliver ongoing support. This may include the development of promotional content and materials, and the translation of those content and materials.</p> <p>To monitor the success of the project, regular reporting sessions will take place between Shelter Cymru and Wales &amp; West Utilities. Wales &amp; West Utilities will provide training to Shelter Cymru staff to ensure they are comfortable providing the key messaging (CO Awareness, priority service register) agreed.</p>
Scale of VCMA project and SROI calculations	Using our Social Value model, in line with our VCMA activities, and developed by third-party experts to forecast a positive SROI of £43.60 per £1 spent.
Project Partners and third parties involved	This project will be delivered through a partnership of <b>Wales &amp; West Utilities</b> and <b>Shelter Cymru</b> .
VCMA Project start and end date	Project Start: 01/07/23. Project End: 30/06/25.
Geographical area	This project will take place across Wales.

Please return all completed forms to: [VCMA@wwutilities.co.uk](mailto:VCMA@wwutilities.co.uk)

For further information on the VCMA please use the below link to the Ofgem guidance document:

[Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance \(VCMA\) Governance Document | Ofgem](#)