

# Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

Wales & West Utilities  
Annual Report  
2023/24





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## How to use our interactive report

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You can also navigate this document using the clickable contents list on this page.

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# Welcome

I am proud to introduce our *Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Report* for 2023/24. The cost-of-living crisis and large increases in energy costs have resulted in more customers and communities falling into fuel poverty than ever before. As homes cut back on outgoings, servicing or replacement of appliances can take a lower priority raising the risk of gas escapes or carbon monoxide (CO) exposure. Despite reducing inflation and energy costs as we have moved into 2024, the cost-of-living crisis and accumulated debt continues to affect those who are most vulnerable in our communities and people are still trying to recover – this is where our projects and partnerships come in.

This year's annual report showcases new partnerships we have established with trusted organisations and demonstrates how we have continued to support and build existing relationships through the VCMA funding. The funding has allowed us to provide timely and adaptable support by working in collaboration with our partners to help tackle complex challenges facing those who are most

in need. We recognise we cannot do this alone: we need to work with partners across our network and utilise their expertise to maximise the support for our customers.

The projects highlighted throughout this report have been shaped by stakeholder input, which we continue to explore, to make sure we are reaching the most disadvantaged communities across our network.

*As a business, we have always been focused on putting customers first and we remain committed to supporting our customers by building on our successful track record and going above and beyond our business-as-usual activities. Our customers trust us to keep them safe and warm 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and we don't take this responsibility lightly.*

**Graham Edwards,  
Chief Executive Officer  
(CEO)**



# 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

**625,000**

Homes on the Priority Services Register (PSR)





It's our responsibility to look after those pipes and other assets that keep the gas flowing safely and reliably, to respond to gas emergencies and to keep the communities in which we operate safe.

We also need to play our part in protecting and enhancing the environment in which we work and look out for customers in vulnerable situations.

As a gas transporter, we don't have direct customers we bill or who we have an ongoing relationship with. That role is taken by the gas suppliers. Therefore, we utilise the gas suppliers' Priority Services Register (PSR) and other demographic data to identify priority customers and communities across our network who are likely to be directly impacted because of our work.

We rely on our trained customer facing colleagues to identify further vulnerabilities for individual customers and make sure they are equipped with the knowledge and training to provide additional support.

At least 24% of the 2.5 million homes we supply have additional needs that we must tailor our services to, and we know these needs can be complex with some customers having multiple factors impacting their lives at the same time.

As a socially responsible business, we will also provide additional services to customers and communities, either directly or through a network of partnerships.

## VCMA – Our priority customers

**625,000**

Households on the PSR in our network

**179,809**

With chronic/serious illness

**69,792**

With mental health conditions

**53,877**

Families with children under five













# Our commitments




## In our RIIO GD2 (2021–2026) business plan, we committed to:

- investing £750,000 per annum to identify vulnerable customers and reduce the risk of CO
- funding first time gas connections via our Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES), delivering at least 2,500 new connections
- help at least 1,200 homes per year with fuel poverty and energy efficiency support
- maintaining our Institute of Customer Service (ICS) accreditation and British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision
- increasing our customer satisfaction scores
- signing 12,000 people up to the PSR per year and campaign for a single utility PSR
- reaching 250,000 homes each year with CO awareness messaging
- issuing 5,000 free CO alarms to the most vulnerable homes
- expanding our schools programme, targeting 4,000 pupils per annum

## What we've achieved:

-  invested £5.1m per annum. We have been able to support more organisations through the VCMA allowance
-  funded 1,485 FPNES connections. Due to the policy changes relating to funding for first time gas heating and in recognition that targets set would be ambitious, it was agreed that any unspent allowances have been repurposed into the VCMA resulting in an additional £111m to be split across the networks
-  helped 3,610 households (recent reporting) 36,335 individuals with fuel poverty and energy efficiency support services
-  maintained our ICS ServiceMark accreditation with distinction status
-  accreditation against British Standard BS 18477 (now superseded with BS ISO22458)
-  increased customer satisfaction scores to 9.17/10 (priority customers 9.22/10)
-  signed 20,812 customers up to the PSR
-  reached 8,952 households with CO awareness messaging
-  issued 22,725 CO alarms
-  expanded our schools programme, reaching more than 18,000 young people to date

## Key

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



# Overview of VCMA

## Original funding

The Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) enables the Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs) to deliver additional services and initiatives to support vulnerable customers and deliver carbon monoxide safety initiatives to all customers.

It is a Use It or Lose It (UIOLI) allowance which means that if we don't spend it supporting those who are most in need, unused funding is returned to all customers. It was created following feedback from key stakeholders whilst planning for RIIO GD2. GDNs were recognised as a key audience identifying hardship within the communities we serve as we are on the ground and in people's homes. As a result of the engagement, the original allowance of £60m was made available by our regulator, Ofgem. We have just under a 12% share (£7m)<sup>1</sup> of the allowance to spend on projects, supporting communities who are most in need between 2021 and 2026.

The Ofgem VCMA Governance document details eligibility for VCMA projects and requirements for registering projects, annual reporting and showcase events. It also requires at least 25% of the allowance to be spent on VCMA projects reaching a UK wide footprint in collaboration with one or more of the other GDNs. The remaining allowance

is spent on projects specific to our network providing localised support.

To support the delivery of projects through VCMA, Ofgem have published a [Governance Document](#) setting out the regulation, administration, and governance of the VCMA, and to obligate the GDNs to hold an annual showcase event.

### To qualify as a VCMA project, a project must:

- have a positive, or a forecast positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI)
- either:
  - provide support to consumers in vulnerable situations and relate to energy safeguarding,or:
  - provide awareness of the dangers of CO,
  - or
  - reduce the risk of harm caused by CO
- have defined outcomes and associated actions
- go beyond activities funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations; and not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government funding.

<sup>1</sup> Allowance in 2018/19 prices – 2023/24 prices with inflation are £8.7m





## Additional funding

The Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES) is a scheme 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. The scheme commenced in 2009 and allowed GDNs to fund the cost of a new gas connection to an eligible fuel poor home if the home had secured funding from third parties for gas central heating systems. WWU have funded almost 20,000 connections under the FPNES scheme since 2009. However policy changes to NEST in Wales and ECO4 funding meant that funding for first time gas heating was limited and we saw a significant decline (90%) in the number of FPNES connections since 2021/22. This led to a review by Ofgem as it was evident that networks would not be able to achieve the targets originally set.

We worked closely with Ofgem and key national stakeholders to review the allowances we have, to support customers in vulnerable situations and suggested alternative ways to utilise the unspent allowances.

In July 2023, Ofgem confirmed through changes to our Gas Transporters Licence that unspent FPNES funding would be re-purposed and allocated to the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance. This has increased the original GDN allowance from £60m to £171m. The £111m of funding was shared amongst GDNs based on the number of gas consumers each network serves. For WWU this has resulted in an additional £13m<sup>2</sup> bringing our total VCMA allowance to £20m<sup>3</sup>. As per the Ofgem VCMA Governance document, a minimum of 25% has been ringfenced for collaborative projects with the other GDNs. The additional allowance must be invested primarily delivering projects which focus on initiatives supporting those in or at risk of fuel poverty.

<sup>2</sup> Allowance in 2018/19 prices – 2023/24 prices with inflation are £17.09m

<sup>3</sup> Allowance in 2018/19 prices – 2023/24 prices with inflation are £25.79m



## Making a positive impact

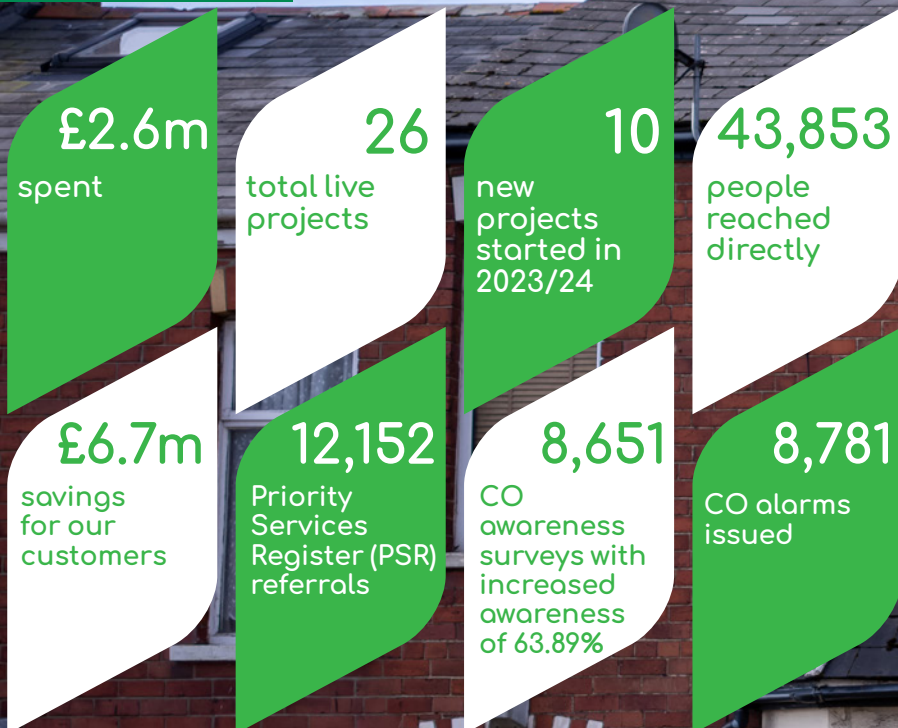
### Year 3 of delivery

In our third annual report, we'll share how we've used the VCMA funding to create robust partnerships with trusted organisations already embedded in the communities we serve, to deliver tailored and targeted support to vulnerable households across Wales and the south-west of England in 2023/24. This report summarises our activities through the last regulatory year and sets out our strategy, and in-flight and upcoming projects, including how you can work with us.

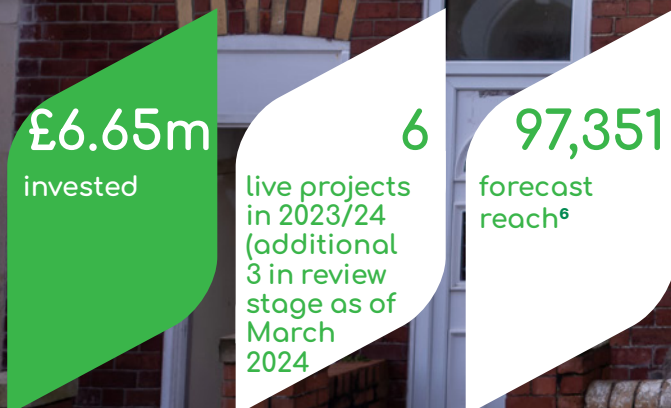
During 2023/24, we've expanded and accelerated our VCMA project portfolio to address the challenging timescales with the additional allowance. This year we've invested £3.27m of the VCMA, which is a 64% increase on last year and we have seen more people seeking support than ever before, particularly financial support.

We look forward to seeing the impact these projects have on our communities.<sup>4</sup>

### 2023/24 in numbers<sup>5</sup>



### This year through our additional funding we have:<sup>6</sup>



- 4 Outcomes will be highlighted in our next annual report as partnerships established or extended through VCMA were only set up from January 2024, so we have not yet received any reporting outcomes
- 5 Associated benefits relate to company specific projects only and further benefits have come from working in collaboration with the other GDNs. Details of collaborative projects and outcomes can be found in our annual collaborative report, which can be found on the [VCMA pages of our website](#)
- 6 Forecast figures based on approved Project Eligibility Assessments



GD2 in numbers:

**£21.2m**

invested out of our **£25.79m** for VCMA projects

**31**

direct company specific partnerships

**£14.6m**

invested on company specific projects providing localised support

**£6.6m**

invested on collaborative projects with the other networks reaching a wider UK footprint

**142,653**

customers supported directly

**£17.6m**

savings for our customers

**20,812**

people signed up to the PSR

**22,747**

CO questionnaires with an increased awareness of **63.89%**

**22,725**

CO alarms issued

**135**

locking cooker valve (LCV) installations





## VCMA governance

Following the re-allocation of the FPNES underspend to the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance, changes were made to both internal and external governance recognising the substantial increase in available funding.

### Internal governance

- Project invitation via procurement process
- Review by VCMA team and internal Customer and Communities Steering group
- Updates and discussion with WWU internal Stakeholder Group
- Investment paper process with executive level challenge and sign off
- Monthly financial budget review
- Monthly/quarterly project review meeting with partners
- Quarterly updates to Business Performance Delivery Committee
- Annual regulatory reporting with review following Ofgem Data Assurance Guidance (DAG) process.

### External governance

- Specific VCMA Industry working groups with other gas networks and key stakeholders
- Advanced notification to be sent to Ofgem for projects in excess of £1m

- Quarterly expenditure tracker submitted to Ofgem to demonstrate allocation of funds
- Annual regulatory reporting to Ofgem
- Annual company and collaborative reports
- Annual showcase event

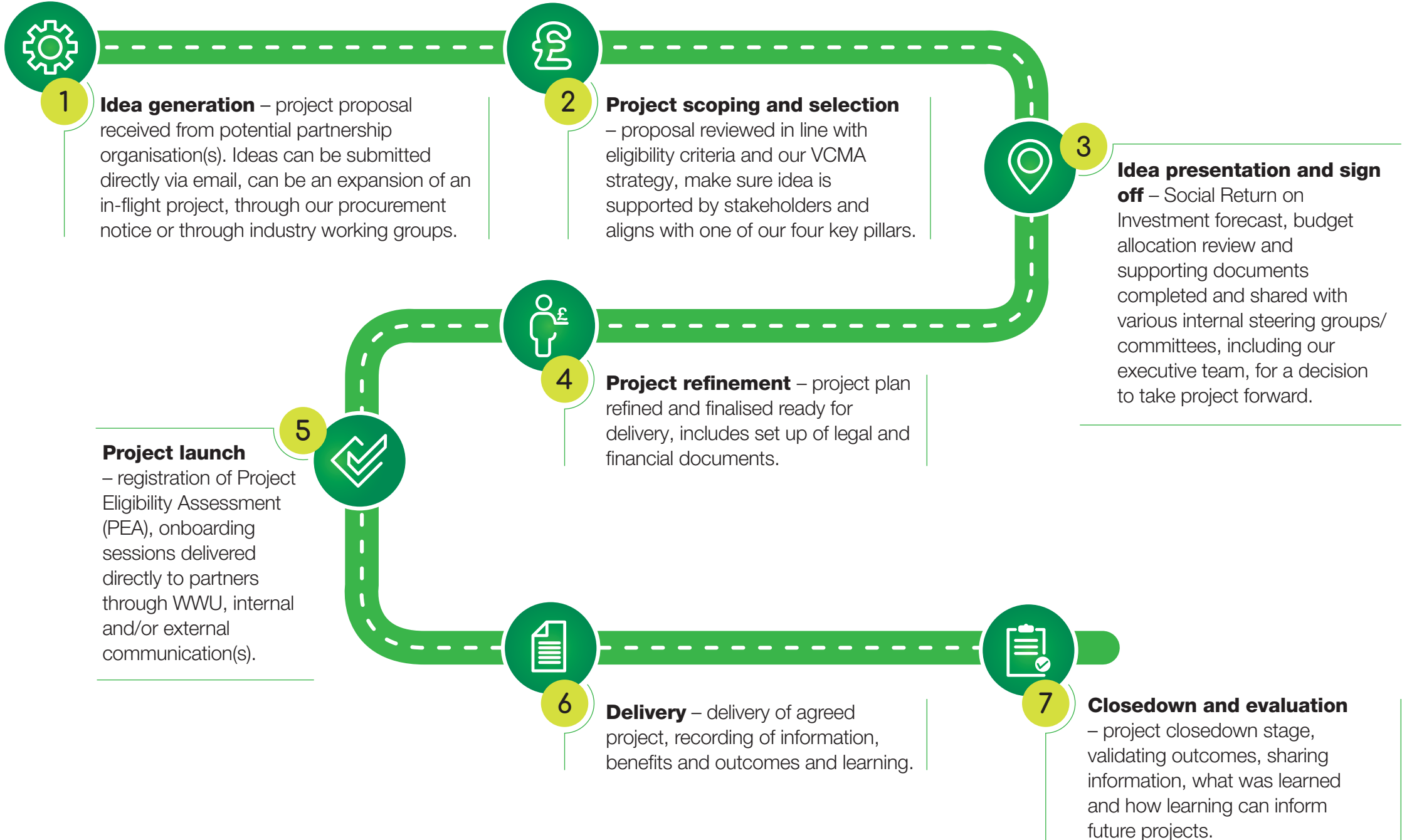
Around 49% of WWU's VCMA project portfolio is in collaboration with at least one other network. The GDNs are also publishing a collaborative annual report, which complements and should be read alongside this report; both can be found on our [VCMA page](#).

### VCMA process

To adapt to the changes within VCMA allowances, we have updated our processes and internal governance to add an extra level of scrutiny to our project sign off and budget allocation. WWU have a number of well-established steering groups and committees who review our VCMA projects. The groups are made up of colleagues from across the business, including our Priority Customer team, Customer Management team, Programme Management Office (PMO) and our Stakeholder Engagement team. They are also reviewed through our Business Performance Delivery Committee which is made up of our CEO, Executive team and senior managers from across the business.

Each project is reviewed to ensure it meets the VCMA eligibility criteria, aligns to our strategies and is supported by our stakeholders.









## Meet the team

### **Nigel Winnan**

Customer and Social  
Obligations Strategy Manager

### **Molliemay Wells**

VCMA Project Administrator

### **Rhiannon Deamer**

VCMA Project Administrator

### **Sophie Stone**

VCMA Project Co-ordinator

### **Sophie Shorney**

Vulnerability and Carbon  
Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)  
Manager

### **Bethan Webb**

VCMA Project Administrator

### **Rachele Verdini**

VCMA Project Co-ordinator

Our team is critical to supporting projects and helping partnerships deliver vulnerability and CO safety initiatives. We've expanded our VCMA team to be able to meet the demands of taking on new projects, delivering onboarding training and tracking the progress of projects to ensure they are delivering value for money.





## Our strategy

**Our aim is to create a robust and balanced portfolio of VCMA projects, supporting the most vulnerable in our communities with fuel poor and carbon monoxide safety initiatives.**

**We have done this, and will continue to do so, by working in partnership with trusted organisations across our own network, but also on a wider scale by working in collaboration with the other gas networks. Our business priorities and values set the scene for converting principle into practice.**



## VCMA key drivers are:

- Stakeholder feedback and customer need
- Ambition, priorities and values
- Sustainability strategy
- Business plans
- Ofgem governance.

We have updated our [VCMA strategy](#) to outline how we've adapted our approach to account for the additional funding. Our prime focus has been to expand funding for existing partnerships and establish new projects and relationships with partners who have proven track records of delivery.

What hasn't changed is our commitment to driving outstanding service and putting our customers first, by offering tailored support through our critical partnerships to help keep people safe and warm in their own homes. Through our daily interactions, our front-line colleagues are directly seeing the hardship our customers are experiencing and understand the challenges and struggles the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities are facing.

This year we have worked in partnership with 30 organisations, delivering 26 projects across Wales and the south-west of our network. We are continuously learning from projects and adapting delivery to ensure our projects are delivering maximum outcomes and benefits for our customers.

We will continue to develop our strategy by focusing on the following factors to inform our approach:

- Stakeholder engagement
- Data and vulnerability research
- Skills and knowledge of our colleagues
- Social Return on Investment
- Regulatory guidance and governance.





## Our approach

We detail our approach in our VCMA strategy, which outlines how we work with partners.

We have regular and continuous touchpoints with our partners to identify key themes and insights, which are used to tailor our approach when delivering projects. Through partnership working and insight from key stakeholders, we have seen a strong support for the advocacy handheld approach, which means customers are supported from start to finish resulting in tangible outcomes and direct benefits.

Despite this meaning higher costs per intervention for our investments and more one-on-one time with customers being supported, the advocacy approach is proving to be the most successful and meaningful for our customers, resulting in:

- greater benefits and outcomes
- increased savings and income maximisation
- increased general awareness
- peace of mind.

Stakeholders have been key to creating and developing our strategy and approach so this is something we will continue to focus on through the remainder of GD2 and beyond.



*There are few things more essential than keeping warm and safe. Yet millions of households across the UK cannot afford to do so because of poor housing, low incomes and high bills.*

*Ending fuel poverty will take years of urgent, sustained action. We will only have the scale of impact needed if we work together.*

**Ben Saltmarsh,  
Head of Wales,  
National Energy Action**



## Our Independent Stakeholder Group

Our strategy and approach are also reviewed and shaped by our Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG) made of experts from both the private and public sector. The role of our ISG includes:

- **challenging** us to respond to strategic business opportunities and future energy sector risks
- **evaluating** engagement robustness to make sure it reflects best practice
- **encouraging** us to deliver better customer and stakeholder outcomes by pushing our [Business Plan](#) commitments.

Our ISG is chaired by Sian Callaghan, who has extensive experience of corporate communications in highly regulated industries.

To reflect the views of communities across Wales and the south-west of England, Sian is joined by seven other members representing different customers and stakeholders, with specialisms in communications and engagement, business, safeguarding vulnerable customers and research.



[Click here](#) to find out who's who on our ISG.

*The ISG believes that the work Wales & West Utilities does to support vulnerable customers is crucial. We are delighted the business continues to treat this as a priority and are looking forward to seeing the strategy evolve, providing a range of support services reaching those most in need.*

**Sian Callaghan,  
Independent Stakeholder  
Group Chair**

## Stakeholder engagement and research

Part of our responsibility is to make sure we identify who and where our vulnerable customers are and provide the extra support that's needed. We understand there is no 'one size fits all' solution when addressing vulnerability and needs can be complex, transient, or permanent, so its important we have the right processes, skills and solutions in place to be able to tailor the support to

each of our customers' needs, making sure no one gets left behind or is disadvantaged.

Working with key stakeholders and having a better understanding of what our customers need, help us adapt and identify gaps in the communities we are supporting through our portfolio of VCMA projects. This is reflected in our procurement processes and remaining VCMA allowance.

## 2023-2024 engagement

Event	When	Topic	You said...	We did...
Citizens panel	August 2023	Testing support measures for vulnerable customers	Surprised at range of measures – prioritisation of most vulnerable as numbers vulnerable rise to 40%	Reviewed our matrix of priority groups for incident management. Those with serious health conditions, physical and mental disabilities, elderly living alone and those with young babies would be priority in a large-scale incident.
		Testing support for VCMA funding as part of GDN bill	General willingness to pay if up to £1 a year (of typical £133 bill). Challenge on what investors bring to customer support	Formal willingness to pay and testing of priorities of the VCMA services planned for July 2024 as part of RIIO GD3 business plan. Commenced work on documenting our social strategy and putting together a business case to take to our investors to help fund non-regulatory interventions for customers and communities as well as staff volunteering.
Regional stakeholder workshop	November 2023	Testing VCMA current service and level of funding	Current funding proportional to role of GDN and need of the nation	Pushed back on Ofgem's RIIO GD3 proposal to drop funding back to levels at start of RIIO GD2 making the case that fuel poverty will be an issue for years to come and increasing number of vulnerable customers to be supported, many of whom have not been classed as vulnerable before.
		Role of GDNs in UK energy transition to low carbon	GDNs trusted organisations and should be providing balanced advice to customers on options to heat the home	We are developing our plans to provide support to customers in GD2 adding advice resources and online tools developed with other organisations to help guide customers through technologies, grants and where to go for independent energy assessment. This advice will need to be reviewed regularly with the government decision on hydrogen for domestic heating and other policies around gas boilers key in RIIO GD3.
Mindset – vulnerable customer deep dive	March 2024	Support for customers during emergency works	Emergency service is quick and professional but response of landlords and third parties to fix issues can be slow leaving them off gas for days or weeks	Set up a HyperCare team from June 2024 with two additional resources to proactively call customers following a gas supply interruption to check they understood what they needed to do. Where required, support through calls to landlords and Gas Safe Registered engineers (GSRs) to get the issued resolved quickly. Refer customers to VCMA partners where appropriate for support.
		Support for customers during connections works	WWU service is great, but customers have problems in getting a supplier and meters fitted as well as not understanding electrical earthing	HyperCare team (June 2024) is calling all connections customers on the PSR or who identified as being vulnerable to provide additional support through the process and check supplier and meter fix is arranged following our works. In the case of the 150 alterations we fund (due to physical need in accessing the emergency control, valve and meter), offer the earth bonding as well via our contractors.
		Support for customers during planned works	Customers want to be kept informed and have individual needs listened to and addressed	Focused our customer support officers on contact with all PSR customer ahead of planned work schemes and increased presence and door knocking during the works and post completion. Letters, cards and advance signage rebranded and reworded for clarity.





*/// We believe it's important to take time to engage with a broad range of stakeholders and customers, understand their needs and wants and then use their insight to influence key business decision-making. Demonstrating we are doing this helps us build stakeholder and customer confidence and trust in the decisions we make. ///*

**Elizabeth Warwick,  
Stakeholder Engagement  
Manager**



## Working together

Throughout 2023/24 we have continued to develop ways of working with our existing partners and built new relationships with organisations to further support those most in need, in line with our strategy and commitments.

Our stakeholders have highlighted the importance of working with trusted organisations who are already well known within the communities we serve, to maximise the benefits for our customers. It's important they have the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to support customers through the delivery of their projects, so we have developed an in-house training model which outlines PSR and CO key messaging. The model consists of an interactive onboarding session, as well as other training materials that can be referred to.

Through development of our VCMA project portfolio, we encourage partners to come together and identify new ways of working to better support the communities we serve, collectively. Given the uncertainty of VCMA funding post GD2, it has been vital for us to make sure our partners think about the sustainability and longevity of the support services they provide.

We've also provided bespoke training packages to charitable organisations we work with to improve skills on applications such as Microsoft Word and Excel.

We will continue to engage with our partners and utilise their expertise when it comes to tackling fuel poverty to inform our GD3 business plans. This will help shape our future commitments to make sure they are aligned to our customers needs through a range of accessible services.

We've linked up organisations such as Warm Wales and Care & Repair Cymru and have created a quarterly steering group to share best practice, learning and review challenges through project delivery. Covering a similar geographical area, they are now working together to ensure there is no duplication and to make sure everyone they reach is accessing tailored support.



*At Warm Wales, we value opportunities to work in close partnership with other organisations to achieve the best outcomes for everyone involved. Our VCMA2 steering group brings together two key organisations with a shared vision, allowing us to better align our projects for the benefit of the Welsh communities.*

**Jonathan Cosson,  
Chief Executive, Warm Wales**



## VCMA Partners' Network

We recently launched a VCMA Partners' Network event with the goal of bringing together the organisations within our project portfolio. By connecting these organisations, we aim to bridge the gaps between their services and offer smoother support for our customers' complex needs. The event was held in person, given our partners the opportunity to connect and build collaboration among themselves.

We welcomed attendees from different organisations to join in with valuable activities, including project presentations, group discussions, and a contribution from our Net Zero team. Most importantly, it provided ample opportunities for networking.

We were thrilled with the success of the first event and the potential of the VCMA Partners' Network. We also held a virtual round up welcoming those who couldn't attend in person.

Going forward the intention is to hold these events twice a year to better inform ways of working and to make sure the funding continues to support those most in need. We are excited about the future of this initiative and the positive impact it will have on our vulnerable customers.

### FACT FILE

**29**

surveys sent to organisations

**90%**

response rate

**37**

attendees

**22**

different organisations



*“The project presentations were useful and they highlighted the similarities in our collective missions. Great feeling of fighting the good fight and advocating for vulnerable individuals.”*

*“Great opportunity to chat to other people on my table, learning from other project partners with ample networking time.”*



## Measuring outcomes and benefits

We use a number of methods to test the success of our projects. These include comparing forecast outcomes with actuals, case studies, and stakeholder feedback.

Throughout our annual report we have referenced savings for our customers. This is made up of one off and enduring savings where household income has been maximised through support services such as benefit entitlement checks, access to additional grants, fuel debt support etc. This is then fed into our SROI model to accurately calculate the benefits for the communities being supported.

Social Return on Investment is a tool we started using when developing our RIIO GD2 business plan. It allows the investment made to be compared to the number of outcomes, the financial benefit to the individual/home, and the wider social impact.

	Individual	Society
Energy efficiency measures and advice	Reduced energy costs / warm and dry homes	Reduced burden on doctors, hospitals, reduced excess winter deaths
Unclaimed benefits	Higher household income	As above
Reduced energy debt	Higher disposable income	As above
Carbon monoxide awareness	Health and wellbeing	As above
PSR	Health and wellbeing Eligibility for other funding	As above

Following a request from Ofgem for the GDNs, District Network Operators (DNOs) and transmission companies to develop a common SROI model, Sirio were awarded a contract to build a common SROI tool. The GDNs decided that this was still open to interpretation and was too complicated for widescale use, so Sirio were contracted to develop a GDN rule book for the VCMA activities and delivery channels to default factors within each proxy to simplify usage when evaluating if a project has a positive SROI. We use the duration of the project as the assessment period although some interventions will continue to provide benefit to the individual or society for years after the project (sustainability).

Training has been delivered to GDNs and the SROI rulebook was finalised in May 2024. Going forward, this model will now be used collectively on all new projects and we aim to rerun all projects that have been awarded through the additional allowance by August 2024.





## Lessons learnt

Since the VCMA was created in April 2021, we have adapted to a number of challenges, including Covid and the cost-of-living crisis. During this time, it has become clear that people are in need of additional support and don't know how to access the services available to them. Through our partners we have been able to understand:

- the scale of hardship facing the most vulnerable in our communities
- the complexity of issues affecting health and wellbeing
- the scale of hardship facing the most vulnerable in our communities and how complex issues across multiple factors are affecting people's health and wellbeing.

We have learnt that often, the support delivered by our partners is the only tailored and hand-held support that customers have received when it comes to maximising income and understanding what they are entitled to. Through delivery of a tailored suite of support services, we have seen how complex and frustrating application processes can be when it comes to the most disadvantaged communities across our network. This has shaped our approach and furthered the need for advocacy support rather than purely signposting services, resulting in tangible benefits for those who are most in need. In some cases we have seen lifechanging outcomes for customers and their gratitude is heartwarming.

We have faced a number of challenges including:

- finding partners who can deliver fuel poverty programmes in the south-west of our network
- timescales to get people on board and to get projects mobilised.





# Summary of company specific projects and case studies

**This section of our report highlights the activities that have been carried out under the VCMA between April 2023 and March 2024 and builds on our delivery of Years 1 and 2.**





## Spend profile

In Year 3, we have spent a total of £3.27m VCMA projects. £2.6m has been spent of company specific projects delivering localised support across our network and the remaining £0.67m has been spent on collaborative projects with the other gas networks.

Through the additional allowance, we have invested £6.65m supporting a forecast audience of more than 97,000 people delivering fuel poor initiatives.

Services delivered through our projects include, but aren't limited to:

- Income maximisation
- Benefit entitlement checks
- Fuel debt support
- Welfare advice and support
- Energy efficiency advice and support
- Increased awareness of CO
- Increased awareness and referrals on PSR.

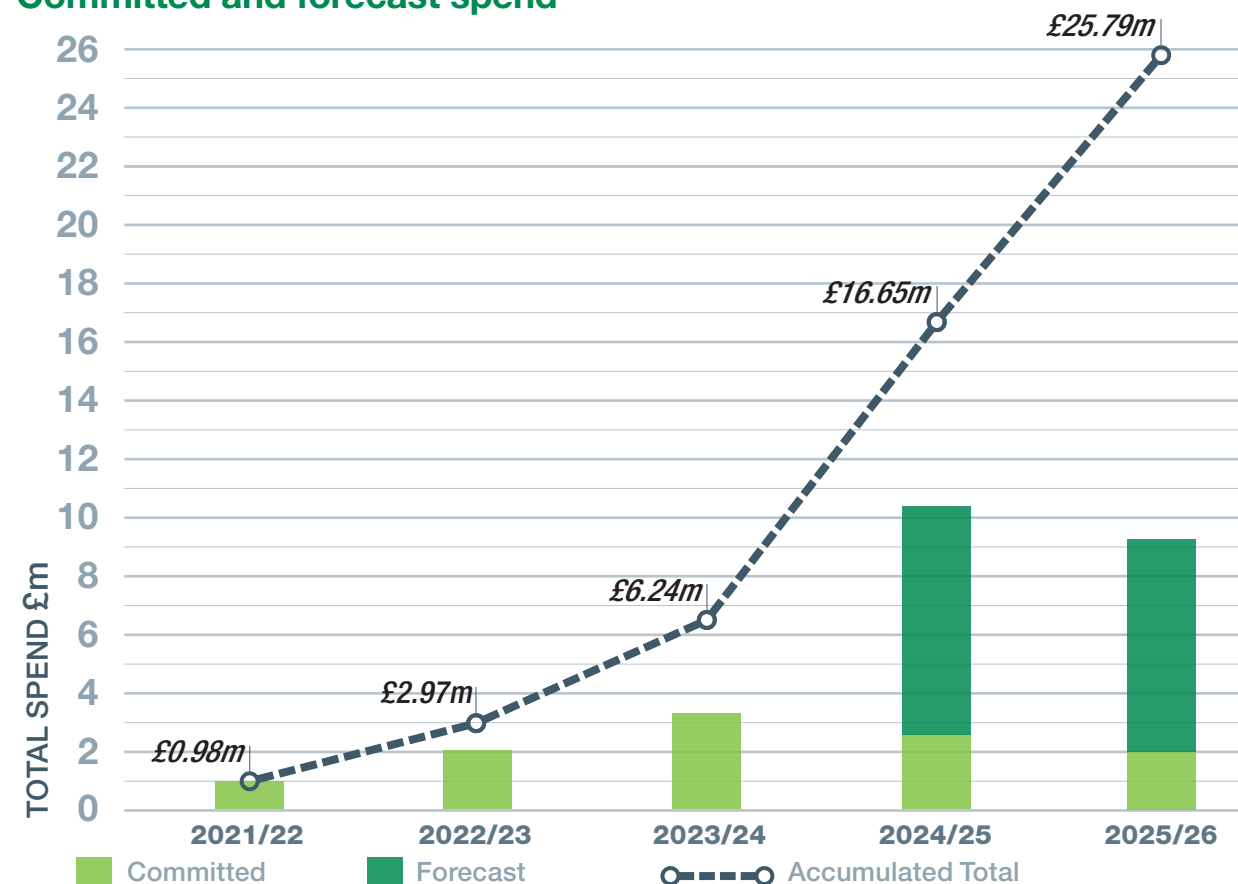
We believe we have risen to the challenges brought about by the cost-of-living crisis and will continue to support those who are most in need despite reducing inflation and energy costs.

## VCMA GD2 summary\*

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	TOTAL
Forecast	-	-	-	£2.53m	£2m	£4.53m
Committed	£0.98m	£1.99m	£3.27m	£7.88m	£7.14m	£21.26m
						<b>£25.79m</b>
Company specific	£0.73m 75%	£1.54m 77%	£2.6m 80%	£6.91m 66%	£5.96m 65%	£17.74m <b>69%</b>
Collaborative	£0.25m 25%	£0.45m 23%	£0.67m 20%	£3.5m 34%	£3.18m 35%	£8.05m <b>31%</b>

\*current year prices

## Committed and forecast spend



## FACT FILE

**41%**

of projects have been delivered across our whole network, while **41%** are Wales specific and **18%** south-west specific. We work with partners to ensure there is a consistent coverage across our network and to identify potential projects that can be expanded collaboratively.



## Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability

**Our Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability programmes are designed to help customers who are struggling to afford their energy bills. Through delivery of a tailored suite of accessible support services, they have been designed to help those most in need.**

Despite energy costs falling, millions of UK households are still facing significant challenges and are struggling to pay their energy bills. Whilst the reduction is welcomed, bills remain higher than they were before the energy crisis began and household budgets are still being stretched to breaking point making it harder for people to escape fuel poverty.

In response to the cost-of-living crisis, we have enhanced existing programmes and created new relationships with partners, delivering programmes which have been specifically designed to help alleviate fuel poverty.

Experiencing the hardship our communities are facing first hand, we have tailored our approach when working with partnership organisations, making sure those who are most in need are able to access tailored support services to maximise

their household income. Providing handheld and in-depth support, means households in crisis have somewhere to turn to and a trusted point of contact from start to finish through a scope of services, resulting in tangible outcomes which have been greatly received. However, whilst we are seeing increased savings for households being supported, the number of people reached has been impacted, as the one-to-one support can be time consuming and complex. We are working with our delivery partners to make sure their programmes are sustainable and are continuing to reach disadvantaged communities.

With the fuel crisis disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable, we have seen local community buildings adapting their services to make warm spaces available for longer. To further support this initiative, we have extended our Winter Warm Support project increasing investment by 174%. Our warm packs have been designed to heat the person and contain small measures such as thermal blankets, gloves, hot-water bottles and insulated mugs. They are distributed across our network to ensure a smoother transition between leaving a warm space and potentially returning to a cold home.

**£1.23m**

invested in 23/24  
(£2m to date)

**12**

Fuel Poverty and  
Energy Affordability  
Projects

**33%**

VCMA spend  
to date



## CASE STUDY 1

# Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability



## Warm Wales Healthy Homes, Healthy People

### FACT FILE

#### Project at a glance

Investment:	£3.55m
Forecast SROI:	£19.76/£1
Duration:	Apr 2021 – Mar 2026
Status:	Extended and uplifted



## Why we are working together

With the cost-of-living crisis still having a huge impact on our communities, despite reducing energy costs and inflation, people are still struggling to make ends meet and are forced to make almost impossible decisions which includes rationing energy for heating and hot water. This impacts the condition of a property, resulting in cold damp homes which can make existing conditions worse and even bring on new health complications such as chest complaints, asthma, and skin conditions. General wellbeing and social confidence can also be impacted.

Around 45% of homes in Wales and England are in fuel poverty and the pandemic resulted in job losses, incomes being cut and people working from home meaning they were more reliant on their energy supply. Many households are still feeling the effects of the pandemic, which has been further impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

Warm Wales aims to provide homes with affordable warmth and to alleviate fuel poverty across the company. Healthy Homes, Healthy people is at the core of targeting the issues many vulnerable households are facing.

## How we are working together

Building on a successful partnership, the project looks to provide support to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities across our network through a range of handheld support services focusing on maximising household income to help those in or at risk of fuel poverty. Homes in need of support are identified through direct referrals from WWU engineers and through a network of partnerships including local authorities, charities and health professionals, which Warm Wales have built strong working links with.





With the additional funding Warm Wales will continue with this support with an enhanced delivery model, introducing awareness raising and social prescribing to improve individuals' knowledge and instigate household behaviour changes related to health and wellbeing issues. Additionally, we will expand our community engagement delivery to provide support by attending local events, drop-in sessions and larger events such as community or fun days arranged by local authorities or housing providers. The extended project will also deliver awareness sessions to frontline staff and the wider community to support locally identified energy champions. With the project team supporting large caseloads, there is reduced capacity to engage with communities and identify those in need. By utilising an engagement team within the community, we will increase visibility and accessibility of available services whilst building relationships with new and existing organisations.

### Partnership and community impact

We originally invested £1.25m into the project for two years which exceeded delivery reaching a total of 4,779 people seeing savings of over £2.4m (averaging around £500 per household). Due to the success of initial delivery, the project was extended to March 2026 with increased funding to further benefit 44,000 households across our network.

By uplifting the delivery model and bringing together health professionals to include social prescribing, Warm Wales have shaped the project to really make a difference when it comes to tackling fuel poverty and the associated link with health and cold damp homes.





## Stakeholder support

Tackling fuel poverty is a priority for WWU alongside raising awareness of the PSR and the dangers of CO, which has been recognised and supported throughout extensive engagement with stakeholders such as NEA and Citizens Advice.

Given the scale of the project, we have also consulted with NEA Cymru to check the project does not conflict with the Welsh Government NEST scheme and its successor. The scale and ambition of the uplifted project has been fully supported, given the need and demand for these services in Wales.

Research on fuel poverty statistics show that despite falling energy costs, fuel poverty continues to impact thousands of homes with many not knowing what support is available or where to turn to get it. We have also tested support for projects under the VCMA which target fuel poverty through our CEG, Citizens panels, VCMA showcase events and regional workshops with overwhelming support to continue and do even more.

## Evaluation and learning

Warm Wales have built relationships with health professionals across Wales to encourage a proactive approach to support the most disadvantaged communities ensuring they can remain safe and warm in their own homes. They have advocated collaboration across Wales with other partners who are working on similar projects and who share the same goals and ambitions to provide accessible support services which will really make a difference and this is something they will continue to do.

They are also considering an in-house financial role to provide a one stop shop which will enable additional support for smaller organisations and charities to refer into when they identify people in need. This approach also eliminates duplication of workload, making sure a broad range of demographics are being supported.

*Following changes to the energy price cap, the Welsh Government estimates that up to 45% of households could be in fuel poverty, and up to 8% of those could be in severe fuel poverty.*

*Our Healthy Homes, Healthy People programme was successful, and this now extends our reach across the entire country. We want to reach as many people in communities as possible and this expansion looks at the ways in which we do that.*

**Joanna Seymour,**  
**Director of Partnerships**  
**and Development**

### Key achievements

**4,779**

Households supported

**£2.4m**

Savings

**1,416**

People signed to the PSR

**183**

CO alarms issued

**1,360**

CO awareness surveys

## CASE STUDY 2

# Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability



## Frame Ltd Fuel Poverty and Carbon Monoxide Awareness Project

### FACT FILE

#### Project at a glance

Investment:	£50,000
Forecast SROI:	£9.21/£1
Duration:	May 2022 – Apr 2024
Status:	In progress

### Why we are working together

Pembrokeshire FRAME help change lives and provide support to vulnerable adults in a safe and supportive environment. They provide adults with disabilities, mental health issues and learning difficulties work experience to reuse and recycle items donated to FRAME. In addition, they support vulnerable people to help alleviate fuel poverty and provide help to those most in need. Many people come to Pembrokeshire FRAME having been turned away from support elsewhere as they are keen to holistically support their communities, with a prime focus on making sure people can live independently in their own homes keeping safe and warm.

### How we are working together

The project with FRAME delivers a number of accessible support services whilst raising awareness of energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty, which is a key priority for us at WWU. FRAME act as a community point of contact for those with fuel poverty issues offering information and signposting for assistance with unclaimed benefits and tariff comparisons. They also support people to decarbonise their home heating by offering guidance and delivering workshops, talks and activity events in their Green Shed Community Reuse Centre.

The project's prime focus is to provide support to help vulnerable residents increase their household income, whilst raising awareness of the dangers of CO and how people can stay safe.

WWU have supported FRAME by upskilling their employees

to help raise awareness of CO and the Priority Services Register and have also provided free CO alarms which are distributed to their customers through their engagement with them.

### Partnership and community impact

Given their trusted position in the community, FRAME have built established relationships with the community, reaching some of the most vulnerable people across our network. By working in partnership with FRAME, we have been able to further enhance engagement opportunities to provide accessible support services and share critical safety messaging around the dangers of carbon monoxide.

Their customer base includes some of the most vulnerable across our network, who would all likely be eligible to sign up to the Priority Services Register to access further support, so this project enhances those engagement opportunities, making every conversation count.

### Stakeholder support

Our stakeholders have told us that the handheld support is most beneficial to priority customers groups as they can often find things like speaking on the phone and filling in forms difficult due to their complex needs.

We apply this approach through a lot of our projects as we know this is preferred and delivers more tangible and meaningful outcomes for our customers. Whilst the advocacy support is more costly and time consuming, the results we've seen from projects demonstrates that this is the most impactful method of delivery.





## Key achievements

**1,381**

People supported

**£50,391**

Savings

**54**

People signed to the PSR

**113**

CO alarms issued

**49**

Keep Warm packs distributed



*This funding allows us to deliver far-reaching benefits. Not only does it allow us to get into the heart of Pembrokeshire communities to help those most in need to gain specific advice on energy efficiency and gas safety, but it also provides employment and volunteering opportunities to local people.*

**Paul Hughes, Chief Officer**

To support further stakeholder feedback, we also make sure our services cover signposting and have applied hybrid support approaches where possible, tailoring delivery to the individual needs of our customers and communities.

## Evaluation and learning

When we first started the project in May 2022, FRAME initially faced challenges in reaching their targets. However, we collaborated closely to customise their approach, and as a result, they have now successfully supported over 13,000 people, achieving savings of over £50k

They have collaborated with other organisations such as Citizens Advice and created an onwards referral pathway into FRAME as the reduction in funding for other organisations has seen their referrals increase with great demand for their services. FRAME are also working with other organisations to explore future opportunities to create a smoother support system for their customers.

The projects has now been extended for a further 22 months and will now run until March 2026. The additional investment will expand the support to an additional 3,000 people with estimated savings of around £20,000.

## CASE STUDY 3

# Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability



## Shelter Cymru Preventing Homelessness

### FACT FILE

#### Project at a glance

Investment:	£100,000
Forecast SROI:	£43.60/£1
Duration:	Jul 2023 – Sep 2025
Status:	Extended due to delayed start

### Why we are working together

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:

- Have mental health problems
- Have physical health problems
- Be on a low income/benefits (ranging from single parents with young children to pensioners).

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 energy debt.

Over the last 12 months, Shelter has supported a number of record people with 1 in every 142 households in Wales going to them for help. 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.

### How we are working together

By working in partnership with Shelter Cymru to prevent homelessness for those in or at risk of fuel poverty, they have extended their frontline service and triage teams to meet the unprecedented levels of people seeking help. They have also expanded their expert inhouse debt and benefits advice from 4 of the 22 authorities in Wales to cover all of

Wales. This advice helps people to maximise their income, build financial resilience and stay in a safe home.

The service integrates energy saving advice and provides fuel debt assistance – supporting some of the most vulnerable people across Wales. It has applied a three tiered approach all focussed on referral pathways to maximise outcomes for customers and increased learning for Shelter Cymru colleagues.

To further support the most vulnerable people reaching out to Shelter Cymru, WWU have delivered a bespoke training model upskilling their customer facing colleagues to raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide and how to stay safe, as well as raising awareness of the Priority Services Register and other safety devices such as CO alarms and locking cooker valves.

### Partnership and community impact

Supporting communities who are in risk of fuel poverty or at risk of losing their homes due to reduced incomes and not being able to make ends meet is a shared passion for both WWU and Shelter Cymru and through some of the case studies and feedback, we are already seeing the great impact this project is having on the communities across our network.

The project aims to reach 20,000 people over the two year period with CO, energy efficiency and PSR awareness with at least 530 individuals receiving in-depth support with added benefits of living in a warm home

### Stakeholder support

The majority of stakeholders have flagged fuel poverty as a bigger issue than ever before due to the impact of recent





events such as the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. With more and more people struggling to make ends meet, there is a huge risk of people not knowing where to turn for support or what support is available to them.

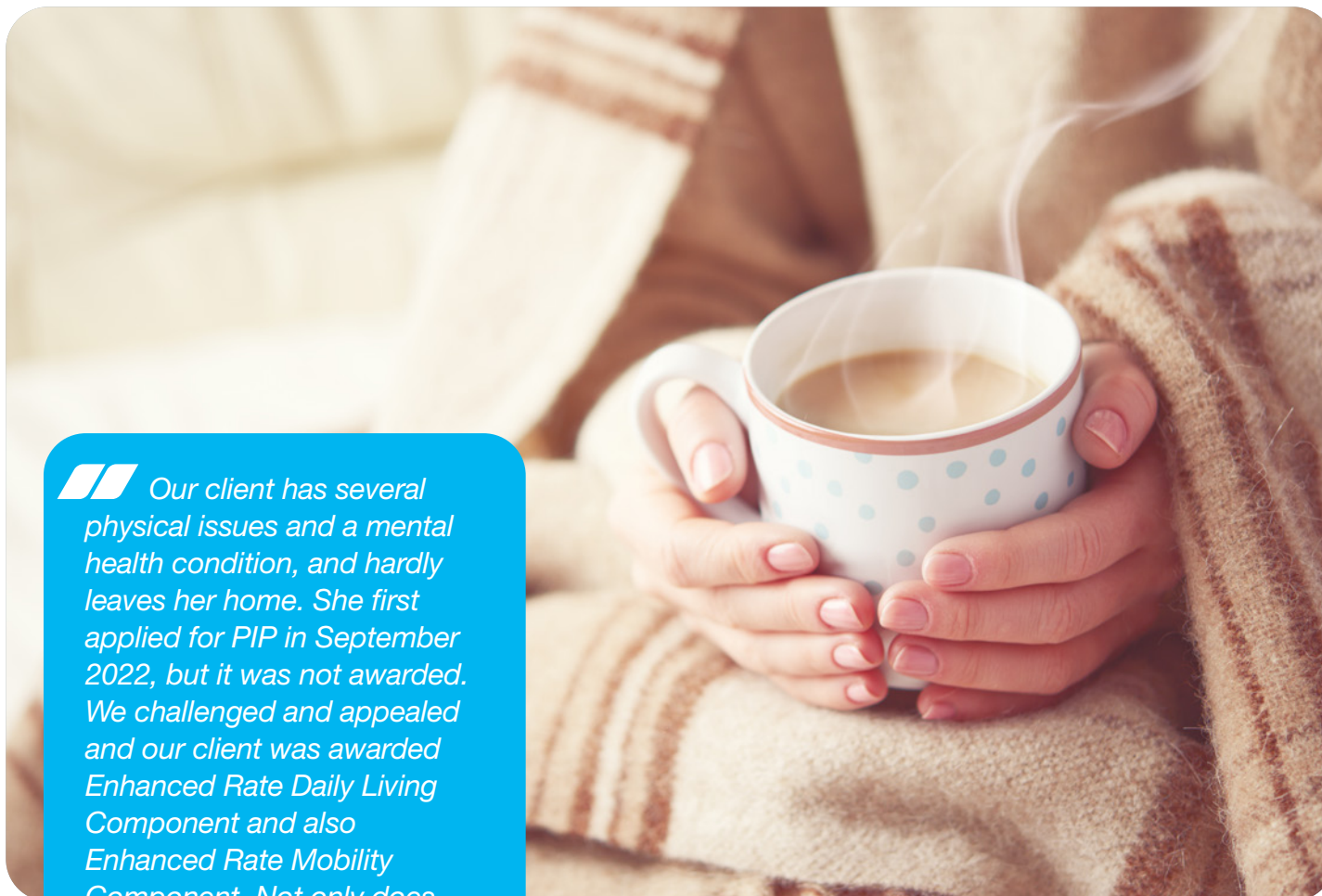
We have tested our portfolio of VCMA projects with key stakeholders and will continue to do so to make sure we are supporting a broad range of demographics across Wales and the south-west of our network.

### Evaluation and learning

This project will provide insight into the groups that are most at risk of fuel poverty within Wales and how they are being adversely affected by the cost-of-living crisis. We will be able to see how using a network of partnerships can impact an individual and provide a more holistic aid to them.

We will continue to monitor the success of the project through regular reporting sessions, adapting delivery throughout to ensure the best support for those who are most in need and preventing homelessness.

This project has been highlighted with the other gas networks who have also shared an interest in working with Shelter to prevent homelessness. As Shelter Cymru only covers Wales, we have reached out to Shelter who provide support to communities across England and Scotland and are in the process of exploring what a collaborative delivery model looks like to enhance the services reaching a wider UK footprint among this disadvantaged community.



*Our client has several physical issues and a mental health condition, and hardly leaves her home. She first applied for PIP in September 2022, but it was not awarded. We challenged and appealed and our client was awarded Enhanced Rate Daily Living Component and also Enhanced Rate Mobility Component. Not only does this equate to an additional £798 each month, but the award was also backdated to September 2022 meaning the client has also received backdated PIP of £14,883.*

**Caseworker,  
Shelter Cymru**

### Key achievements

**4,194**

People with raised awareness

**353**

People who received in-depth support

**£75,125**

Evidenced savings

## CASE STUDY 4

# Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability – Future look



## Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) Warm Home Advice and Money (WHAM)

### FACT FILE

#### Project at a glance

Investment:	£997,900
Forecast SROI:	£10.74/£1
Duration:	Jan 2024 – Jan 2026
Status:	In progress

### Why we are working together

WHAM was originally set up in 2016, covering Bristol and North Somerset, to support people in some of Bristol's most deprived areas with more than just one-off energy advice. Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) has built up a partnership with six local organisations providing support and advice to vulnerable people that tackles all the underlying issues of fuel poverty.

WHAM partners report rising demand for their services, as well as clients presenting with complex needs, who are often in greater crisis, with high levels of mental health issues and eviction notices. There is more scope to work with the health service, and safeguarding referrals, such as people living without heating, have risen dramatically.

There is an ongoing need to address the systemic issues that contribute to fuel poverty to protect people with, or at risk of, health issues from living in a cold home. These include chronic respiratory disease (including COPD), cardiovascular disease (CVD), and mental illness in deprived populations in the WHAM area (within the most deprived 20% of the national population). CVDs are the second most common cause of early death among Bristol residents which, despite seeing a decline during this century, have levelled off in Bristol over recent years.

### How we are working together

Through the funding provided by Wales & West Utilities, CSE intend to deliver advice and support to 6,000 vulnerable households (c. 18,000 people) over two years

from the westernmost tip of Somerset to Wiltshire and Swindon in the east, and all points in-between.

It is also significantly ambitious in the depth and impact of the support for each of those households, in that it will tackle all the causes of fuel poverty, particularly income (including a target of £450 average financial benefit per client), housing, behaviour and energy understanding confidence, and bringing together a unique style of partnership where caseworkers work within other organisations.

The delivery mode has been shaped by the success of their Heat Ability project, previously funded by WWU, which will now be superseded by WHAM. Services will:

- improve financial skills and understanding amongst the most vulnerable communities, ensuring they are more confident and resilient around future changes in fuel prices and income
- make homes warmer, with less damp and mould, particularly benefitting those with health conditions associated with living in cold and damp conditions
- support an integrated partnership; an easy system for housing, social care, health and voluntary sector workers to refer clients to, with confidence that referrals are acted upon and result in positive outcomes.

### Stakeholder support

Upon review of our VCMA project portfolio stakeholders wanted to see more localised support in the south-west of





our network to help alleviate fuel poverty. To encourage proposals from trusted local organisations, we targeted our procurement call to focus specifically on deprived areas in that region.

There were a number of key themes highlighted through our stakeholders workshop which included the link between health and living in a cold damp home and tackling fuel poverty. These were both recognised as key focus areas for WWU and will continue to remain a priority.

### Potential for new learning

CSE has built up a network of organisations in Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) who are seeking a more integrated partnership service and much greater capacity to deal with all of the underlying causes of fuel poverty. With an estimated 9,900 households in fuel poverty (12%), people in B&NES also need substantially more in-depth support than the current single caseworker can provide. CSE will continue to explore collaborative partnerships and ways of working to ensure they are delivering maximising outcomes for the most vulnerable in their communities.

#### Forecast outcomes

**18,000**

People supported

**£450**

Average financial benefit per client

*Being diagnosed with a life changing illness was awful, but the support I received through WHAM was amazing. Without help with my heating issues and financial support, I dont know what I would have done. Thank you very much!*

**Jane, Clevedon**



## CASE STUDY 5

# Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability – Future look



## Healthy Homes Solutions (HHS) Vulnerability Registration Service (VRS)

### FACT FILE

#### Project at a glance

Investment: £490,655

Forecast SROI: £24.58/£1

Duration: Jan 2024 – Dec 2025

Status: In progress

## Why we are working together

Energy affordability and sustainable housing are pivotal for societal wellbeing. Vulnerable and in-poverty residents require real guided support, with many vulnerable homes grappling with the challenges of fuel poverty, inefficient energy performance, and the broader cost-of-living crisis.

To ensure customers are able to heat their homes to adequate levels and also to help lift them out of fuel poverty, the four root causes of fuel poverty have to be addressed:

- Low household income
- The cost of fuel
- Energy efficiency of the home
- People's behaviours and understanding of energy use.

Healthy Homes Solutions' mission focuses on delivering an end-to-end solution that includes profiling, engagement and delivery that drives greater awareness and results in significant improvements for the poverty, health digital, carbon and energy issues facing UK homes today.

## How we are working together

The project promises a holistic approach tailored to the needs of vulnerable and in-fuel-poverty homes, prioritising not only their immediate welfare but also helping to support them against escalating living costs and environmental impacts.

HHS will use their national households database, a detailed set of information and insights that include the latest census and sonar profiling, to identify and engage with more data driven precision.

HHS will design and launch a bespoke VRS and HHS WWU focused information booklet. This guide will amalgamate relevant insights and resources from our partners such as PSR information, Telephone Preference Service (TPS), benefit checks and carbon monoxide awareness.

The holistic programme will provide access and information to the following support services:

- PSR registration
- CO awareness and access to free alarms
- Vulnerability Registration Service (VRS) awareness and registrations
- NEA Warm Homes
- DWP checks and free report
- Energy efficiency measures, eligibility checks and delivery partner introduction
- Telephone Preference Service (TPS) registration
- Friends Against Scams
- Broadband social tariff
- Water saving kits
- Debt management support via Payplan.

HHS will also create an onwards referral pathway to other organisations they collaborate with to maximise outcomes for their customer base such as SCOPE and the Alzheimer's Society.





## Stakeholder support

HHS know from our programmes that while many are keen to transition towards a greener future or register for additional support and advice, they lack the knowledge or means to navigate the maze of information and advice they receive. Raising awareness of these services is something our stakeholders have highlighted as a key focus when it comes to tackling fuel poverty.

HHS aim to foster collaboration among service providers and utilities, ensuring vulnerable and in-poverty homes not only receive consistent information but also benefit from a tailored triage service that addresses both energy efficiency and the broader challenges of today’s living costs.

This endeavour looks to pave the way for a unified platform, harmonising the efforts of different utilities and services to offer a streamlined, accessible solution for homes in need within our network.

## Potential for new learning

HHS’s team looks to understand the challenges faced by households, and to delve deeper into understanding where the team can help the most, whether it’s reducing bills, navigating available assistance, or raising awareness of specific services they may never have heard of or know where to look for them. The team ensures every resident is given the time to discuss their situation and a tailored service that supports each resident in having a warmer, more affordable home.

They will also look to the new partners to work with that are 100% aligned with reducing fuel poverty such as NEA, HACT Fuel Vouchers, Citizens Advice, Energy Saving Trust, and WWU localised partners.



### Forecast outcomes

<b>12,000</b> Engagements	<b>6,000</b> Registrations to one or more services	<b>4,000</b> PSR registrations
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*I think it’s reassuring and a very professional service. I feel better knowing that there is support out there.*  
**Julie D**

*An essential service for those struggling. Easy to sign up to.*  
**Joanne**

## Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability

Delivery partner/Project title/Description	Start date and end date/Project status	Investment	SROI	Outcomes to 31/03/2024
<p><b>Frame Ltd – Fuel Poverty and CO Awareness Project</b> Community led support services focused at raising awareness of energy efficiency, the PSR, and the dangers of CO, whilst helping carers to access relevant benefits and to maximise their incomes.</p>	May 22 – Mar 26 <i>Extended and uplifted</i>	£50,000	Forecast £9.21/£1 Actual £2.04/£1	Directly reached 1,380 people with savings of £49,749 through income maximisation, benefit entitlement checks etc.
<p><b>Adra – Prosiect Sero Net Gwynedd (Project Net Zero Gwynedd)</b> Targeted support services for rural communities in North Wales, through energy wardens.</p>	Jan 23 – Jan 24 <i>In progress</i>	£100,000	Forecast £15.72/£1 Actual £14.31/£1	Directly reached 613 people with savings of £33,092.49 through income maximisation, benefit entitlement checks etc.
<p><b>Hope4U/Newquay Food Bank – Newquay Crisis Support</b> Providing referrals pathway for Newquay Foodbank to refer their service users to Hope4U where they will receive in-depth support to access unclaimed benefits, hardship grants, and support to maximise their income.</p>	Nov 22 – Nov 24 <i>In progress</i>	£100,000	Forecast £5.65/£1 Actual £10.37/£1	Directly reached 173 people with savings of £440,051.32 through income maximisation, benefit entitlement checks etc.
<p><b>BCB – Winter Warm Support – Supporting Vulnerable People in Warm Spaces</b> Providing Winter Warm packs to customers within our network.</p>	Jan 23 – Mar 26 <i>Extended</i>	£193,207	Forecast £5.08/£1 Actual £6.16/£1	Directly reached 4,790 people by providing warm packs.
<p><b>WWU, National Grid, Bristol Water and University of the west of England – Resource West</b> The Resource West’s project aim is to encourage the public to save money and help protect the environment by reducing the consumption of energy and water while still maintaining warm homes. It achieves this by bringing local utility companies together to provide single consistent messages about how to make savings and get help in doing so.</p>	Apr 22 – Apr 23 <i>Completed</i>	£9,950	Forecast £3.00/£1	Energy efficiency leaflets shared online and among partners.
<p><b>Shelter Cymru – Preventing Homelessness</b> Provide expert inhouse debt and benefits advice to help people maximise their income, build financial resilience and stay in a safe home.</p>	Jul 23 – Sep 25 <i>Extended (delayed start)</i>	£100,000	Forecast £43.60/£1 Actual £9.42/£1	Directly reached 48 people with savings of £3,050.31 through income maximisation, benefit entitlement checks etc.
<p><b>Centre Sustainable Energy (CSE)</b> Heat Ability Targeted support services for disabled and low income households, focused at raising awareness of energy efficiency, the PSR, and the dangers of CO, whilst helping carers to access relevant benefits and to maximise their incomes.</p>	May 22 - April 24 <i>Completed</i>	£100,000	Forecast £41.58/£1	Directly reached 915 people with savings of £213,122.00 through income maximisation, benefit entitlement checks.
<p><b>Warm Wales – Healthy Homes Healthy People Extension</b> Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty Programmes – National project covering WWU network area, looking to provide wholistic support in accessing unclaimed benefits and maximising income for households in fuel poverty.</p>	Jan 24 – Mar 26 <i>In progress</i>	£2,314,275	Forecast £19.76/£1	This project aims to reach 44,000 through a range of accessible and tailored support services.
<p><b>Centre Sustainable Energy (CSE) – WHAM ( Warm Homes Advice and Money)</b> Provide advice and support to vulnerable households by tackling all the causes of fuel poverty. This includes improving financial skills and understanding and making homes warmer by tackling houses with damp and mould.</p>	Jan 24 – Jan 26 <i>In progress</i>	£997,900	Forecast £10.74/£1	This project aims to reach 18,000 through a range of accessible and tailored support services.
<p><b>Healthy Homes Solutions (HHS) – Vulnerability Registration Service</b> Self-registration service that provides information on the Priority Service Register (PSR), grant checks and other information that helps to identify why a person may be feeling vulnerable. Help combat fuel poverty through decarbonisation.</p>	Jan 24 – Dec 25 <i>In progress</i>	£490,655	Forecast £24.58/£1	This project aims to reach 12,000 through a range of accessible and tailored support services.

Continued on next page



## Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability (cont.)

Delivery partner/Project title/Description	Start date and end date/Project status	Investment	SROI	Outcomes to 31/03/2024
<b>MyBnk – Tackling Fuel Poverty through Financial Education</b> Deliver financial and energy education to young people across Wales and the south-west of England.	Jan 24 – Mar 26 <a href="#">In progress</a>	£495,478	Forecast £11.78/£1	This project aims to reach 4,851 through a range of accessible and tailored support services.
<b>Exeter Community Energy (ECOE) – Healthy Homes for Wellbeing</b> Provide expert and in-depth one-to-one advice and practical support for low income and vulnerable households to improve energy efficiency, energy behaviour and understanding to combat fuel poverty.	Jan 24 – Mar 26 <a href="#">In progress</a>	£992,000	Forecast £2.86/£1	This project aims to reach 10,000 through a range of accessible and tailored support services.
<b>PEC Trust – PEC Home Hub</b> Supporting vulnerable people in the Plymouth area through a Home Hub, energy advice calls, home visits and providing fuel poverty first aid training to frontline workers.	May 24 – Mar 26 New for 2024 <a href="#">Mobilising</a>	£999,752	Forecast £15.70/£1	This project aims to reach 20,000 through a range of accessible and tailored support services.
<b>YES Energy Solutions – A Holistic, Wrap-Around Energy Advice Service</b> Provide a tiered advice service to fuel poor householders, signpost people to essential service and to any funding opportunities that can deliver property improvements.	May 24 – Mar 26 New for 2024 <a href="#">Mobilising</a>	£492,820	Forecast £21.29/£1	This project aims to reach 4,200 through a range of accessible and tailored support services.
<b>ACE – Action in Caerau and Ely – The Hafan Project</b> Support vulnerable households through face-to-face advice sessions. Conduct home visits to assess energy usage, efficiency, behaviour and home safety. Signposting to the PSR and provide income maximisation through benefit entitlement checks.	July 24 – Apr 26 New for 2024 <a href="#">Mobilising</a>	£49,990	Forecast £23.38/£1	This project aims to reach 1,620 through a range of accessible and tailored support services.



## Supporting Priority Customer Groups

**Our Supporting Priority Customer Groups programmes are targeted at helping customers who are eligible to join the Priority Services Register. Through accessible, handheld support we can help some of the most disadvantaged communities across our network remain safe and warm in their own homes.**

We know that some of our customers need more help than others to stay safe and warm in their own homes, with a complex range of needs that require tailored support. By raising awareness of the Priority Services Register (PSR) and registering eligible households, we can proactively support the most disadvantaged communities across our network if their gas supply is interrupted.

Supporting Priority Customer Groups is a key focus area for WWU and is also supported by our priority customer research and key stakeholders. We've expanded our project portfolio in 2023/24 to further support those who are most in need, by building on existing relationships with partners and developing new initiatives supporting targeted demographics. A reoccurring

theme highlighted through our VCMA project proposals is the direct link between health and fuel poverty amongst specific demographics. Financial and social support is often inaccessible for people with complex and specific needs and programmes developed by our partners have improved health by addressing issues caused by living in a cold damp home.

We partnered with Crunch Digital Media in 2021 to raise awareness of the PSR through digital media platforms, making it easier for our customers to sign up and access a range of support services if their gas, electricity or water supply is interrupted. By working with Crunch, we have seen a significant increase in the number of PSR registrations, and the success of the partnership has resulted in us expanding our company specific project, reaching a wider UK footprint with the other gas networks. The collaborative model has also been designed to incorporate a range of social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and You Tube, reaching a larger targeted audience of eligible households.

In addition to the above, we are continuing to explore our role in the future of energy space and understanding how our VCMA partners can help support the most vulnerable across our network, making sure no one gets left behind as we prepare for a challenging energy transition.

**£0.59m**

Invested in 2023/24  
(**£0.96m** to date).

**10**

Supporting Priority  
Customer Groups  
projects

**16%**

VCMA spend  
to date



## CASE STUDY 1

# Supporting Priority Customer Groups



## Welsh Kidney Network, Kidney Care UK and Auriga Services Patient Support and Advocacy Service



### FACT FILE

#### Project at a glance

Investment:	£568,000
Forecast SROI:	£8.87/£1
Duration:	2 years
Status:	Exceeding delivery

### Why we are working together

People living with long-term health conditions experience a range of challenges when it comes to maintaining a safe and warm home.

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is common, affecting up to 1 in 10 of the adult population and the numbers are expected to rise over the next decade. Currently across Wales, c.450,000 people live with chronic kidney disease and around 1,800 are now reliant on dialysis to keep them alive.

People on dialysis are more likely to live in deprivation with 45% of people in Wales on all forms of renal replacement therapy living in some of the most deprived quintiles.

We've partnered with the Welsh Kidney Network, Kidney Care UK (KCUK) and Auriga Services to support patients with chronic kidney disease through a range of support services.





### How we are working together

Patient Support and Advocacy Officers (PSAOs) provide one-to-one support with patients to improve their health and wellbeing through a range of services. The model is specifically designed to increase patient's income through unclaimed welfare benefit entitlement, reducing financial burden through debt advice, raise awareness and increase the number of patients on the Priority Services Register (PSR), increase awareness around carbon monoxide and provide welfare support such as aids and adaptations and blue badges.

Through this project, WWU has further supported KCUK by upskilling PSAOs to provide information about the dangers of CO and the PSR. This has been done through access to training materials and resources, and to further support vulnerable households we have provided access to small energy efficiency measures such as CO alarms and Keep Warm packs.

### Partnership and community impact

Our partnership with the Welsh Kidney Network, Kidney Care UK and Auriga Services started in April 2023 and in the first year of delivery directly engaged with over 620 CKD patients, provided welfare checks for 259 patients with financial gains of over £115k. Case studies and feedback from this project have also highlighted the value of the support being delivered through the renal units.

It has given patients living with chronic kidney disease the opportunity to reach out to the Advocacy Support Officers to obtain tailored handheld support accessing





a range of services that are often complex and difficult to complete alone.

Following the success of our regional Wales pan project, we have worked with the other gas networks and have set up a collaborative project in partnership with Kidney Care UK which will benefit kidney patients across the UK.

### Stakeholder support

Tackling fuel poverty is a key priority for WWU alongside raising awareness of the PSR and the dangers of CO amongst the most disadvantaged communities. This has also been backed up through our priority customer research and stakeholder feedback as part of our business planning activities.

KCUK’s research highlights the challenges faced by kidney patients when it comes to accessing support and paying their heating bills due to the cognitive impairment associated with dialysis.

Through engagement with stakeholders, we are seeing a number of key themes coming through, particularly around health and cold, damp homes. Stakeholders agree that projects should continue to be delivered through partnership organisations who are experts in delivering support services, such as Kidney Care UK.

### Evaluation and learning

This project is already achieving tangible results and a wealth of benefits for dialysis patients across Wales after just 12 months of delivery. For many dialysis patients, a dedicated and personal face-to-face and unhurried approach by the trained and trusted PSAOs is the only effective way for them to access the benefits and welfare support they are entitled to.

KCUK are exploring ways in which the project can be enhanced and are currently thinking about uplifting the services in Wales to include helpline support. Working with WWU, KCUK are continuing to evaluate and monitor progress of the project and adapting their approach throughout to ensure they are maximising outcomes for customers across Wales.

*We recently supported a patient at a PIP tribunal, who had previously been denied any element of PIP. Through the appeal it was agreed that the patient should be entitled to an enhanced rate for both elements for 10 years. This amounts to nearly £90,000 and the patient is also due a back payment of £8,983. I’m chuffed to bits, as is the patient.*

**Patient Support and Advocacy officer**

### Key achievements

**623**

Individuals helped

**£115,870**

Savings

**69**

People signed to the PSR

**42**

CO alarms issued

## CASE STUDY 2

# Supporting Priority Customer Groups



## Maggie's Cancer Trust Reducing Fuel Poverty and Maximising Household Income for People with Cancer



### FACT FILE

#### Project at a glance

Investment:	£292,874
Forecast SROI:	£3.30/£1
Duration:	4 years
Status:	Extended – due to success of initial project delivery

### Why we are working together

Anyone can experience fuel poverty, but some of the most vulnerable groups who face health challenges, made worse by living in a cold damp home, are those who have been diagnosed with chronic or long-term conditions such as cancer. Receiving a cancer diagnosis brings its own worries and challenges and adds additional pressure from both a health and a financial perspective, as those impacted can potentially face reduced income and increased costs, particularly around energy bills, making them more likely to experience fuel poverty.

This increased financial burden can be lifechanging for those impacted by cancer and can lead to changes in lifestyle as well as mental health and wellbeing. People with cancer often spend more time at home, meaning they are reliant on heating to keep them warm, so its essential that these services are affordable to avoid added complications.

### How we are working together

Working in partnership with Maggie's has enabled them to expand the support provided in each of their award-winning purpose-built centres across Cardiff, Cheltenham





and Swansea, reaching more people through a range of support services. Each centre has a dedicated benefits advice service to provide direct handheld support to cancer patients and their direct family members through a range of services including income maximisation, raising awareness of the Priority Services Register (PSR) and the dangers of carbon monoxide.

With a cancer diagnosis potentially having a devastating impact financially, as well as emotionally, the charity's benefits advisors play a vital role to make sure people with cancer and their carers can pay utility bills, keep a roof over

their heads and put food on the table. So, it's essential they are equipped with the relevant knowledge to provide support.

We've upskilled the benefits advisors through bespoke training on how to raise awareness of the PSR and CO and where to signpost patients further for those in or at risk of fuel poverty.

*Without the support from Maggie's I wouldn't be here today.*

**Jane, Maggie's visitor**

### Partnership and community impact

Maggie's are a reputable charity, who are already embedded and trusted by people who have been diagnosed with cancer. Given their expertise in this field, they are perfectly positioned to provide support to those who need it most.

They have been a constant pillar of support to the community throughout the cost-of-living crisis and the pandemic when there has been little or no support available locally. The Maggie's centres that cover south Wales contain many areas of severe deprivation and fuel poverty, so the support provided through this project is invaluable and has seen great outcomes for customers.

Since launching the partnership in April 2022, Maggie's have supported 5,966 people impacted by cancer through their dedicated centres across Wales and the south-west of England with financial gains of at least £5.07m.

### Stakeholder support

WWU and Maggie's have been working together for the last two years and the partnership aligns to our approach and strategy when supporting priority customer groups.





Through our business planning activities and priority customer research, stakeholders have told us that supporting those who are most in need should continue to be a key priority for WWU, including raising awareness of the PSR and the dangers of CO amongst disadvantaged communities.

Through engagement with our Citizens Panel, customers demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of vulnerability, with a strong emphasis on people facing challenges because of a chronic illness and the link between health and fuel poverty. The panel agreed that projects should continue to be delivered through partnership organisations who are experts in delivering support services, such as Maggie's Cancer Trust.

### Evaluation and learning

Our support was originally intended to last for 12 months. However upon further evaluation of the project, it has seen great success and provided invaluable and in some cases life-changing support for people living with cancer.

The project was extended for an additional six months and continued to exceed delivery. We have now further extended the project so it will run until March 2026 reaching more people and their direct support network who have been diagnosed with cancer.

Maggie's have also adapted delivery of the project, making sure the support remains fit for purpose and continue to raise awareness of PSR and CO. They are also in the process of building a new centre in the grounds of Glan Clwyd Hospital in Bodelwyddan, Denbighshire to further expand their reach across our network. Through these

additional support measures, the new centre and partnerships already cultivated by Maggie's this project should also see longevity post VCMA funding, in terms of support for people living with cancer.

Despite this being a company specific project, providing localised support to recognise the regional differences across the UK, we are also working with the other gas networks to share best practice and lessons learnt through the collaborative project.



*The funding from Wales & West Utilities has helped alleviate the distress of crippling financial worries to many of our centre visitors and we are very grateful. Around 30% of our visitors first contact us to gain benefits advice and our benefits advisors are there to maximise household income to help keep cancer patients safe and warm, ensuring they can continue living their lives.*

**Dame Laura Lee,  
Chief Executive**

### Key achievements (since April 2022)

**5,966**  
People supported

**£5m**  
Financial gains

**99**  
People signed to the PSR



## CASE STUDY 3

# Supporting Priority Customer Groups



## Advocates and Angels Hospital to Home Confidence Support



### Why we are working together

Each year, over 90,000 babies are cared for in neonatal units in the UK because they have either been born prematurely (before 37 weeks of pregnancy), are sick or disabled. Twenty thousand of these children will also be admitted to the intensive care units and as a result, parents will often stay at hospital to provide support and care for their newborns. During this time parents are without beds and have no access to a shower or other hygiene products unless they travel back and forth to their homes.

Advocates and Angels help parent carers navigate the world of

disabilities, palliative care and bereavement by delivering services in the form of care packages including hygiene essentials to new and expectant parents providing palliative care to their children in 24 wards across hospitals in Wales.

Because of the palliative care required, families will often experience increases to general living costs, including large increases to their energy bills. Potentially facing reduced income to support their newborn babies, parent carers are more likely to experience fuel poverty as they don't consider themselves as carers, meaning that they often miss out on vital financial and social support they could otherwise be entitled to.

### FACT FILE

#### Project at a glance

Investment:	£30,000
Forecast SROI:	£3.40/£1
Duration:	2 years
Status:	In progress



### How we are working together

The project with Advocates and Angels has been able to reinforce the care packages distributed throughout children's wards across Wales with targeted messages to raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide and signpost to the Priority Services Register (PSR) which all families will be eligible to join.

WWU have also provided access to small support measures in the form of CO alarms and Keep Warm Packs which Advocates and Angels are able to provide when engaging with families being cared for in neonatal and intensive care units.

In addition, we have provided bespoke training to staff and volunteers in Advocates and Angels to broaden their knowledge making sure they are aware of referral pathways and are able to share messaging more widely through in-person community events.

### Partnership and community impact

Advocates and Angels play a vital role in supporting parents caring for children. Families who receive a diagnosis face emotional and financial struggles and often don't know where to turn for support or what support is available to them. This can have a huge impact on their mental health and wellbeing as they feel overwhelmed and consumed with worry, as well as dealing with the physical demands and lack of sleep that come with caring for a child with complex medical needs.

When families are discharged from hospital and return home, it is essential they are able to heat their homes

keeping them safe and warm, preventing further complications and health issues for their children.

The support provided through Advocates and Angels eases this stress and worry and provides reassurance to the community that there is support out there. By raising awareness of the dangers of CO and signposting parents to the Priority Services Register means that families are accessing additional support that they otherwise wouldn't have been aware of reducing added worries.

### Stakeholder support

Our stakeholders have helped shape our VCMA strategy and reinforced where we should continue to prioritise additional support to those who are in or at risk of fuel poverty, particularly for priority groups. We align our portfolio of projects to the PSR needs codes, which help us identify if and where there are groups that are not supported. In addition, we use data demographics to identify and shape the delivery models by working in partnership with expert organisations who are already embedded and trusted within the communities we serve.

Through our engagement and priority customer research there was a direct link between health and the detrimental effect of living in a cold damp home. We have adapted our approach and prioritised projects to cover a range of demographics from young families to those with chronic medical conditions and older people. Our project with Advocates and Angels falls within that category and aligns to our strategic approach as it provides support services to parent carers.

*We know first-hand just how daunting dealing with trauma is and we exist purely to help parents and carers navigate the world of disabilities, hospital admissions, palliative care and bereavement. Over time we naturally form extremely close relationships with our families and this funding allows us to supplement the huge amount of support and advice we already provide with practical advice that will benefit people in their home lives.*

**Bethan Germon,**  
**Founder**





### Evaluation and learning

As a small, localised charity Advocates and Angels rely on word of mouth to widen awareness of the support they provide and are exploring how they can work with organisations and collaborate to introduce new opportunities and ways of working. Understanding they are only part of the puzzle through signposting and providing resources, they are looking to build relationships with organisations who can provide in-depth support by creating new pathway referrals to expand the support amongst parent carers to reduce the financial burden they

may face. This is something they could potentially bring in-house to enhance the services they provide.

Advocates and Angels are currently looking to expand their support to families with parent carers to cover paediatric wards and hospitals across the southwest of our network as there is a huge demand for their services. We are exploring how we can further support this expansion through our funding and are looking to extend the delivery of the project until March 2026 due to its current success.



*The care packages help provide families with the essentials they require without having to worry about leaving the hospital site or be away from their child. Our parents and families prioritise the children above themselves so having these packs enable us to care for them whilst they care for their child. Each family upon check in will receive a care package into their room allowing them to cover their basic needs and hygiene requirements. We have a lot of emergency admissions so these packs 100% take some stress off our families. Thank you.*

**Bethan Domaille,**  
**Ronald McDonald House,**  
**parent accommodation, Cardiff**

### Key achievements

**2,780**

Individuals supported

**1,388**

Care packages with PSR and CO messaging distributed

## CASE STUDY 4

# Supporting Priority Customer Groups – Future look



## Care & Repair Cymru Older Not Colder



### Why we are working together

Building on the success of the award-winning national Older not Colder project and through the additional VCMA funding, Wales & West Utilities are working in partnership with Care & Repair Cymru to support the delivery of their new programme Older not Colder, providing support until March 2026.

Despite reducing energy costs and inflation, the cost-of-living crisis continues to have an adverse effect on the most vulnerable in our society. The Welsh Government estimates that the number of people in fuel poverty and severe fuel poverty has doubled over the past 12 –15 months meaning that people are still struggling to pay their bills and are in financial crisis.

It is recognised that older people are more likely to be in fuel

poverty, and it is more likely that their health and wellbeing will be affected by cold temperatures. They are more likely to live in older pre 1919 homes, homes which are more challenging to heat, keep warm and retrofit with cheaper and greener technologies.

Care & Repair work specifically with low income older homeowners and private tenants, over the age of 60, or who are over the age of 50 who have also been diagnosed with sensory loss, dementia or stroke. Their beneficiaries are often in receipt of Pension Credit, have multiple existing conditions, or live alone with no one else to turn to. In addition, many are low income and not claiming their benefit entitlements.

### FACT FILE

#### Project at a glance

Investment:	£1.3m
Forecast SROI:	£6.09/£1
Duration:	2 years
Status:	In progress





### How we are working together

Care & Repair Cymru have enhanced their Older not Colder project, working specifically with low-income older homeowners and private tenants by providing a range of handheld support services including:

- Income maximisation through benefit entitlement checks
- Access to grants such as the Warm Home Discount
- Onwards referrals for energy specific and general debt advice
- Onwards referrals for mental health and wellbeing support
- Raising awareness of the Priority Services Register and how people can sign up to access additional support if their gas, electricity or water supplies are interrupted
- Utilising engagement opportunities to raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide and how to stay safe.

The services will be delivered by recruited Home Energy Officers who will provide tailored support through home visits and face-to-face advice.

### Stakeholder support

Through our business planning for RIIO GD2, priority customers research and stakeholders told us that tackling fuel poverty was a priority for WWU alongside raising awareness of the PSR and the dangers of CO.

Our continued engagement with stakeholders such as the NEA, Citizens Advice, and charities supported by fuel poverty statistics shows due to high inflation and record



## CASE STUDY 4: Care & Repair Cymru – Older Not Colder

energy prices that fuel poverty is impacting more homes and customers than ever. People who were struggling are now not using the heating or limiting use to unhealthy levels and appliances are not being serviced leading to future safety risks. The crisis has meant people who have never been in trouble now find themselves needing help but not knowing where to turn for advice.

We have tested support for projects under the VCMA which target fuel poverty through our Independent Stakeholder Group, Citizens Panels, VCMA showcase events and Regional Workshops with overwhelming support to continue and do even more.

### Potential for new learning

While the additional allowance has been welcomed, we have put a huge focus on bringing our VCMA partners together to create an eco-system of referral pathways to further support those who are most in need. Despite all projects providing

tailored support, they all share consistent deliverables, so we want to make sure there is no duplication with the funding across our network. By linking up key partners such as Care & Repair Cymru and Warm Wales who both deliver projects in the same geographical area across our network, we are encouraging best practice, sharing learning and preventing duplication by working in collaboration.

The project started earlier this year and will highlight the full impact of the cost-of-living crisis specifically for older people and what specific support is useful to them both now and in the future. We will take learning from the project to inform our future business plans and to help shape our approach going forward to make sure support for priority groups remains relevant and accessible.

The project will gather, analyse and share a robust project impacts report, detailing best practice to achieve healthy warm homes for vulnerable older households.

### Forecast outcomes

**8,500**

Vulnerable households will be supported

**12**

Home Energy Officers recruited

**1**

Project Manager recruited

**2,350**

Home visits

**2,000**

Households to be signed up to the PSR

**£5m**

Financial gains for customers

*Services work best when organisations work closely together, ensuring that we maximise our reach and minimise the numbers of people who fall through the cracks. That's why we're so pleased to be working in partnership with Wales & West Utilities and Warm Wales to support vulnerable customers who live in cold homes and fuel poverty.*

**Chris Jones,  
Chief Executive**

*A couple that I was originally told would not be eligible for the ECO and Nyth (Nest) scheme, well I have been able to get them on the ECO scheme through Menai Heating and the couple are over the moon. It's a brilliant feeling to be able to help people isn't it!*

**Home Energy Officer,  
Gwynedd and Mon**



## Supporting priority customer groups

Delivery partner/Project title/Description	Start date and end date/ Project status	Investment	Partner(s)	Outcomes to 31/03/2024
<b>Crunch – PSR Facebook Campaign</b> Target social media campaign to raise awareness of, and increase referrals to, the PSR.	Apr 22 – May 24 <b>Extended</b>	£30,000	Forecast £50.22/£1 Actual £49.93/£1	Directly reached 4,460,605 people through campaigning reach, impressions and click through.
<b>Care &amp; Repair Cymru – 70+</b> To support the older community throughout Wales with in-depth, wholistic support to access unclaimed benefits, maximise income, and to access small to large energy efficiency measures.	Dec 22 – Mar 23 <b>Completed</b>	£85,000	Forecast £40.82/£1	Directly reached 588 people with savings of £352,422.95 through income maximisation, benefit entitlement checks etc.
<b>Swansea Carers Centre – Swansea Carers Fuel Poverty/Income Maximisation Project</b> Targeted carer specific support services focused at raising awareness of energy efficiency, the PSR, and the dangers of CO, whilst helping carers to access relevant benefits and to maximise their incomes.	Aug 22 – August 24 <b>In progress</b>	£59,979	Forecast £21.51/£1 Actual £39.34/£1	Directly reached 844 people with savings of £2,047,883.05 through benefit entitlement checks, hardship grants etc.
<b>Bridgend Carers – Welfare Benefits Advice Service for Unpaid Carers and their Families</b> Targeted carer specific support services focused at raising awareness of energy efficiency, the PSR, and the dangers of CO, whilst helping carers to access relevant benefits and to maximise their incomes.	Apr 22 – Apr 24 <b>Complete</b>	£50,000	Forecast £19.25/£1 Actual £17.33/£1	Directly reached 230 people with savings of £483,261.25 through benefit entitlement checks, hardship grants etc.
<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 at raising awareness of energy efficiency, the PSR, and the dangers of CO, whilst helping carers to access relevant benefits and to maximise their incomes.	Apr 22 – Mar 26 <b>Extended and uplifted</b>	£292,874	Forecast £19.25/£1 Actual £58.77/£1	Directly reached 5,966 people with savings of £5.07m through referrals, benefit entitlement checks, hardship grants etc.
<b>Rhondda Cynon Taff Council and Partners – Lower Cynon Pilot</b> Partnership lead by RCTCBC working with local community groups to raise awareness of CO using engaging and appropriate methods.	May 22 – Nov 22 <b>Completed</b>	£28,150	Forecast £8.26/£1	Directly reached 253 people through CO Awareness, PSR referrals and issuing of CO Alarms.
<b>Kidney Care UK / Auriga Services – Vulnerable Patients with Kidney Disease in Wales</b> Targeted support services for patients diagnosed with chronic kidney disease, focused at raising awareness of energy efficiency, the PSR, and the dangers of CO, whilst helping carers to access relevant benefits and to maximise their incomes.	Jan 23 – Mar 26 <b>Extended</b>	£569,000	Forecast £8.87/£1 Actual £1.59/£1	Directly reached 325 people through referrals and CO surveys with savings of £27,114.20 through benefit entitlement checks, hardship grants etc.
<b>Women Connect First – Advice and Advocacy</b> Targeted support for BAME women’s group in Cardiff, focused on energy efficiency and raising awareness in appropriate methods.	Dec 22 – Nov 23 <b>Completed</b>	£46,978	Forecast £5.10/£1 Actual £4.13/£1	Directly reached 450 people with savings of £107,113 through benefit entitlement checks, hardship grants etc.
<b>Advocates and Angels – Hospital to Home Confidence Support</b> Provide targeted messages to raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide, and signpost to the Priority Service Register which all families will be eligible to join.	Aug 23 – Mar 26 <b>Extended and uplifted</b>	£89,000	Forecast £3.40/£1 Actual £8.68/£1	Directly reached 2,780 people by providing care packages on hospital wards.
<b>Care &amp; Repair Cymru – Older not Colder</b> Supporting the older community in Wales, with targeted support with income maximisation and energy and debt advice.	Jan 24 – Mar 26 <b>In progress</b>	£1,355,000	Forecast £6.09/£1	Forecast reach = 8,500.



## Services Beyond the Meter

**Our Services Beyond the Meter programmes provide direct operational support to the most vulnerable households across our network, who are identified as we go about our work. These support services go above and beyond our business as usual activities helping keep people safe and warm.**

Through our licence obligations, we must respond to gas emergency call outs which can include gas escapes and suspected carbon monoxide incidents. However, as we are only responsible for the pipework up to the meter, our initial response is to make sure any internal pipework and appliances are made safe if we detect a leak or if an appliance is deemed unsafe. This is then passed back to the customer to resolve through a Gas Safe Registered (GSR) engineer, which can incur financial implications. This means that low income or vulnerable households may:

- not be able to get back on gas easily
- experience long periods without heating, hot water and cooking facilities
- face challenges seeking additional support.

Working with National Energy Action through our Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance, we have developed a referral pathway and provide funding to their delivery teams, to engage with customers who need support getting their appliances back up and running. This can often include funding an appliance repair or replacement where customers are eligible.

In addition, we have trained our customer-facing colleagues to help identify customers in vulnerable situations and have a dedicated Priority Customer team who support them with the appropriate referral pathway, providing tailored support to those most in need.

We have recently upskilled a number of our own engineers who can now carry out enhanced carbon monoxide checks and have explored the benefits of creating an in-house HyperCare team. This team will provide additional support to those most in need following our works, including linking vulnerable households up to other partnership organisations, who can provide further tailored handheld support.

Projects delivered through Services Beyond the Meter ensure vulnerable households aren't left without gas for extended periods and allow us to provide additional safety measures such as the installation of locking cooker valves.

**£0.18m**

Invested in 23/24  
(£0.46m to date).

**2**

Services Beyond  
the Meter  
projects

**8%**

VCMA spend



## CASE STUDY 1

# Services Beyond the Meter



## National Energy Action Gas Appliance Referral Scheme



### FACT FILE

#### Project at a glance

Investment:	£786,000
Forecast SROI:	£10/£1
Duration:	Jul 21 – Jun 2025
Status:	Extended

### Why we are working together

National Energy Action (NEA) is the UK's leading fuel poverty charity working to end fuel poverty in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. They work closely with their sister charity, Energy Action Scotland, to cover a UK footprint and to ensure that everyone is warm and safe at home. They offer advice and support services to fuel-poor households, as well as advocating for policy and regulation to protect the most vulnerable households.

NEA are a reputable organisation and have a track record of delivering projects and support services to the most vulnerable within our communities. They are also a key stakeholder across the energy industry and influence behavioural change, whilst working with high profile organisations to influence policy.

NEA share our values and ambition and recognise there is a group of people who need support beyond what we offer as a gas network under our business-as-usual activities.



### How we are working together

As a gas distribution network, our licence conditions only extend to making internal pipework and appliances safe in the event of an interruption to their gas supply.

Working in partnership with NEA, our front-line engineers make referrals on behalf of customers whose supply has been isolated for safety reasons and who don't have the financial means to get the issue resolved, often meaning they can face prolonged periods of time without heating or cooking facilities. Funding is only provided to low-income households (below £30k) and WWU only support what cannot be funded through existing schemes such as ECO4 and Nest. Homes that do not meet the income threshold are provided with advice and support to resolve the issue.

NEA assess the eligibility and then appoint a trusted Gas safe Registered (GSR) engineer to carry out the work required to get our customers back on gas and undertake a repair or replacement where necessary.

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







### Partnership and community impact

The project has highlighted the challenges facing some of the most vulnerable people across our network, including low-income households, people living in poor conditions which are impacting their health and wellbeing and how poorly appliances are being maintained – if at all. The cost-of-living crisis has had a huge impact on our communities with many still struggling to pay their energy bills being forced to make impossible choices to keep themselves safe and warm.

Working in partnership with NEA has lightened the financial burden for people in financial hardship who have not been able to have their appliances repaired or replaced. The physical measures this project provides has greatly impacted their health and wellbeing, as well as utilise engagement opportunities to discuss safety measures and how they can access additional support.

### Stakeholder support

During our business plan stakeholder engagement, customer organisations asked us to do more to tackle fuel poverty, but also to go further than our licence obligations to avoid people being disconnected and left in cold homes.

We also see in our customer satisfaction surveys and complaints that customers want us to do more to support them in getting their gas back on, even if the problem lies after the emergency control valve. In discussions with Ofgem, we have agreed that the boundary between GDN and suppliers should be observed in terms of funding. This scheme therefore treads a balance between.

Tackling fuel poverty and supporting those most in need remains a key priority for WWU and something we are passionate about supporting.

### Evaluation and learning

Through initial delivery of this programme, there was a huge demand for these support services which resulted in an increased amount of funding. However, recent changes to the eligibility criteria regarding the repair and replacement of appliances has meant that we have not been able to support as many people through this project as they are not in receipt of means tested benefits and don't qualify for support.

We are also exploring what proactive servicing looks like with other potential partners and looking to run a pilot scheme in the south-west of our network later this year.

We will continue to work with the other gas networks and our regulator, Ofgem, to try to plug this gap, recognising there is a group of people who aren't getting the support they need, potentially put their health at risk and could be subject to living in a cold damp home.

*I can stay at home and be warm, this means the world to me.*

**Customer A**

*The Gas Safe Registered engineer arrived very quickly and it was the middle of the night. He was splendid.*

**Customer B**

### Key achievements

**344**

Individuals reached

**78**

Appliances/  
pipework repaired

**107**

Appliances/  
pipework replaced

**£298,000**

Savings

## CASE STUDY 2

# Services Beyond the Meter – Future Look



## Wales & West Utilities – Services Beyond the Meter

### FACT FILE

#### Project at a glance

Investment:	£166,500
Duration:	2 years
Status:	In progress

### Why we are delivering the project

As a gas distribution network, we enter thousands of homes across our network each year through emergency work, connections and as part of our replacement programme. We are on the ground and in people's homes so experience the hardship the most vulnerable people across our network are facing first hand. Our primary focus is to safeguard life and property, but we often come across customers in vulnerable situations who need additional support, both financial and societal and don't know how to access the support or who to turn to.

We have created our Services Beyond the Meter programme to ensure vulnerable people can remain safe and warm in their own homes, retaining their own independence and feel reassured that they are being supported beyond our works.

### How we are delivering the project

We are creating a new HyperCare team within the Priority Customer team who will focus on supporting customers in vulnerable situations to keep themselves safe, warm and independent in their own homes, giving them access to support from us that hasn't been in place previously. These roles will allow us to expand support for customers beyond the gas meter specifically, and therefore broadening the range of help and guidance we can provide. Support will include but is not limited to:

- arranging meter installations with suppliers following a connection

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

In addition, we have upskilled 10 engineers who can now carry out enhanced carbon monoxide checks for our priority customers when we visit a suspected CO call out. This is being tested as a pilot before exploring if and how this can be rolled out across our network.

### Partnership and community impact

Through our Services Beyond the Meter programme, we have been able to create referral pathways with organisations who can provide further support and assessment that goes above and beyond our customers' basic energy needs. By partnering with organisations like Warm Wales and National Energy Action, we can address in-the-moment challenges as well as working towards longer term and sustainable solutions to generally improve health and wellbeing.

This is achieved through a range of support services varying from advanced carbon monoxide checks, access to additional safety measures such as CO alarms and locking cooker valves as well as gas appliance repair and replace schemes. The aim of these support services is to empower our customers to use gas safely, keeping them safe and warm in their own homes.





### Stakeholder support

We will continue to explore expectations around our role as a gas distribution network by engaging with our key stakeholders and our priority customers and will use this feedback to inform our future business plans.

Tackling fuel poverty and supporting those most in need are key priorities for WWU and through stakeholder engagement, customer organisations have asked us to go further than our licence obligations to avoid people being disconnected and left in cold homes.

### Evaluation and learning

Following recent research into our customer feedback, a common theme has been identified where we can improve our service to customers who are dealing with third parties to get a new supplier, get meters fitted or resolve issues due to a gas leak or broken appliance. To plug this gap we have recruited two priority customer advisors who are going to pilot our HyperCare team, which will be monitored and evaluated to make sure we are maximising support and seeing tangible outcomes for our most vulnerable customers.







We have also been working in collaboration with Cadent to explore their Services Beyond the Meter activities and have participated in training at their purpose built centre to help us create and design internal process for the additional support which will be delivered through our front line colleagues.

*It can be very difficult for our engineers to walk away from a vulnerable customer having made a gas escape or carbon monoxide call safe on site by isolating appliances or the internal supply. The partnership with Warm Wales/NEA had allowed us to get the most vulnerable customers back on gas quickly through repairs and some replacement on appliances. The VCMA funding has also allowed us to upskill a number of our engineers to undertake small repairs on appliances, and to carry our further checks for carbon monoxide, a process we are looking to embed over the next two years.*

**Nigel Winnan,**  
**Customer and Social Obligations**  
**Strategy Manager**

### Commitments

**650**  
Individuals  
forecast reach

**2**  
Company  
specific  
projects



## Services beyond the meter

Delivery partner/Project title/Description	Start date and end date/ Project status	Investment	SROI	Outcomes to 31/03/2024
<p><b>National Energy Action (NEA) – Gas Appliance Referral Scheme</b></p> <p>Providing practical support to low income and fuel poor households to help restore their gas services to their appliances following emergencies where appliances have been found to be faulty or not fit for use.</p>	<p>July 21 – Mar 25 Extended and uplifted</p>	£786,000	<p>Forecast £10.00/£1 Actual £0.63/£1</p>	Directly reached 302 people with savings of £275,508.78 benefit entitlement checks, hardship grants etc.
<p><b>Wales &amp; West Utilities – locking cooker valves</b></p> <p>Supporting those in the WWU network who are experiencing memory loss issues, to maintain their independence and prolong their time living in their homes.</p>	<p>Apr 21 – Mar 26 In progress</p>	£25,000	<p>Forecast £14.00/£1 Actual £14.87/£1</p>	Directly reached 79 people to fit locking cooker valves.



## Carbon Monoxide Awareness

**Our Carbon Monoxide Awareness programmes are designed to help raise awareness of the dangers of CO, remind people how to stay safe and to help communities understand the impact CO can have on different vulnerabilities and age groups.**

As a gas distribution network, one of our core business-as-usual activities is responding to gas emergencies, including call outs to suspected carbon monoxide exposure. Raising awareness of the dangers of CO is a high priority for WWU, which is also supported by our stakeholders.

As household budgets remain stretched due to the cost-of-living crisis, servicing or replacement of appliances can take a lower priority for low-income households, which increases the risk of exposure to carbon monoxide. To make sure this remains a priority for those most at risk of CO poisoning, our partners have developed a range of activities and campaigns targeted at high-risk groups across our network.

By working in collaboration with dedicated safety centres such as Lifeskills and Danger Point and through trusted organisations such as Care & Repair Cymru, we have been able to support a number of initiatives through the Vulnerability and Carbon

Monoxide Allowance to raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide and how to stay safe.

In addition, we have created an in-house model, called Gas Safety Ambassadors which is aimed at raising awareness of CO amongst schoolchildren. Due to the success of the project so far, we've extended the delivery and will continue to raise awareness directly through our colleagues until March 2026. Further information about our Gas Ambassadors project can be found on [page 66](#).

Despite the additional allowance being ringfenced to support initiatives which tackle fuel poverty, we encourage our partners to utilise all engagement opportunities to have CO conversations and raise awareness amongst our most vulnerable customers as there is a direct link between fuel poverty and CO poisoning.

**£0.36m**

Invested in 23/24  
(**£0.72m** to date).

**9**

CO Awareness  
Projects

**12%**

VCMA spend



## CASE STUDY 1

# Carbon Monoxide Awareness



## Lifeskills Carbon Monoxide Safety Centres



### FACT FILE

#### Project at a glance

Investment:	£68,500
Forecast SROI:	£5.51/£1
Duration:	Apr 2021 – Mar 2026
Status:	Extended

### Why we are working together

Lifeskills aim to improve health, safety and wellbeing for the most disadvantaged communities and they do this by offering an exciting and memorable environment in which to learn. By taking part in their activities, visitors can experience real-life difficult or dangerous situations and learn how to deal with them. They have built rapport with surrounding communities and schools and by collaborating to educate visitors about the dangers of carbon monoxide through the safety centre in a fun but controlled environment.

Young people are more susceptible to carbon monoxide and are more at risk of serious harm when exposed. People with learning disabilities also are more at risk as they tend to have poorer health than the general population, meaning they experience health inequalities, often starting early in life.

By working in partnership we can ensure we are reaching the most vulnerable in society with critical safety messaging that they can take into their adult life, or cascade the messaging to their families and friends.





### How we are working together

We have partnered with Lifeskills to help deliver vital and potential life-saving gas safety advice to its visitors across the Bristol area.

The project has provided the opportunity for them to create a real-life scenario in their safety centre which highlights the dangers of CO in various settings inside and outside the home. These scenarios focus on signs, symptoms and prevention of CO in a fun and engaging way which is brought to life in their interactive tour.

As part of their Special Education Needs (SEN) project they have been able to enhance their messaging, tailoring their content, to include additional information on other gas safety devices such as Locking Cooker Valves (LCV) and raising awareness of the PSR which their beneficiaries would be eligible to join.

Training has also been delivered to a variety of professionals, including support workers and personal assistants, so that they can deliver CO specific messages, whilst using the centre with their clients. To further support delivery of the project, WWU

have provided free CO alarms for the SEN project element.

To further enhance the visitors experience, we provide our 'scratch and sniff' cards which contains the smell of natural gas, to alert their senses and help them identify it should they ever come across it in the future.

### Partnership and community Impact

Every year there are deaths from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning. Children are often unaware and uneducated on the dangers of CO and people with learning difficulties can find it particularly hard to understand and identify issues, leaving them with an increased risk of death or serious injury, especially if they are living independently.

By working in partnership, the funding has enabled Lifeskills the opportunity to enhance their services while expanding their reach to people with learning disabilities, their families and their support workers. Additional resources and information has been tailored to their needs to maximise the effectiveness of the messaging through engagement with the safety centre.





*We are proud to work in partnership with Lifeskills to raise awareness and educate young people, teachers, and adults with learning difficulties on the dangers of carbon monoxide. The centre provides a fantastic educational resource to young people, teaching them invaluable safety skills for life, including those around gas, CO and site safety.*

**Sophie Stone,**  
**VCMA Project Co-ordinator**

Due to the success of the project and the impact of the safety messaging provided through this project we have increased the level of funding and extended the duration of the project to continue to see greater benefits to the community.

### Stakeholder Support

Our stakeholders have highlighted the importance in raising awareness of CO amongst the most vulnerable in society and recognise the benefit of working in partnership with trusted organisations to reach the most disadvantaged communities across our network.

In our Business Plan for RIIO GD2 we made a commitment to reach at least 10,000 people a year through either face-to-face contacts, or by providing educational materials; demonstrating success by a CO survey of

understanding before and after the engagement. We will target all ages and demographics with our messages.

In addition, we committed to reaching 250,000 homes a year with CO awareness messaging through our usual communications for connections, planned and emergency work, and through social media channels.

This is a key project and is helping us reach those ambitions. WWU remain committed to raising awareness of CO and it is a key priority.

### Evaluation and Learning

We will continue to monitor the progress of this project and the impact and effectiveness of the messaging and Lifeskills will adapt delivery to ensure the messages remains fit for

purpose tailored to those who are attending the safety session.

Feedback and case studies have highlighted the value of support being delivered in the safety centres. It has given people with learning disabilities the opportunity to share their experiences with others, widening the critical safety messaging around CO. Due to the success of the original project, we have now extended the delivery until March 2026, investing a further £18,500.

Learning and feedback from projects like this one with Lifeskills that's focus specifically on carbon monoxide Awareness, help us better understand the impacts that CO has on different age groups and vulnerabilities. This is something we will continue to focus and will use this to shape future processes and support.

### Key achievements

**19**

Life like scenarios delivered through the educational facility

**333**

Bespoke sessions delivered

**54**

Professionals upskilled with CO safety messaging

**400**

CO alarms provided

## CASE STUDY 2

# Carbon Monoxide Awareness



## Gas Ambassadors

### FACT FILE

#### Project at a glance

Investment: £37,770

Forecast SROI: £0.46/£1

Duration: Sep 2022 – Mar 2026

Status: Extended

## Why we are delivering the project

From a health perspective, children are at higher risk of carbon monoxide poisoning because they breathe faster than adults. CO can build up in a child's body and replace oxygen in their blood and their brain, organs, and tissues can shut down due to a lack of oxygen causing long-lasting damage.

Young people rely on adults to keep them safe, meaning they have little control over the actions taken by the people they live with, such as servicing their gas appliances or installing a CO alarm – so its vital they are exposed to our critical safety messaging.

Research has shown that:

- awareness of CO remains low and is lowest in young adults, with only a quarter understanding the risks or what to do if they suspect the presence of CO
- severe CO poisoning causes approximately 60 accidental deaths per year in England and Wales (NHS).

By educating the younger generation with a for life message, we are able to cascade our vital safety messaging to



the people we visit, who then organically share what they learnt with their families friends and love ones.

We are committed to raising awareness of the dangers of CO and will continue to educate young people through our Gas Ambassadors.

## How we are delivering the project

WWU has a team of trained colleagues who work as Gas Safety Ambassadors delivering sessions across Wales and the south-west of England to raise awareness of gas safety and highlight the dangers of CO.

The sessions take children on a journey about how gas gets to their home from outside all the way up to their appliances. We then go on to educate them about the dangers around our sites, how to be gas safe and the hidden dangers of carbon monoxide. The aim of the sessions is to provide vital safety messaging to give them the knowledge to prevent and to take action in a gas emergency.

Our sessions have largely been catered for primary school children as they are delivered in a fun and engaging way Pupils are given a take-home pack which includes a





keyring, magnet and a leaflet outlining the relevant safety messages which can be shared with their families and loved ones to help keep them safe and warm. This helps the children put their knowledge into action at home, sharing and including this vital messaging with their loved ones.

We have also started a new phase of the programme whereby we are tailoring our content to suit a wider range of audiences and settings. This will allow us to reach more people in our local communities and provide them with the vital safety messaging to keep them safe in their homes.

*Having Wales & West Utilities come in to deliver the gas workshops was really useful. I didn't know enough about it to be able to tell the children. The children responded so well to the session. The following day the children came in to tell me how they'd been talking to their families, checking if they had a CO alarms, some already had them and were testing them. It just made everyone more aware. The children can still recite the national gas emergency number now too!*

**Teacher, Tredegar Park Primary School**

## Partnership and community impact

Our Gas Ambassador sessions are tailored to the relevant audience to maximise engagement and get the messages across. We actively target the areas most at risk including those who live in socially deprived areas. These disadvantaged communities are most likely to experience fuel poverty due to low income, being forced to make choices about how they can heat their home and how to get their gas appliances services.

By expanding our programme to reach a wider audience we can have a greater impact on the communities we serve, helping them keep safe and warm and understand what signs they should look out for when it comes to protecting themselves from the “silent killer.”

We are actively targeting schools and communities on our local gas pipe upgrade schemes, whereby we are working in the local area, to give people some awareness and understanding of who we are and how they can stay safe. We can include multiple channels of information and support in these sessions including our free priority support measures to the communities most in need.



*We want to equip as many young people as possible with vital gas safety information. Our sessions are delivered in a fun and informative way, with children taking a participative role. We have been running similar sessions for years now and the response from pupils, teachers and families has always been positive.*

**Andrew Firth,**  
**Gas Ambassador**

### Stakeholder support

In our business plan, we provided extensive evidence of support from stakeholders for us to continue to raise awareness of CO among those who are most at risk.

At our Stakeholder Prioritisation and Value for Money workshops, attendees ranked investment in CO awareness raising, alongside other vulnerability support, as their top priority.

To demonstrate our commitment to raising awareness of CO throughout young people we have uplifted the investment into our Gas Ambassador Project and have also extended the duration. Originally we invested £25,000 for the project to deliver sessions across our network between September 2022 and December 2025, with an aim of reaching 2,000 young people annually. We have now invested a total of £37,700 allowing us to commit to reaching a minimum of 4,000 children annually with safety messaging until March 2026.

### Evaluation and learning

When we started the project in September 2022, our original sessions purely focused on CO safety messaging. In January 2023 we redeveloped our programme to raise awareness of the gas industry in general, including messaging about what gas is and how it is transported into people's homes.

The take home packs and the content for the sessions was also revamped and co-designed with teaching to maximise the effectiveness of the messaging when engaging with young people.

Through evaluation of our existing Gas Ambassadors, we identified a gap in the support we have across the more rural areas of our network. As these areas are harder to get to it was difficult for us to co-ordinate logistically but identified the need for support as our rural areas include some of our most disadvantaged communities and people who are most at risk of CO. We have recently partnered with a third-party organisation called Bollo who help deliver the sessions through an event called Crucial Crew to make sure the messages are spread wide and far reaching those most in need.

#### Key achievements

**151**

Sessions delivered

**11,218**

Young people reached

**34**

Gas Safety Ambassadors



## CASE STUDY 3

# Carbon Monoxide Awareness



## Care & Repair Cymru Managing Better with Carbon Monoxide Monitors

### FACT FILE

#### Project at a glance

Investment: £200,000

Forecast SROI: £13/£1

Duration: Apr 2022 – Mar 2026

Status: In progress

## Why we are working together

People with sensory loss do not have access to specialist equipment, information, or advice on carbon monoxide in a way that is accessible and meets their needs. Those who are deaf or have profound hearing loss are particularly affected due to sound-based alarm systems being most commonly used and more work is needed to protect older people with sensory loss from the dangers of carbon monoxide.

Care & Repair Cymru is an award winning Welsh charity helping older people to live independently through repairs, adaptations and home maintenance. They share our values and ambition when it comes to supporting the most vulnerable in society especially when it comes to health and wellbeing which can be affected by the condition of a property.

Keeping people safe and warm through partnerships such as this one eases the pressure on social care, hospitals and the NHS, so its important that we do all we can to raise awareness of the dangers of CO, keeping in mind the challenges faced with people who have sensory loss.

## How we are working together

We are extending our successful partnership with Care & Repair Cymru particularly focusing on raising awareness of CO in older people across Wales incorporating further work to identify meaningful solutions for people experiencing sensory loss. The project will also utilise engagement opportunities to raise awareness of the Priority Services Register (PSR) referring those who are eligible to sign up for additional support.

Care & Repair Cymru have recruited specialist caseworkers, who are specifically trained to offer information and advice to help assist older people living with sensory loss to live independently at home. The caseworkers offer advocacy handheld support when engaging with older people by discussing the dangers of CO, and the signs and symptoms and actions they can take to make sure they are safe and warm in their own homes. As well as providing CO monitors, they invest time making sure people know how to use them and what to do if the alarm goes off.

## Partnership and community impact

When originally launched the service won the Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Friendly Diversity Award in recognition of the methods used to deliver the Managing Better programme. Since then, the project has gone from strength to strength delivering valuable support and meaningful outcomes for those who have been directly supported.

Feedback and case studies from this project demonstrate the need for this level of support across older people and, due to the success of delivery and the impact it has had on the wider community across Wales, we have invested an additional £40,000 extending the project until March 2026 to maximise the support services and to enable the exploration of innovative solutions to support people.

## Stakeholder support

Through extensive engagement during discussions between key stakeholders and as part of our Citizens'



Panel workshop focusing on supporting people living in vulnerable situations, participants commented on the significant potential impacts of carbon monoxide poisoning and the need to ensure the safety of customers in relation to this issue. This remains a key priority for WWU and something we are proud to advocate for.

The British Deaf Association surveyed 75 deaf people across four groups in Swansea, Barry, Cardiff and Bridgend. Following these interviews Care & Repair Cymru and WWU produced the “Managing Better with Carbon Monoxide Report”. One of the recommendations was to make specialist carbon monoxide equipment more accessible to deaf and hard of hearing clients and this is being achieved through this project.

### Evaluation and learning

Following the recommendations made by Care & Repair in their Managing Better report (published in August 2023), we have enhanced our partnership by providing adapted CO alarm systems for deaf and hard of hearing customers. Care & Repair Cymru have worked tirelessly to build relationships and collaborate with local fire services to create a referral pathway which enables additional support to communities through home safety visits.

Care & Repair carried out interviews with Managing Better caseworkers to gain a better understanding of the needs of people who have hearing loss or are deaf when it comes to having accessible information and equipment that can protect them from carbon monoxide. The delivery of the project has been adapted throughout and has been shaped by this feedback maximising the impact of delivery.

#### Key achievements

**4,173**

Individuals  
supplied

**3,879**

PSR  
registrations

**2,910**

CO alarms

**4,176**

CO awareness  
surveys



## CO awareness

Delivery partner/Project title/Description	Start date and end date/Project status	Investment	SROI	Outcomes to 31/03/2024
<b>Heavenly – Game Over Campaign</b> 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. The campaign maintains longevity of the digital media campaign.	March 21 – Feb 22 Completed	£30,000	Forecast £4.09/£1 Actual £4.09/£1	Directly reached 1,771,395 people through campaigning reach, impressions and click through.
<b>Life Skills Bristol – Adults with Learning Difficulties and Special Educational Needs Programmes (sponsorship)</b> Specialist support targeted at raising the awareness of the dangers of CO for adults with learning difficulties, and children in life-like settings.	April 22 – Mar 26 Extended and uplifted	£68,500	Forecast £5.51/£1 Actual £2/£1	Directly reached 20,027 people through school sessions/educational visits.
<b>DangerPoint – CO Heroes</b> Specialist support targeted at raising the awareness of the dangers of CO for children in life-like settings.	Apr 21 – Mar 25 In progress	£35,717	Forecast £5.51/£	Directly reached 9,205 people through school sessions/educational visits.
<b>Wales &amp; West Utilities – Gas Safety Ambassadors</b> Utilising workforce to raise awareness of the dangers of CO throughout primary schools within WWU network.	Sep 22 – Mar 26 Extended and uplifted	£37,770	Forecast £2.71/£1 Actual £1.18/£1	Directly reached 9,184 people through school sessions/educational visits.
<b>Care &amp; Repair – Managing Better with CO Monitors</b> Supporting the older community in Wales, with targeted support looking to raise awareness of the PSR, CO, and to provide free CO monitors where appropriate.	Apr 22 – Mar 26 In progress	£200,000	Forecast £13.00/£1 Actual £36.33/£1	Directly reached 3,439 people with CO advice/CO alarms and PSR referrals.
<b>South Wales Fire and Rescue – CO Alarms for the Profoundly Deaf</b> To support 10 households with profoundly deaf occupants, using specialist CO alarms and wearable tech; and to assess the value of the equipment.	Apr 22 – Mar 23 Completed	£5,000	Forecast £0.13/£1 Actual £0.23/£1	Directly reached 3 people and providing CO accessible alarms.
<b>RoSPA – Carbon Monoxide Hub</b> Raise awareness of the dangers of CO through the creation of a CO hub. Targeted communications campaign to promote and signpost the target audience to these resources.	Jun 23 – Sep 25 Extended (delayed start)	£100,000	Forecast £2.88/£1	Campaign launched in Jun 24. Q1 reporting outcomes expected in Sep 24.
<b>Wales &amp; West Utilities – WWU Led CO Awareness Campaigns (DWFRS, Codebreakers, WWU Ops etc.)</b> Various programmes focused on providing free CO alarms to the most vulnerable in our network, and raising the general awareness of the dangers of CO.	Apr 21 – Mar 26 In progress	£495,846	Forecast £1.07/£1	Directly reached 7,399 people through CO awareness and providing CO alarms.
<b>Wales &amp; West Utilities – CMDDA1</b> CO training for WWU FCOs to test and repair appliances.	Dec 23 – Mar 26 In progress	£35,000	N/A	10 engineers trained to date.



# Future look

## Project future look

**While energy affordability and keeping customers safe and warm will remain our priority going forward, we will continue to seek and follow up on feedback from key stakeholders to inform future programmes and ways of working.**

Years 4 and 5 of VCMA will be focusing on delivery of our projects and we will continue to award any unallocated funding to ensure we can support the most disadvantaged communities across our network with fuel poor and CO initiatives.





## Our strategy

We are in the process of reviewing our Vulnerability Strategy which will incorporate the VCMA strategy. This will look ahead for the remainder of RIIO GD3 (2026-2031) period. We have engaged with stakeholders to understand how vulnerabilities and the UK energy landscape will change over that period. We know that despite reducing energy costs, household debt including energy debt is at record levels and will take many years to resolve meaning continued challenges for homes to keep warm and maintain appliances.

## Future of energy

We will also see government decisions impacting the choices customers will have to heat their homes in the future including decisions on the future of the gas network and hydrogen for heating. It is therefore our intention to include support for customers and communities through our staff and engineers, and via our partnerships to support customers with independent advice, signposting and the use of innovative tools to guide customers through their options and where a change is required, how they can access installers and available funding.

## GD3 Future look

The GDNs are now well into the Business Planning cycle with Ofgem for the next regulatory period for 2026 to 2031, known as RIIO GD3. Ofgem has included a continuation of the VCMA in the RIIO GD3 consultation, but with a reduction in funding back to levels at the start of RIIO GD3. Whilst this would still provide WWU with around £2m per annum of VCMA funding, we would of course like more and continue to make the case with Ofgem for higher levels of funding. Ofgem is due to issue a decision document following the consultation by the end of June. This will allow us to start evaluating which projects we want to take into RIIO GD3 and managing that transition process in terms of resourcing and avoiding funding gaps. Where projects will not be taken forward, we will work with partners to continue to deliver sustainable services to customers.



# Working with us

Over the last 12 months, we have been busy investing money in projects to support those most in need with CO and Fuel Poor initiatives through our portfolio of VCMA projects.

We can't do this alone and need your help, so please get in touch if you would like to work with us.

- 1 [Complete an application form](#)
- 2 [Stakeholder newsletter](#)
- 3 [Email your ideas](#)
- 4 [Ofgem VCMA Governance](#)

*Thank you to our partners for supporting the delivery of the projects through our third year and for helping collate this report.*

*If you would like to work with us and have a project you think we should take up, either by ourselves or collaboratively with the other gas networks, then please get in touch.*

**Sophie Shorney,  
VCMA Manager**

## Closing Statement

*Whilst the additional VCMA funding was welcome, it has taken time to get new projects developed and for partners to recruit and mobilise. However, we now have a really good portfolio of projects covering all areas of the WWU network and supporting a wide range of demographics.*

*A huge thank you to the WWU team, the other GDN VCMA teams and our network of partnerships for creating such great projects that are making a real difference to homes and communities across our network and the wider UK.*

**Nigel Winnan,  
Customer and Social Obligations Manager**





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