

GDN Collaborative Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Energy Safeguarding - Helping older people live in safe and warm homes

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Updated March 2024

Updated July 2025

Updated December 2025

Gas Network Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Governance Document - Project Eligibility Criteria

Section 1 - Eligibility criteria for company specific projects (other than condemned essential gas appliance repair and replacement)

In order to qualify as a VCMA project, a project must:

VCMA Eligibility Criteria	Criteria Satisfied (Yes/No)
a) Have a positive, or forecasted positive Social Return on Investment (SROI), including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA project;	Yes
b) Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Provide support to consumers in vulnerable situations, and relate to energy safeguarding, or ii. Provide awareness on the dangers of CO, or iii. Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO; 	Yes
c) Have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these;	
d) Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations; and	Yes
e) Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved, or local) funding.	Yes

Section 2 - Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing, repair, and replacement projects

In order to qualify as a VCMA project, unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance servicing, repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:

a) A GDN has to isolate and condemn unsafe pipework or an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role;	NA
b) The household cannot afford to service, repair, or replace the unsafe pipework or essential gas appliance; and;	NA
c) Sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including national, devolved, or local government funding) to fund the unsafe pipework or essential gas appliance servicing, repair, or replacement.	NA

Section 3 - Eligibility criteria for collaborative VCMA projects

In order to qualify as a collaborative VCMA project, a project must:

a) Meet the above company specific and boiler repair and replace (if applicable) project eligibility criteria;	Yes
b) Have the potential to benefit consumers on the participating networks; and	Yes
c) Involve two, or more, gas distribution companies.	Yes

Gas Network Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Governance Document - Project Registration Table 2

Information Required	Description												
Project Title	Energy safeguarding, helping older people live in safe and warm homes												
Funding GDN(s)	The GDN(s) which register(s) the VCMA project Cadent, NGN, SGN and WWU												
Role of GDN(s) *For Collaborative VCMA Projects only	The specific role(s) of GDN(s) participating in a collaborative VCMA Project Lead(s): SGN and WWU Supported by Cadent and NGN												
New/Updated	Updated December 2025												
Date of PEA Submission	13 January 2023 Updated March 2024 Updated July 2025 Updated December 2025												
VCMA Project Contact Name, email, and Number	Kerry Potter Kerry.potter@sgn.co.uk Sophie Shorney Sophie.Shorney@wwutilities.co.uk												
Total Cost (£k)	<p>(Capture all costs) Total = £1,035,000 Age UK = £600,000 (+VAT) + £5,000 SROI forecast Age Scotland = £230,000 (+VAT) Age Cymru = £200,000 (+VAT)</p> <p>Updated March 2024 Total additional costs for extension of services Age Cymru = £262,312.25 (+VAT) Age Scotland = £511,520 (+VAT) Age UK = £486,188 (+VAT)</p> <p>Updated July 2025 Total additional cost for Age Scotland Winter Campaign Age Scotland - £129,866 (+VAT)</p> <p>Overall project total following all updates to July 2025 = £2,424,886.25</p> <p>Update December 2025 Age UK – Additional £5,000 (+VAT) Age Scotland – Additional £40,000 (+VAT)</p> <p>Overall project total following all updated to December 2025 = £2,469,886.25</p>												
Total VCMA Funding Required (£k)	<p>2 Year Programme Total = £1,035,000</p> <p>Age Cymru – Funded by WWU (Wales collab allowance) Year 1 = £100,000 Year 2 = £100,000</p> <p>Age Scotland – Funded by SGN (Scotland collab allowance) Year 1 = £115,000 Year 2 = £115,000</p> <p>Age UK (including independent SROI assessment) = £605,000</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Cadent</th> <th>NGN</th> <th>SGN</th> <th>W&WU</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>% Split</td> <td>57.4529%</td> <td>13.3309%</td> <td>21.6111%</td> <td>7.6051%</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Cadent	NGN	SGN	W&WU	Total	% Split	57.4529%	13.3309%	21.6111%	7.6051%	100%
Year	Cadent	NGN	SGN	W&WU	Total								
% Split	57.4529%	13.3309%	21.6111%	7.6051%	100%								

22/23	£175,231.37	£40,659.14	£65,914	£23,195.50	£305,000	
23/24	£172,358.72	£39,992.60	£64,833.44	£22,815.24	£300,000	
Total	£347,590.09	£80,651.74	£130,747.44	£46,010.74	£605,000	

Age Scotland

Updated November 2023 – Age Scotland (Scotland collab allowance)

Additional costs

2023/24 - £6,813

2024/25 - £187,259.71 (includes energy crisis funding and Co alarm costs)

2025/26 - £317,447.29 includes energy crisis funding)

Total = £511,520

Updated July 2025 – Age Scotland (Scotland collab allowance)

Additional costs 25/26

Winter Campaign £129,866

Updated December 2025 – Age Scotland (Scotland collab allowance)

Additional costs 25/26

Crisis support for winter campaign £40,000

Age Cymru

April 2024 – March 2026

Revised costs

April 2024/25 - £76,770.66

2025/26 - £185,541.59

Total - £262,312.25

Age UK

Additional costs (£486,188)

(Updated March 2024)

Extension of existing scope from 01/02/2025 until 31/03/2026

Commercial Party	Percentage Allocation	Cost
Cadent	57.45%	£232,165.53
NGN	13.33%	£53,869.64
SGN (SoGN only)	21.61%	£87,330.01
WWU	7.61%	£30,731.91

Additional scope from 01/04/2024 until 31/03/2026

Commercial Party	Percentage Allocation	Cost
NGN	31.33%	£25,720.74
SGN (SoGN only)	50.79%	£41,696.83
WWU	17.88%	£14,673.34

Update December 2025

Age UK – Additional £5,000 (+VAT) for SGN only

Revised overall Age UK total £491,188 (+VAT)

Overall project VCMA total following all updates to December 2025 = £2,469,886.25

Problem(s)

Fuel Poverty and older people

During 2021 it is estimated that three million English households were living in fuel poverty (Dept for Business, Energy and Business Strategy). Nearly half of low-income households would be living in hard to heat homes, and the rate of improvements is well below what is needed to lift people out of fuel poverty by a target date of 2030.

Fuel poverty is particularly serious for older people because they are particularly vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home, which increases the risk of stroke, heart attack and exacerbates pre-existing conditions such as cardiovascular disease and arthritis. It also impacts mental health, increasing feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and depression. Against a backdrop of Covid-19, many older people have increased levels of anxiety ([Age UK impact of COVID report](#)) exacerbated by instability in the retail market and a steep rise in utility costs ([Age UK Research briefing](#) – impact of energy cap rice on older households in England). Our operational teams and our community partner organisations are seeing more older people worried about what is happening not just with their energy company and energy costs but also how they will afford to keep warm and manage household essentials including their utilities.

The cost-of-living crisis

The cost of living has been increasing across the UK since early 2021 and in [May 2022, inflation reached 9%, its highest recorded level since 1982](#). This will significantly impact low-income homes in their ability to afford household essentials. It is also expected that the conflict in the Ukraine will also push household essential costs higher.

In addition, with energy price cap changes and the recent energy price guarantee we've seen energy prices double from October 2021 and October 2022.

Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age UK are the country's leading charities for older people, and they state that many older people simply won't be able to cover the further rise in living costs. This is particularly worrying for older people as they face higher heating needs, spend longer at home and are more vulnerable to the effects of the cold. The rising inflation and escalating prices are now threatening the standard of living of many pensioners on low incomes, creating uncertainty and anxiety especially as winter begins to bite. Part of the problem is that many older people are living in hard to heat, older homes and, as a result, often need use a lot of energy just to stay warm.

With around 1 million older people already living in fuel poverty, Age UK has warned that the rising energy costs could push a further [150,000 older people into fuel poverty](#). In [January 2022 Age UK research found](#) that as a result of the increase in costs:

- Over half said they'd have to limit the heating in their home
- A quarter said they'd have to choose between heating their home and the food they buy if energy bills increase substantially
- 43% said they would have to cut back, go into debt or simply not be able to afford to pay their bill.

The Government's own figures show that nearly a million eligible pensioner households are not receiving Pension Credit – an average of £32 a week, or over £1,600 a year, per household.

We understand from insights from recent research completed by Age UK and Age Scotland that many older people are unaware of the benefits they are eligible for so, with the cost-of-living crisis expected to deepen this year, one of the key ways that older people could be supported into a safe and warm home is by helping eligible older people access support and claim the benefits that they are entitled to.

We also understand that older people who own their own homes are less likely to be living in an energy efficient property or have their gas appliances routinely serviced putting them at greater risk of living in a cold, damp home or being at greater risk of CO exposure.

This partnership builds on the successful partnership co-designed between SGN and Age Scotland. During the past 18 months of this partnership the Age Scotland team were able to help over 20,000 older people access information and support to maintain a safe and warm home.

Age Scotland – Annual Big Survey Result
[Age Scotland insights](#)

Age UK insights

Since the start of our partnership, the service has supported 1186 older people with benefits checks over the phone, identifying a total of £6,905,368.20 in unclaimed benefits – an average of £3671.11 per person. Thanks to this partnership Age UK delivered more benefit checks between May – July 2023 than they did in the whole of 2022.

Update July 2025 - Age Scotland Winter Campaign

With growing numbers of older people in Scotland struggling to cope with the cost of living, it is vital that those on the lowest incomes and in fuel poverty receive everything they are entitled to, alongside immediate support to stay warm and well at home.

Every year in Scotland hundreds of millions of pounds in social security payments go unclaimed by older people due to a lack of awareness, difficulty in accessing them, stigma surrounding benefits, or just not knowing where to turn for help.

Age Scotland research tells us that around 123,000 pensioner households are missing out on pension credit, with a potential 1.7 billion pounds of pension credit not reaching those eligible low-income pensioners. Pension Credit is an essential benefit, which opens the door to more additional support and those low-income households not receiving pension credit can be at a higher risk of being in fuel poverty.

Age Scotland's 2025 housing and energy survey shows a stark increase in older people experiencing fuel poverty. 51% of all respondents of the survey were in fuel poverty of some kind, a sharp increase from the 39% who stated this in the previous survey in 2023. A further 21% cited living in extreme fuel poverty.

Whilst this survey comes after the winter that older people were disproportionately affected by the removal of the Winter Fuel Payment, predictions are that despite the re-introduction of it in Winter 2025, many older people will still be struggling with the effects of last winter and at best, fuel poverty in older people will go back to the rates seen in 2023 – 39%.

Additionally older people in Scotland face a greater risk of fuel poverty than UK counterparts due to typically higher energy bills Scottish pensioners face compared to England and Wales, and longer, colder winters.

Qualitative data from the survey confirms a negative impact of financial insecurity and cold homes on older people's physical and mental health. Many older people are cutting back on using their energy due to the current cost-of-living and it is known that cold homes can exacerbate respiratory problems, heart disease and other health conditions for older people.

In addition, when a gas engineer enters someone's home, they might see someone presenting examples of vulnerability and that person may be needing additional support to cope with the rising cost of living. These could be:

- Lack of food – the person may be very thin
- The home may be cold
- Presence of damp/mould in the home.
- The person may be living out of one room in their house.
-

With training and a clear signposting leaflet, we want to ensure all responders have the knowledge and resources to refer to Age Scotland and get direct, efficient help to the person in need without hesitation or hiatus through the provision of a holistic, person-centred support dependent upon individual circumstances.

In addition to helping those in need, the secondary effect is that the responder may themselves suffer from finding an occupier in need.

	<p>Update December 2025</p> <p>Age Scotland Winter Campaign – Crisis Support</p> <p>While we anticipated an increase in helpline demand and invested in additional resources we received demand well beyond expectations. Our helpline experienced a dramatic spike, receiving over 500 calls per day compared to an average of 70, placing considerable strain on capacity.</p> <p>As a result of this unprecedented demand and the strong preference for warmth bundles and so far we've distributed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 338 Warmth Bundles • 94 Heated Throws • 202 Food Vouchers • 204 Energy Vouchers <p>We now have an opportunity to support over 200 older people who have enquired about the availability of warmth bundles in target communities including Inverclyde an area of higher financial vulnerability.</p> <p>Age UK x SGN Keep Warm Packs</p> <p>Winter poses serious risks for older people, particularly those living in fuel poverty or with long-term health conditions. An estimated 1.9 million older households are expected to be in fuel poverty, with 43% of people aged 60+ cutting back on heating and 21% reporting their homes are consistently too cold. These conditions contribute to around 30,000 excess winter deaths annually, highlighting the urgent need for targeted support.</p> <p>For many older people, a benefit entitlement check is a practical step towards accessing help but often this support is not realised for a number of months. As part of this expansion of our current aim to pilot the issuing of crisis funds to 100 older people along with their benefits confirmation letter. This will be sent to those who we identify to be most in need and facing the difficulty of choosing between heating their home and eating a hot meal. If successful we would like the opportunity to extend this offering.</p>
Scope and Objectives	<p>Project Scope</p> <p>Bringing together the UK's leading older people's charities, Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age UK – we will support people in vulnerable situations by providing energy safeguarding services to older people who are in or at risk of fuel poverty. The collaborative partnership will look to ensure that older people are aware of and are assisted to access the Priority Services Register and support services that help increase household income including benefits checks and provide advice on how to increase household energy efficiency and increase awareness on the signs, symptoms, and mitigations of carbon monoxide harm.</p> <p>The programmes will be delivered via regional model and learnings between the partners will be shared openly recognising that the three partners will need to co-ordinate within regional support frameworks – all working to a common outcome to help older people maintain a safe and warm home.</p> <p>Age Cymru will provide energy safeguarding services by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a bespoke training programme for front line engineers at W&WU to identify needs in older people and how to effectively engage and increase engineer confidence into specialist advice • Completing an annual older people insights survey on energy matters, overall confidence, access to energy switching and other energy initiatives to monitor engagement on energy market • Providing an accessible and efficient referral pathway for emergency gas engineers and other front-line responders • Providing a dedicated energy adviser skill set to supporting older people with their energy needs alongside existing benefits and helpline teams • Building a support network and reach into hard-to-reach communities committed to providing an inclusive service for all older people, ethnic minority groups, those with sensory disabilities, those with communication needs as well

- as those in remote areas of Wales and those experiencing digital poverty
- Building support services over the partnership period to develop the energy related advice and provision of information and support Age Cymru Advice provide and knowledge in local Partner services.

Age Scotland will deliver energy safeguarding services by:

- Providing a bespoke training programme for front line engineers at SGN to identify needs in older people and how to effectively engage and increase engineer confidence into specialist advice (tbc)
- Providing an accessible and efficient referral pathway for emergency gas engineers and other front-line responders
- Increasing CO Awareness in older people and providing an accessible CO alarm to those who need this installed in partnership Scottish Fire & Rescue
- Providing a dedicated energy team to supporting older people with their energy needs alongside existing benefits and helpline teams
- Building support networks and reach into hard-to-reach communities committed to providing an inclusive service for all older people, ethnic minority groups, those with sensory disabilities, those with communication needs across Scotland with resources and tailored community events to effectively engage older people in at risk communities with energy safeguarding services
- Completing an annual older people insights survey on energy matters, overall confidence, and current challenges faced by older people to manage a safe and warm home
- Promoting the support services available to older people that help maintain a safe and warm home
- Delivering workshops focussed on income maximisation and financial resilience including benefits for people in later working life, newly devolved benefits, and benefits for older people.

Age UK will provide energy safeguarding services by:

- Build a new dedicated specialist team who will provide 'Benefit check+' service: Benefits checks and support to register older people on the PSR. This will help older people to increase household income and be more financially resilient to the increase in energy prices.
- Training the existing Age UK Advice team to be able to triage clients, provide simple advice and where needed referred over to a trained adviser – appointment-based service with the energy safeguarding team
- Providing energy safeguarding services provided for older people in an accessible way – ensuring channel options meet older people's needs e.g., online, printed guides and referrals to other Age UK services
- Marketing of the Age UK Advice Line and the services to invite older people to access help to stay safe and warm e.g., benefits check through a variety of channels to older people, their families, and carers
- Promoting and sharing of the online benefits calculator to support older people and their families and carers access trusted information on benefit entitlement
- Promoting of the support services Age UK offers including energy information and advice, through leaflets and guides distributed by Age UK
- Signposting vulnerable older people identified by frontline GDN employees onto the Age UK services where an older person would benefit from the support offered.

Collaborative partnership objectives

This project aims to support older people in vulnerable situations by providing energy safeguarding to older people who are in or at risk of fuel poverty, with a focus on helping them with trusted information on benefits entitlement, energy matters including current energy support schemes and access to safeguarding services including the Priority Services Register.

Update Age Cymru (April 2024 – March 2026)

- Increase from 1,500pa to 2,500pa older people supported through the services
- Extending the service until March 2026

Update November 2023 (Age Scotland)

- Provide energy voucher for older people in energy crisis
- Upskilling the energy advisory team to take on additional skills in benefit checks and fuel crisis support allocation
- Supporting older people to access Pension Credits.
- Extending the service until March 2026

Update April 2024 (Age UK)

- Extension of existing partnership scope until March 2026

NGN, SGN and WWU only;

- Expand support to include a form filler service on the Advice Line supporting older people with complex forms especially Attendance Allowance that supports 350 people
- Develop and launch a pilot of crisis support to 100 older people

Update July 2025

Age Scotland Winter Campaign

The objective of the Winter Campaign is to reach those older people who may be missing out on vital benefits and living in fuel poverty, offering them the opportunity to have a benefits and entitlement check via the Age Scotland helpline to improve their long-term situation and when required, providing a food/fuel voucher or a heat the person pack, to provide immediate short-term support.

The helpline will provide a holistic approach to service and offer older people with additional support as required throughout the process, for example referring an older person to the friendship service following a benefit check.

This objective will be carried out through a 'Be warm and well this winter' campaign using the following engagement methods.

Age Scotland has access to data on households across Scotland who are likely to be missing out on eligible Pension Credit. People missing out on pension credits are low-income households and more likely to experience fuel poverty. Age Scotland will target 75,000 of these households via a partially addressed mailer, inviting them to contact the Age Scotland helpline for a benefits assessment, energy advice including carbon monoxide awareness, Priority Services Register awareness and signposting, and the potential to receive a food/fuel voucher or heat the person pack.

This mailer will be supplemented by a Meta campaign targeting the same postcodes to enhance recognition.

The campaign will be included in Age Scotland monthly email bulletins reaching over 6,000 people.

Due to the increased demand this campaign will put on the Age Scotland helpline, additional resource will be added to the service in the form of a funded PT advisor over the 6-month period of the campaign to ensure response in a timely manner.

SGN engineers will also be provided with tools in the form of a) refreshed training on how to identify a vulnerable person, and b) production of a leaflet for engineers to hand out / refer older people in the homes they visit to Age Scotland.

Update December 2025

Age Scotland Winter Campaign – Crisis Support

	<p>The campaign aims to continue supporting households by providing additional heated throws, a practical solution which is far more likely to be accepted within the Age Scotland community than fuel vouchers. This essential item will be distributed to those already on the waitlist and to older people living in some of Scotland's most deprived areas. Alongside this, recipients will receive holistic energy and wellbeing advice, ensuring they remain warm, safe, and supported throughout the winter.</p> <p>Age UK x SGN Keep Warm Packs To help keep older people in Southern England warm in winter, Age UK will distribute 230 Keep Warm Parks in SGN's Southern network area across winter 25/26. Each Keep Warm Pack will include a fleece blanket, hat, snood, gloves, socks, and a thermos flask. These packs have consistently received positive feedback from older people and will seamlessly complement the benefit checks and broader support provided by the Age UK Advice Line.</p>
Why the Project is Being Funded Through the VCMA	<p>The project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria as it will provide energy safeguarding services including direct advice and support to households where vulnerability exists for older people at risk of or living in fuel poverty.</p> <p>This project will also engage on key matters to build energy resilience for older people, and key support services including the Priority Services Register whilst delivering a forecast positive Social Return on Investment.</p> <p>Updated January 2024</p> <p>This partnership service goes above and beyond our core responsibilities as a Gas Distribution Network and is eligible under the VCMA funding criteria as it will provide energy safeguarding services, empowering vulnerable households to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably.</p> <p>This partnership aligns to the GDNs shared commitment to deliver support services for customers aligned to our four strategic pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Services Beyond the Meter 2. Supporting Priority Customer Groups 3. Fuel Poverty & Energy Affordability 4. Carbon Monoxide Awareness <p>This project aligns to strategic pillars 2 (with outcomes in 3 and 4).</p>
Evidence of Stakeholder /Customer Support	<p>Age Scotland – Age Scotland's and SGN Energy Survey 2022 in comparison to AS Housing Survey from previous years shows that:</p> <p>Older households in Scotland are currently one of the largest demographics impacted by fuel poverty; during summer 2022, it is now estimated that 4 in 10 older households (42%) are already living in fuel poverty, with this figure expected to increase rapidly throughout the winter period. With many of these households on low and fixed incomes and already living in some of Scotland's most energy inefficient properties they will face significant challenges during the cost-of-living crisis.</p> <p>The number of older households satisfied that they could heat their home to a comfortable level has fallen dramatically over the last four years; with 88% respondents stating they were either 'very satisfied' or 'quite satisfied' in 2018, to 77% in 2020, and just 46% in 2022. Those less satisfied with their heating levels were predominately represented in households with gross annual incomes totalling less than £10,000, and households where occupants had long standing health problems or disabilities.</p> <p>Similarly, the number of older households struggling to pay their fuel bills has increased over the last four years, with 13% always or sometimes struggling to pay their fuel bills in 2018, rising to 32% in 2022. This correlates with the sharp increase of older households experiencing concern or anxiety about the prospect of paying their bills; rising from 49% always concerned in 2020, to 76% in 2022. As a result of concerns of</p>

rising energy prices, many households have already started cutting back on both food and heat ahead of the winter period and growing proportions of older people are experiencing severe anxiety and strains on their mental health as a result.

Positively, only 4% of older households in 2022 had not installed any energy efficiency measures in their home, compared to 19% in 2020. The most common features installed were central heating systems (71%), double glazing (67%), loft insulation (56%) and a new boiler (42%). Despite relatively high proportions of older households installing efficiency measures within their home; awareness of energy efficiency support has remained consistently low amongst older households over the last four years. In 2022, 47% of respondents had never heard of or used Home Energy Scotland, 54% respondents had never heard of the Warmer Homes Scotland Scheme and 58% of respondents were not aware of any of their more local Area Based Schemes. In 2020, over half the sample of respondents (55%) were unaware of any of the above listed schemes that form the Scottish Governments main program of funding energy efficiency improvements and reducing fuel poverty. This illustrates the scale of the challenge in reaching some of the hardest to reach (often digitally excluded) vulnerable households in Scotland to help keep them warm and safe during the winter.

Recent changes in legislation such as the requirement to have interlinked smoke and heat alarms and carbon monoxide alarms installed in Scotland have reinforced the need to ensure households are kept safe, especially in relation to how they heat their home. Whilst respondents showed a high awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning (94%), only 79% had a working carbon monoxide alarm installed. Further only 68% of households had the new mandatory interlinked smoke and heat alarms installed also. Registration levels on the Priority Services Register, a vital safeguarding measure for vulnerable customers is still far too low; our recent survey showed that whilst 76% of respondents would be eligible for the PSR, only 34% had registered.

Age UK – Policy position statement

Everyone should be able to live in a warm, energy efficient home, and the energy market should work in the interests of consumers. Following review of Priority Services Registers, energy companies should better identify and support vulnerable older people.

NGN Customer Engagement Group (CEG)

This group provides an independent oversight into the actions we take to support customers in vulnerable situations (CIVS). Checking we've got it right – using a range of engagement mechanisms to assess and challenge our response to stakeholder feedback, ensuring we are responding in the right way. This has offered us robust challenges into how we deal with CIVS, which meets the needs of our stakeholders. This group acknowledges the additional challenges faced by older people within our network, especially during the cost-of-living crisis when fear and lack of understanding can result in dangerous and unnecessary fuel rationing, and lack of confidence in terms of managing household energy budgets. The CEG group recognises the value of projects supporting CIVS, both on an individual level and also in relation to the wider social value, whereby increasing overall health outcomes can assist in reducing impact and cost to health services.

Covid 19 Research & NGN Vulnerable Customer Research

NGN commissioned some CV-19 specific research in June 2020. The main access-related impacts of the pandemic are in relation to difficulties faced by those with poor digital access, often in rural and disadvantaged areas. The research also highlighted that older people, especially in their 70s and above or with underlying health conditions, have greatly increased physical vulnerability. Many will also face increased social and economic vulnerabilities, and they should be a very high priority group in terms of response. The vulnerability of this group is amplified by other factors, such as lower digital access and awareness and higher dependency on public transport – which many in this group will be seeking to avoid using. Other impacts affecting older people are likely to include isolation and loneliness, bereavement, and limited access to services, in particular public transport.

Further research into vulnerable customer groups undertaken by NGN in 2022 shows that in total, the NGN area has an estimated 1.32 million people aged 65 and over, and about 165,000 people are aged 85 or older. The NGN area includes a number of rural and coastal areas within which the prevalence of those aged 85+ is often higher. In these areas, additional vulnerability factors such as access to services and fuel poverty are also often present, with the potential to impact older people to a greater extent. The report also identified areas within the NGN network with higher levels of age-related health conditions such as hearing loss and dementia.

	<p>SGN Customer Engagement Group and Vulnerable Steering Group</p> <p>During the shaping of the SGN business plan we committed to, over the 5-year price control, to support over 250,000 vulnerable customers to use gas safely, affordably, and efficiently. To ensure that we adapt to market conditions we continue to engage our SGN Vulnerable Steering Group, they help us shape our vulnerability and CO strategies and our priorities for GD2 based on current need. Our expert stakeholders representing a range of vulnerable customer segments guided us to work with existing organisations that already support those in crisis and where we are able to broaden the reach or increase the capacity of those established charities that support people most in need. It is with guidance and support from our dedicated Vulnerable Steering Group that SGN prioritise support for those most likely to need help from their utility company due to low incomes, those in extreme financial vulnerability and in fuel crisis.</p> <p>GDN Vulnerability Collaboration Group</p> <p>Representatives from all four GDNs are supportive of delivering tailored support services to older people and those who are more likely to be digitally excluded as it aligns to our overall strategic ambition to increase awareness of the Priority Services Register to those most likely to benefit from the support linked to this service.</p> <p>GDN GD2 Consumer Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Steering Group</p> <p>The steering group membership includes senior leaders from each representative gas network and representation from key consumer advocacy groups including Citizens Advice, National Energy Action, and Energy UK. The steering group ensures that the VCMA is managed in accordance with Ofgem guidelines and the strategic ambitions of the group. This initiative was discussed by the chair of the GDN Vulnerability Collaboration group, and the initiative was broadly supported.</p>
Outcomes, Associated Actions and Success Criteria	<p>Details of the VCMA Project, outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these, interim milestones and how the Funding Licensee will evaluate whether the project has been successful. Each action should have a proportion of the funding allocated.</p> <p>Through the collaborative partnership we aim to reach older people through a range of inclusive mechanisms and offer support that helps them access support services designed to keep them safe and warm in their homes.</p> <p>All three partners will be funded to provide additional resources into their existing advice line services with expertise in energy, promotion of key the energy safeguarding service the Priority Services Register and ways to increase household income through benefits checks.</p> <p>Age Cymru</p> <p>Age Cymru will employ additional resources to provide energy safeguarding and support such as raising awareness in the community, advice and benefits teams to ensure that the Age Cymru team have the skills to empower older people to engage in the energy market, to access sign up to services and schemes where they are eligible and to increase the safety and warmth of their homes as a result.</p> <p>The partnership is designed to deliver the following outcomes each year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of customer facing teams at WWU • Referral pathway to support older people with energy safeguarding and income maximisation • Annual insights survey • Upskilling of frontline teams at Age Cymru including local partners • Dedicated skillsets and resources in the advice and benefits team to support older people • Promotion and delivery of Community Events focussing on energy related matters and CO awareness • Over 3,000 older people engaged on safely, efficiently, and affordable use of energy <p>To monitor our impact, we will provide regular partner monthly reporting as well as a</p>

	<p>quarterly overview demonstrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals from employees into Age Cymru • Number of people supported reducing energy costs • Number of people engaged on energy switching • PSR Sign Ups • % Increase in confidence and awareness to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably • CO Alarms • Completed CO Awareness Surveys • Number of people accessing home adaptions • Community Events • Wellbeing impacts • Case Studies and outcomes <p>Update Age Cymru (April 2024 – March 2026)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase from 1,500pa to 2,500pa older people supported through the services • Extending the service until March 2026 <p>Age Scotland</p> <p>Age Scotland will be able to continue in line with the first year of the partnership with SGN by providing a dedicated team that provides energy safeguarding and support such as building capacity and financial resilience in the community, information and advice energy helpline adviser as well as training the wider helpline team to ensure that the Age Scotland team have the skills to empower older people to engage in the energy market, to access sign up to services and schemes where they are eligible and to increase the safety and warmth of their homes as a result, whilst being able to identify ways to maximise income.</p> <p>The partnership is designed to deliver the following outcomes each year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triage calls to circa 25,000 clients via the Age Scotland information and advice team for onward referral onto the energy adviser • Dedicated energy and benefits team trained to provide support to older people who require energy and income maximisation advice • Deliver (90) community events to support older people with energy related matters reaching (800 people) and building financial resilience. <p>To monitor our impact, we will provide regular partner monthly reporting as well as a quarterly overview demonstrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calls triaged to identify the need to of the energy advice services • Energy advice calls • CO Awareness session – awareness scores • Workshops held and people engaged • PSR sign ups • Client financial gain figures • Benefits checks completed • Online benefit checks completed through our online benefits calculator • Wellbeing friendship calls • Case studies and workshop outcomes <p>Update November 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 2025 – March 2026 – an additional 18,000 older people provided with information and advice for onward referral onto the energy adviser • Increase the energy and benefits advice team to include fuel poverty advisers delivering case worker support to 5,150 older people • Deliver an additional 95 community events to support older people with energy related matters reaching 950 people and building financial resilience • Provide 2,218 fuel vouchers to households in energy crisis over winter • In addition to the benefits checks, 1,000 older people will be supported to access Pension Credits <p>Update July 2025 Age Scotland Winter Campaign</p> <p>Through this Age Scotland Winter Campaign partnership, the project will support 2,500</p>
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	<p>older people in Scotland through the helpline and triage service, and with 4,500 receiving support via the Age Scotland website. Age Scotland will run a targeted multi-channel awareness campaign to provide CO and PSR awareness, basic energy efficiency advice, and an invite to contact the Age Scotland helpline for a benefits assessment and more in-depth support.</p> <p>Campaign reach includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75,000 older person households via a partially addressed mailer • Meta campaign targeting the same postcodes as the mailer • Over 6,000 older people via Age Scotland email bulletins • Approximately 7,000 older person households via a feature in the winter edition of Advantage Magazine • 15,000 older person households via the 2026 Age Scotland Calendar <p>Online support includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm and Well information guide covering Energy Costs, Saving energy in the home, and Home Safety and emergencies • A Guide to understanding your bill • A Guide to understanding your energy performance • A bespoke campaign landing page that includes CO advice and information on and the PSR with links to sign up. <p>The helpline and triage service are forecast to provide the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,500 older people triaged through the helpline service, provided with information around income maximisation, energy advice and safeguarding advice • 1,600 income maximisation/benefit check basic assessments, which determine if someone is eligible to go through a full benefit check process • 800 detailed income maximisation and benefit checks, making sure an older person is in receipt of all benefits/grants/discounts. Anticipate over £1m potential client financial gain. • 800 households provided access to fuel/food vouchers or heat the person packs funded in the November 2023 update. • 400 in-depth energy usage and behavioural advice, including billing and meter support. • 300 Priority Service Register sign-ups, energy, and water. • 340 health and wellbeing advice/friendship line. <p>To monitor impact in line with the above, Age Scotland will evaluate and provide results during, and at the end of the campaign using quantitative and qualitative data.</p> <p>Update December 2025 Age Scotland Winter Campaign – Crisis Support</p> <p>Provision of heated throws to 755 older people, living in some of the most deprived areas in Scotland.</p> <p>To monitor impact in line with the above, Age Scotland will evaluate and provide results during, and at the end of the campaign using quantitative and qualitative data.</p> <p>Age UK Age UK will be able to increase its capacity to provide energy safeguarding and support such as a benefits check+ (benefits check and PSR information and support to sign up), guides and factsheets on energy and the services Age UK can offer.</p> <p>The partnership is designed to deliver the following outcomes each year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circa 22,000 clients triaged via the Age UK 'Level 1' Advice Line. Some people will call Age UK's Advice Line specifically for help with their energy bills and/or to ask for a benefit check to ensure they are receiving their whole entitlement. Others call for a range of unrelated reasons, but during conversation with our advisor financial issues will be discussed, and it will be agreed that a Benefit Check+ would be beneficial. • Dedicated team of advisors trained on energy safeguarding, including benefits checks, informing older people of the benefits of the PSR, how they can sign up and signing them up if they would like or need assistance supporting circa 2,300 older people per year
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 200,000 online users of the Age UK benefits calculator to assess unclaimed benefit opportunities and increase household income, in addition the Age UK energy safeguarding team can support the assessment of benefits entitlement. <p>Update February 2024 (extended scope)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 2025 – March 2026 – an additional 22,000 older people provided with information and advice for onward referral to support on cost of living or onto the benefits entitlement advisers Provide an additional support to 2610 older people as delivered via advisers who deliver benefits entitlement check and inform people of the benefits of the PSR Distribute 100,000 Age UK Information Guides to older people on financial support and ways they can reduce energy costs Maintain the support of our Benefits Calculator that reaches around 200,000 people each year <p>Update March 2024 NGN, SGN and WWU only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 2024 – March 2026 – 350 older people (175 per year) will be supported with the application processing of complex and long forms including attendance allowance 100 older people will be supported with a voucher to help when in crisis <p>To monitor our impact in line with the above, we will monitor and report back on a quarterly basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of calls triaged through the respective advice teams Number of personalised appointments delivered through the respective funded advice teams Number of community events (Age Cymru & Age Scotland) Value of benefits identified through the Benefit Check+ appointments. Number of people informed about PSR Number of benefits checks completed online <p>As a collaboration we will;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer feedback from the service users for satisfaction and impact as part of our wider impact and evaluation of the respective organisations (Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age UK) Work closely with our partners to share insights, and address issues faced to continue to develop our services by need through the named partnership lead who will meet regularly to share learning and develop the partnership Provide stories to highlight the impact of the programme on frontline support and impact of individuals supported by the initiative from partners <p>Update December 2025</p> <p>Age UK x SGN Keep Warm Packs</p> <p>From December 2025 using clear eligibility criteria, the Age UK Advice Line will identify clients most in need of a Keep Warm Pack in SGNs Southern network area. These packs will be dispatched directly to recipients' homes, offering immediate warmth and comfort. This practical support will complement our existing Warm Homes programme, helping us to extend our reach and deepen our impact, improving both physical comfort and emotional reassurance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 230 older people in SGN's Southern network area will receive a Keep Warm Pack to help keep them safe and warm through winter.
Project Partners and Third Parties Involved	<p>Details of Project Partners or third-party involvement.</p> <p>Regional delivery partners – all with their respective local referral and signposting networks;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age Cymru Age Scotland Age UK <p>SGN & WWU – lead partners guiding the coordination of mobilisation, training, and delivery until 2026 supported by Cadent and NGN.</p> <p>For Age UK's extended project scope – SGN will lead on behalf of SGN, NGN and WWU.</p>

	<p>Potential for New Learning</p> <p>Details of what the GDN(s) expect to learn and how the learning will be disseminated.</p> <p>Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age UK will conduct ongoing evaluation of the impact of the partnership as well as provide case studies and feedback from beneficiaries of the partnership. This will help the partners and the GDNs better understand how to support older people struggling with fuel poverty.</p> <p>Age Cymru and Age Scotland will also complete annual research the outcomes of which will be shared across partners and broader to support the advocacy of older people in energy.</p>												
<p>Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations, including NPV</p>	<p>We worked with leading social impact research consultancy SIA Partners to carry out an assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to our services for vulnerable customers incorporated in this partnership.</p> <p>Carrying out an in-depth assessment of the predicted outcomes we forecast a positive net social return of £8.38 for every £1 spent.</p> <p>Updated March 2024 (Additional Scope)</p> <p>Using the new Social Return on Investment (SROI) tool developed in partnership with SIRIO Strategies, WWU have reviewed this project, and has forecasted a positive SROI for the additional scope of the project as detailed below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="414 923 1399 1125"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">3-year results</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="3" style="text-align: center;">Economic</td> <td>Total gross present value</td> <td>£59,131,230.45</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NPV</td> <td>£56,950,622.61</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SROI</td> <td>£26.12</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	3-year results			Economic	Total gross present value	£59,131,230.45	NPV	£56,950,622.61	SROI	£26.12		
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	<p>Update July 2025 - Age Scotland Winter Campaign</p> <p>As the Age Scotland Winter Campaign is in addition to the core project and only impacting SGN Customers in Scotland we have separated this out as a standalone activity for SROI assessment, not impacting on the core project forecast.</p> <p>We have used the GDN Rulebook developed in partnership with SIRIO Strategies as part of the Industry Standard Social Value Framework to carry out this assessment of the predicted outcomes linked to the Age Scotland Winter Campaign 25/26.</p> <p>Carrying out this assessment based on the predicted outcomes for this activity we forecast a positive net Social Return on Investment of £21.22.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="414 1439 1283 1619"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total cost</td> <td>£129,866</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total gross present value</td> <td>£2,886,014.47</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Net Present Value (NPV)</td> <td>£2,756,148.47</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SROI</td> <td>£21.22</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Update December 2025 – Age Scotland and Age UK Winter Warmth</p> <p>As the Age Scotland Winter Campaign – Crisis Support and Age UK Keep Warm Packs Winter Campaign are dedicated winter warmth support activities in SGN only network areas we have separated this and updated the July 2025 SROI forecast for the Winter Campaign.</p> <p>We have used the GDN Rulebook developed in partnership with SIRIO Strategies as part of the Industry Standard Social Value Framework to carry out this assessment of the predicted outcomes linked to the Age Scotland Winter Campaign – Crisis Support, and Age UK Keep Warm Packs Winter 25/26 updates. Carrying out this assessment based on the predicted outcomes for this activity we forecast a positive net Social Return on Investment of £17.13.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="414 2001 1283 2086"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total cost</td> <td>£174,866</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total gross present value</td> <td>£3,170,187.34</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Total cost	£129,866	Total gross present value	£2,886,014.47	Net Present Value (NPV)	£2,756,148.47	SROI	£21.22	Total cost	£174,866	Total gross present value	£3,170,187.34
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VCMA Project Start and End Date	<p>Detail start and end date of the VCMA project and, where relevant, the VCMA project that proceeded this initiative.</p> <p>Phase 1 - 01 February 2023 to 31 January 2025</p> <p>Extension - Partnership extended to 31 March 2026</p>						
Geographical Area	<p>Details of where the VCMA Project will take place. If the VCMA Project is collaborative, the Funding Licensee area(s) in which the project will take place should be identified.</p> <p>England, Scotland, and Wales</p>						
Internal governance and project management evidence	<p>SGN and WWU have worked alongside Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age UK on behalf of all of the gas networks to co-design this partnership and ensure that its ambition contributes to the delivery of the gas networks collaborative Vulnerability Strategy and adheres to the updated VCMA governance criteria.</p> <p>The initial SROI was completed by SIA Partners in January 2023 using the shared DNO methodology with GDN specific proxies included.</p> <p>For the updated 2024 – 2026 partnership, the SROI has been assessed by WWU with support from SIRIO Strategies using the newly developed Industry Standard Social Value Framework supported by the GDN Rulebook, this includes consideration of the current partnership delivered outcomes.</p> <p>As detailed above have reviewed the additional partnership scope which has been forecast at adding an additional £26.12 for each £1 invested, this will be monitored closely to ensure we adhere to the VCMA governance criteria and over deliver as we did in 2023.</p> <p>To support the partnership to deliver the success criteria outcomes as detailed, the Age Collaboration partners will continue to work closely to ensure a quality service for older people. Age UK and Age Scotland will continue to meet monthly to review partner challenges, and quarterly to review outcomes, learn, share best practices, and address any delivery issues, and this is replicated with WWU and Age Cymru.</p> <p>The PEA has been drafted by the business lead Kerry Potter from SGN and Sophie Shorney from WWU and has been reviewed by representatives of the GDN Vulnerability Working Group and signed off by the senior leaders of all participating GDNs.</p> <p>Update July 2025 Age Scotland Winter Campaign As detailed above, we will continue to work closely with Age Scotland to ensure a quality service for older people in Scotland, including for activity through this dedicated winter initiative.</p> <p>We have reviewed the additional scope and forecasted outcomes for this winter campaign, using the GDN Rulebook these have been forecast at delivering an additional £21.22 for each £1 invested. This is separate to the SROI forecast for the core project and not an update to that SROI forecast. This will be monitored closely to ensure we adhere to the VCMA governance criteria and aim to over deliver.</p> <p>Update December 2025 Age Scotland Winter Campaign – Crisis Support and Age UK x SGN Keep Warm Packs As detailed above, we will continue to work closely with Age Scotland and Age UK to ensure the Heated Throws and Keep Warm Packs go to older people most in need through these dedicated winter initiatives.</p> <p>We have reviewed the additional forecasted outcomes from these winter warmth updates, using the GDN Rulebook these have been forecast at delivering an additional £17.13 for each £1 invested when combined with the SROI forecast for the Age Scotland Winter Campaign. This will be monitored closely to ensure we adhere to the VCMA governance criteria and aim to over deliver.</p>						

Gas Network Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Governance Document - PEA Control Table

In order to ensure that a VCMA project is registered in accordance with the Ofgem VCMA governance document (incl. project eligibility assessment), the below table should be completed as part of the project registration process.

Stage 1: GDN Collaboration Group PEA Review

Meeting date review completed: 18/03/2024, Updated December 2025

Review completed by:

GDN:	Name:	Job Title:
Cadent	Mary O'Shaughnessy	Safeguarding Specialist
NGN	Jill Walker	Social Strategy Project Manager
SGN	Kerry Potter	Group Social Impact Manager
WWU	Sophie Shorney	Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance Manager

Stage 2: GD2CVG Panel Review

Meeting date sign off agreed: 26/03/2024 Updated December 2025

Review completed by:

GDN:	Name:	Job Title:
Cadent	Phil Burrows	Head of Customer Vulnerability Social Programme Delivery
NGN	Eileen Brown	Customer Experience Director
SGN	Maureen McIntosh	Director of Customer Services
WWU	Sophie Shorney	Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance Manager

Step 3: Participating GDN individual signatory sign-off: Updated December 2025

GDN	Name:	Job Title:	Signature:	Date:
Cadent:	Phil Burrows	Head of Customer Vulnerability Social Programme Delivery		
NGN:	Eileen Brown	Customer Experience Director		
SGN:	Maureen McIntosh	Director of Customer Services		08/12/25
WWU:	Sophie Shorney	Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance Manager		

Step 4: Upload PEA Document to the Website & Notification Email Sent to Ofgem (vcma@ofgem.gov.uk)