

Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Sandon House Community Centre

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February 2024

Updated April 2025 – Aamina Vhora



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;	Yes
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;	Not Applicable
b) The household cannot afford to service, repair or replace the unsafe pipework or essential gas appliance; and;	Not Applicable
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.	Not Applicable
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;	Not Applicable
b) Have the potential to benefit consumers on the participating networks; and	Not Applicable
c) Involve two, or more, gas distribution companies.	Not Applicable

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

Information Required	Description
Project Title	Centre for Warmth – Sandon House Community Centre
Funding GDN(s)	Cadent company specific project
New/ Updated	Updated March 2025
Role of GDN(s) *For Collaborative VCMA Projects only	Not applicable
Date of PEA Submission	February 2024 Project Extension Updated April 2025
VCMA Project Contact Name, email and Number	Name: Phil Burrows Title: Head of Customer Vulnerability Social Programme Delivery Email: Phil.m.burrows@cadentgas.com Number: 07773 545451
Total Cost (£k)	Centre costs: £77,771.70 Slow Cookers: £16,704 Project Management Costs: £3,779.02 New Project Costs: £98,254.72 <u>Updated April 2025 – Additional costs</u> Centre costs: £48,274 Slow cookers: £2,088 Leaflets: £1,763.64 Project Management cost 4%: £2,085.03 Total: £54,210.67
Total VCMA Funding Required (£k)	£98,254.72 <u>Updated April 2025</u> £152,465.39
Problem(s)	Sandon House Community Centre is in Heywood, which is regarded as a highly deprived area. One of the biggest problems the people of Heywood are facing is fuel poverty, with one in three children living in a home classed as in fuel poverty. ¹ With the ongoing cost-of-living crisis data shows that the poorest fifth of families spend two-fifths (37%) of their income on essentials (food, housing, fuel, and power). Sandon House Community Centre works to alleviate such community tensions and pressures by offering various clubs and activities, but this is getting harder to achieve with funding being difficult to obtain.

¹ <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/>

	<p><u>Updated April 2025</u></p> <p>The project's continuing success presents the need and opportunity for Sandon House to continue to support Heywood in Rochdale, which is ranked the 15th most deprived borough in England.²</p> <p>Lower income families are most at risk of fuel poverty, as increases in costs from energy, food and fuel represent a greater share of those existing levels of spend. This can impact people with the unfortunate choice of 'heating or eating'.</p> <p>Furthermore, food and fuel insecurity, and the stress of navigating threatening letters regarding council tax, rent, and utility bills further erode well-being. The constant worrying can exacerbate mental health issues, with anxiety, depression, and loneliness now among the most pressing issues.</p> <p>With family incomes set to be reduced, high predicted inflation into next year, further anticipated interest rate increases and energy consumption set to rise between now and March, there is a difficult winter ahead. Thus, it is important that Sandon House are equipped to support the community and those that rely on it most.</p>
<p>Scope and Objectives</p>	<p>Cadent will invest £98,254.72 of VCMA funding to deliver a two-year partnership with Sandon House. The funding will be used to hire additional staff to help with the increased footfall that the centre has seen.</p> <p>The services which will be available include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on income maximisation and help with benefits. • Advice on energy efficiency. • CO awareness advice. • Vulnerable people will receive a free CO alarm. • Advice on the PSR. • People will be assisted to sign-up to the PSR. • Slow cooker sessions will be hosted to educate people on a more efficient way of cooking, and they will receive a free slow cooker. <p><u>Project Objectives:</u></p> <p>CO and PSR awareness will be raised with individuals attending the Centres for Warmth, via the community kitchens, at events attended by community house staff, with residents accessing the community house trips (many of whom are elderly) and via the welfare support officers.</p> <p>To generate a positive social return on investment - see the below relevant section for more details.</p> <p>The project aims to reach across a two-year period. This will be divided as follows:</p>

² [2022-Case-Study-Rochdale.pdf](#)

	Services	Summary of services	Expected number of customers reached
	Income Maximisation Advice	One to one support for an individual to maximise their income	1,200
	CO Awareness	Raise awareness of the dangers of CO, encourage the use of alarms and give out CO alarms as appropriate	800
	Efficient Use of Appliances & behaviours (Energy advice)	One to one support for individuals giving energy advice	1,200
	PSR Awareness	Raise awareness of the PSR, eligibility and encourage sign of those eligible	240
	Cooking on a budget cookery session	Sessions on slow cooker cooking	600
	<p><u>Updated April 2025</u></p> <p>Cadent will provide Sandon House with an additional £54,210.67 for a 12-month extension. The funding will enable the Centre to provide additional services as listed below:</p> <p><u>Project Objectives</u></p> <p>The success of the project will be measured against achieving the additional below objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver PSR advice to 1,500 individuals • Sign-up 650 individuals to the PSR • Provide energy efficiency advice to 800 individuals via in-depth one-to-one or group conversations. • Provide 95 individuals with income maximisation services. • Provide 75 slow cookers at dedicated events and as individual needs emerge. • Provide 1,800 carbon monoxide awareness conversations to individuals. • Distribute 50 carbon monoxide alarms 		
<p>Why the Project is Being Funded Through the VCMA</p>	<p>We believe that the project meets all of the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance eligibility criteria:</p> <p>a. Have a positive, or a forecasted positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI) including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA Project:</p> <p><i>The project delivers a positive forecasted social return on investment. This is based on achieving the target reach for income maximisation, registrations to the PSR and education</i></p>		

	<p><i>on carbon monoxide. More information can be found in the relevant section below.</i></p> <p>b. Either:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Provide support to consumers in Vulnerable Situations and relate to energy safeguarding, or, ii. Provide awareness of the dangers of CO, or, iii. Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO; <p><i>The project delivers services that meet all three elements of this criteria. For example, the specialist advisors will help households maximise their income, enabling residents to afford the cost of heating their home to an adequate level. The project will also raise awareness of the dangers of CO and promote registration to the PSR.</i></p> <p>c. Have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these:</p> <p><i>Cadent and Sandon House Community Centre have entered into a service agreement that will contain the project objective and actions. Further detail can also be found below.</i></p> <p>d. Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations, and,</p> <p><i>This method of delivering support to customers in vulnerable situations falls outside of Cadent's BAU activities and other licence conditions.</i></p> <p>e. Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding,</p> <p><i>This project will be solely delivered through Cadent's VCMA funding.</i></p>
<p>Evidence of Stakeholder/Customer Support</p>	<p>Cadent conducted extensive stakeholder and customer research in May 2022 following the completion of RIIO-GD2 year one and again after year two.</p> <p>The research aimed to assess customer/stakeholder opinion on Cadent's allocation of VCMA spend and gain insight into where we should direct VCMA funding in the future. The results of our research studies, including our Energy Diaries thought leadership programme are available to view on the Cadent website. However, we've captured some of the key evidence below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 61% of stakeholders (the highest proportion by individual category) supported Cadent increasing its VCMA allocation on projects aimed at tackling fuel poverty. • Over 70% of customers are concerned about the level of their energy costs • Very few customers understand their energy bill • Less than 20% of customers feel as though they understand the range of support opportunities that they may be entitled to • There is very low trust associated with energy companies <p>This project focusses on tackling fuel poverty by offering energy/income advice to at risk households.</p>

	<p><u>Updated April 2025</u></p> <p>Quote from Centre Manager:</p> <p><i>“We feel that since we have started working in partnership with Cadent that we are able to contribute to helping to bring awareness of income and energy advice to the community and beyond, and in turn we hope that this will have some impact on the social deprivation of Heywood and the surrounding areas.”</i></p> <p><i>“As a community centre we work to alleviate community tensions and pressures. We provide luncheon clubs (at a subsidised rate) two days a week that are mostly attended by people and families who are struggling with all aspects of the cost of living, this service also meets the requirements of social inclusion issues. We have a warm room two days a week which is called helping hands café and this provides a warm space and hot meals food and drink no charge to families who have difficulties with their day-to-day living costs. We are finding that this is increasingly being attended by more and more sectors of our community which is improving cohesion and promoting the support we offer.”</i></p>
<p>Information Required</p>	<p>Description</p>
<p>Outcomes, Associated Actions and Success Criteria</p>	<p><u>Project Outcomes</u></p> <p>The Sandon House - Centre for Warmth project aims to achieve the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals will report increased levels of household income. • Individuals will report an increased awareness on the dangers of CO and have a reduced risk of harm caused by CO. • Provide support to lonely residents, ensuring that they can access the community centre and the services it offers. • Provide individuals with energy efficiency advice and carbon monoxide awareness. • Individuals will report reduced levels of anxiety in fearing a utility outage. • Individuals will report an increased knowledge of cooking on a budget, healthy cooking, and use of a slow cooker to save on energy. • Tackle loneliness and isolation <p><u>Associated Actions</u></p> <p>Sandon House Community Centre will implement the following associated actions to deliver the project's outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals will report increased levels of household income through working with the centre's specialist benefits advisors. • Specialist benefits advisors will support households to identify and access previously unclaimed benefits. • Individuals will report reduced levels of anxiety in fearing a utility outage through be assisted to register to the PSR. Centre staff will all receive an awareness on the PSR and will help eligible households through the registration process.

- Clients will report an increased awareness on the dangers of CO and have a reduced risk of harm caused by CO. This will be achieved through the centre's staff providing CO awareness conversations and distributing CO alarms to the most at-risk households.
- Individuals will report an increased knowledge of reducing their energy usage by using a slow cooker from attending a slow cooking course at a centre.
- Individuals will report a better awareness of energy efficiency measures.
- Individuals will report an improvement in their mental health because of attending the centres.

Success Criteria

The success of the project will be measured against meeting the below criteria:

- 1,200 customers will receive specialist advice on identifying and accessing previously unclaimed benefits.
- 1,200 customers will receive help and support on energy efficiency.
- 800 customers will receive an awareness conversation on the dangers of CO. 600 of the most at-risk households will also receive a CO alarm.
- 240 customers will improve their awareness of the PSR. We predict that 10% of the households reached will also be supported to register.
- 600 customers will improve their knowledge of using a slow cooker to help lower their energy consumption.

Updated April 2025

The project extension will build on aspects of the project that have proven to be successful thus far. The project will utilise learning outcomes from years one and two and introduce approaches that will enable as many individuals as possible to benefit from support.

Associated Actions

Cadent will continue to provide the funding, resources and training required to support Sandon House for an additional 12 months to ensure the centre can continue to deliver the Centre for Warmth project successfully.

Success Criteria

The success of the extension will be measured against achieving the additional objectives:

- Deliver PSR advice to 1,500 individuals
- Sign-up 650 individuals to the PSR
- Provide energy efficiency advice to 800 individuals via in-depth one-to-one or group conversations.
- Provide 95 individuals with income maximisation services.
- Provide 75 slow cookers at dedicated events and as individual needs emerge.
- Provide 1,800 carbon monoxide awareness conversations to individuals.
- Distribute 50 carbon monoxide alarms

Project Partners and Third Parties Involved	Cadent and Sandon House Community Centre
Potential for New Learning	<p>Since the Centre For Warmth project began in April 2021 Cadent now realise that every area/town seems to be suffering with the same problems invariably brought on by fuel poverty, unemployment, low wages, and the cost-of-living crisis. Alongside these, each area is also dealing with specific issues.</p> <p>Cadent have brought the centres together on a forum for them to share ideas, best practice and resources.</p> <p>This forum has helped to forge links with centres that were not previously there and acts as a support network.</p> <p>This takes place online every six months and is proving beneficial to all the centres involved.</p> <p>Every area within Cadent's network sees households suffering the same issues, fuel poverty and low income. Cadent have learned that each area also has issues specific to them and these are dealt with differently. To help increase cross network understanding Cadent has set up a forum for the Centres for Warmth.</p> <p>Every quarter we will meet and discuss various topics, share stories, tips, and best practice but most importantly resources such as food.</p> <p>Cadent will continue to listen to our partners to try to improve the support and services where possible, through our Centre for warmth partnerships to assist our most vulnerable customers.</p> <p><u>Updated April 2025</u></p> <p>Cadent have brought the centres together on different forums, including social media and webinars in order for them to share ideas, resources, and best practise. The forum has helped forge links with centres that were not previously there is an extra support network for them to benefit from.</p>
Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations	<p><u>Scale of VCMA Project</u></p> <p>Cadent will invest £98,254.72 in partnership with Sandon House Community Centre over two-years.</p> <p>The project will support customers with a range of services. The project will benefit households near to the community centres, and those in the wider area through the specialist benefits advisors and community outreach workers.</p> <p>Total Investment = £98,254.72</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,200 individuals receiving income maximisation advice: £2,060,562.00 • 1,200 individuals receiving energy efficiency advice: £441,324.00 • 240 individuals will receive support to sign up to the PSR: £34,533.60 • 138 individuals will be alleviated of loneliness and isolation through attending sessions: £165,600.00

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 800 individuals will receive education on CO awareness: £6,984.00 • 600 individuals will receive a slow cooker: £141,852.00 <p>Five-year gross present value = £2,850,825.60 One- year gross present value = £619,845.12</p> <p>Five-year Social Return on Investment = £2,752,570.88 One-year Social Return on Investment = £570,717.76</p> <p>SROI Ratio = £1:27</p> <p><u>Updated April 2025</u></p> <p>Cadent will invest a further £54,210.67 in partnership with Sandon House Centre for Warmth.</p> <p>For the full duration of the project, including the original and extension of the project, Cadent will invest £152,465.39 over 36 months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,295 individuals will receive income maximisation advice = £2,223,657.45 • 2,000 individuals will receive energy efficiency advice = £735,540.00 • 2,600 individuals will receive advice on CO = £22,698.00 • 890 individuals will be registered to the PSR = £128,062.10 • 675 individuals will receive a slow cooker and advice on cooking healthier meals = £159,583.50 • 345 individuals will be alleviated from loneliness = £621,000.00 <p>Five-year gross present value = £3,890,541.05 One-year gross present value = £860,908.21</p> <p>Five-year net present value = £3,738,075.66 One-year net present value = £810,086.41</p> <p>SROI Ratio: £1:25</p>
VCMA Project Start and End Date	<p>Start date 1st April 2023 End Date 31st March 2025</p> <p><u>Updated April 2025</u></p> <p>End Date: 31st March 2026</p>
Geographical Area	<p>The project will be delivered in Cadent's North-West Network. Supporting the communities in Heywood Manchester.</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: Sustainability and Social Purpose Team PEA Peer Review	
Date Immediate Team Peer Review Completed: 17/04/2023	Review Completed By: Emma Turnbull
Second review completed: 30/04/2025	Review Completed By: Emma Turnbull
Stage 2: Sustainability and Social Purpose Team Management Review	
Date Management Review Completed: 16/02/2024	Review Completed By: Gurvinder Dosanjh
Second Review Completed: 07/05/2025	Review Completed By: Gurvinder Dosanjh
Step 3: Director of Sustainability & Social Purpose Sign-Off: Mark Belmega & Phil Burrows	
Director of Sustainability and Social Purpose Sign-Off Date: 15/03/24, 07/05/2025	
Step 4: Upload PEA Document to the Website & Notification Email Sent to Ofgem (vcma@ofgem.gov.uk)	
Date that PEA Document Uploaded to the Website: February 26	
Date that Notification Email Sent to Ofgem: February 26	