

Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)
Communities 1st – 30x Centres for Warmth

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February 2024



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

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

Information Required	Description
Project Title	Communities 1 st – 30x Centres for Warmth
Funding GDN(s)	Cadent company specific project
New/ Updated	New
Role of GDN(s) *For Collaborative VCMA Projects only	Not applicable
Date of PEA Submission	February 2024
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: £393,240.00 Large slow cookers cost: £6,960.00 Project management costs: £16,008.00
Total VCMA Funding Required (£k)	£416,208.00
Problem(s)	<p>In Hertsmere, 4,565 households (10.6%) live in fuel poverty. For every 1,000 Hertsmere homes, on average 60 received support from the main national energy efficiency programme.¹</p> <p>Communities 1st is a prominent charitable organisation that serves as a catalyst for positive change in the East of England. Their main foothold is in the Hertfordshire area, they focus on a wide spectrum of activities driven by the community. Working with Cadent would allow them to tackle several key areas including loneliness, fuel poverty, home energy advice, digital exclusion, healthy cooking on a budget, budget setting skills, health impacts and carbon monoxide awareness.</p> <p>With the additional funding a VCMA project would bring, it would allow Communities 1st to tackle these areas head on and have a real impact in the community. Thus, enhancing the social return on investment of the project.</p>
Scope and Objectives	<p><u>Project scope</u></p> <p>Cadent will invest £416,208.00 of the VCMA funding to deliver a two-year project with Communities 1st.</p>

¹ [Hertsmere - National Energy Action \(NEA\)](#)

The 2023-2025 agreement will replicate other Centre For Warmth models, whereby specialist advisors are employed using VCMA funding. The centres will provide essential information and support on carbon monoxide safety, energy efficiency advice and the priority services register (PSR).

The Winter Centres for Warmth Network project is a multifaceted approach to addressing some of the fundamental challenges facing communities in Hertfordshire. By focusing on community-buildings and energy education the project offers a comprehensive support network.

It's designed to be more than just a temporary initiative; it's a lasting framework that encourages community resilience and empowerment. Over the two-year project period, it will cultivate lasting relationships and provide tools and resources that continue to benefit individuals long after the project's completion.

With the ambitious aim of establishing between 30 Warm Welcome Hubs and implementing a diverse range of support programmes, the project reflects a commitment to holistic well-being and social inclusivity. It offers a vision of community-based support where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, connect, and find warmth. The funding would be utilised by Communities 1st to provide start-up grants to interested venues.

Project Outcomes:

The Winter Centres for Warmth Network lays the groundwork for the entire project, aimed at creating a friendly and supportive environment across Hertfordshire. These hubs will become central points where individuals, particularly those vulnerable and isolated, can find community, warmth, and assistance. The inclusiveness of these hubs acts as a bridge, connecting people to essential resources and providing a sense of belonging.

The Winter Centres for Warmth Network is an innovative and multi-dimensional project aimed at fostering community ties and providing support in Hertfordshire. It is a rich tapestry of community-centred initiatives combined to combat loneliness, isolation, and energy-related challenges, particularly for those most vulnerable in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Features of the Winter Centres for Warmth Hubs:

- **Friendly Environment:** Provides an inclusive atmosphere where people can come alone or with friends to chat over a hot drink or meal.

- **Energy Support:** Offer practical advice and tips on saving energy costs, maintaining warmth, and staying safe at home.
- **Community Energy Champions:** Provide free training to local residents who wish to become Community Energy Champions, facilitating a sustainable support network.
- **Benefits Advice:** Offers guidance on social welfare benefits and Priority Services Register (PSR) eligibility through one-on-one consultations.
- **Collaboration with Other Organisations:** Regular energy-themed events will be organised in partnership with other community organisations, enhancing the range of support and information available.

Target Areas

1. Watford – WD23 3AD	2. Watford - WD19 4DA
3. Watford - WD25 0BW	4. Mill End – WD3 8HD
5. Potters Bar – EN6 5NE	6. Potters Bar – EN6 3BP
7. Borehamwood – WD6 1PL	8. Borehamwood – WD6 4EE
9. Borehamwood – WD6 2TB	10. Borehamwood – WD6 4TB
11. Radlett – WD7 8NN	12. Hemel Hempstead – HP2 5SB
13. Stevenage – SG1 1NA	14. Stevenage – SG2 7QX
15. Stevenage – SG6 3BB	16. Broxbourne – EN8 9XQ
17. Broxbourne – EN8 9BG	18. Hatfield - AL10 9BZ
19. Hatfield - AL10 0XR	20. Hatfield - AL10 0BU
21. Waltham Cross – EN8 7DW	22. Hoddesdon – EN11 8DS
23. Goffs Oak – EN7 5SS	24. Hoddesdon – EN11 0PU
25. Turnford – EN8 0LU	26. Cheshunt - EN7 6LB
27. St Albans - AL1 4JA	28. Cottonmill – AL1 2EF
29. Cuffley - EN6 4EY	30. Dunstable – LU6 1HT

Energy Agents/Champions

Energy Agents play a vital role in equipping individuals with essential knowledge and skills related to energy conservation and safety. Through practical advice and tailored guidance, individuals will be able to learn about the efficient use of appliances, control heating and damp, and access information on energy-saving measures. The goal here is to empower people to make informed energy choices that can positively impact their living conditions and financial well-being.

Winter Centres for Warmth Network attendees will receive simple, practical energy advice. The energy advice will be issued to individuals through a variety of channels including expert speakers, literature and signposting to other sources of information.

The energy advice issued will focus on practical low-cost tips that individuals can easily implement in their homes e.g. efficient use of appliances, heating and radiator controls and condensation and damp support.

Participants in the project will be offered a personalised package of support including income maximisation checks, help to claim eligible benefits, debt management and budgeting. They will also be given guidance on switching utilities, and how to access energy efficiency measures and grants for home insulation and energy discount schemes. Coaching will be provided to help people change their attitudes towards money and improve financial literacy. The project will also offer employability support with opportunities to develop skills through work placements and volunteering to get people into paid work.

Communities 1st experience has shown that everyone experiences poverty differently; whether it's due to family pressures, physical and mental health problems, domestic abuse, a reliance on benefits or working on low income. One dimensional solutions are not effective and an intensive, holistic approach is required to ensure the poorest in our community do not fall even further behind financially.

Energy Agents who are instrumental in education and awareness-raising will be tasked to play a critical role in heightening community awareness about the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO). Furthermore, the agents will be tasked with educating the community on methods to avoid CO exposure as well as distributing CO detection kits to high-risk households.

Benefits Advice

Understanding the complexities of benefit systems can be overwhelming, particularly for those already facing financial or emotional hardships. This critical component of the Winter Centres for Warmth Network offers targeted, specialist advice to attendees on a range of benefit-related topics. These include income support, disability benefits, housing benefits, and tax credits, among others. Benefits Advisors will be on hand to provide confidential one-on-one consultations, demystifying the often complicated benefits landscape and assisting individuals with eligibility checks, PSR eligibility and application processes. The advisors will also work closely with other project components, such as the Energy Agents, to ensure that benefits advice complements broader efforts like energy conservation and financial literacy. This dual approach not only provides immediate relief but also equips individuals with the knowledge

and tools they need for longer-term financial stability. By navigating the complexities of the benefits system and unlocking potential income streams, we aim to directly improve the economic well-being of vulnerable attendees.

Warm Hubs Slow Cooker Courses

A unique and engaging aspect of the project is the slow cooker cooking courses. These classes aren't just about cooking; they're about educating people on energy-efficient methods that save time and money. Through collaboration with community groups, the courses will offer free slow cookers, ingredients, and recipes. By focusing on smart cooking, meal planning, and nutritional awareness, this component promotes healthy living while being mindful of energy consumption and budget constraints.

This will include receiving a pack of energy saving information plus a carbon monoxide alarm as well as a chance to receive a free slow cooker. People will also gain the chance to meet others in a welcoming and safe environment.

Slow Cooker courses will be organised in collaboration with community groups and venue owners, for groups of residents (with a minimum size of eight). Courses will be run over a period of three to four weeks and include hot refreshments, energy advice and an energy pack, as well as free ingredients and recipes, plus a free slow cooker for each attendee if required. Each course can be tailored to the specific community.

In this class they will share cooking methods and tasty recipes which save time and money.

Budget Setting Skills

The focus on numeracy and budget setting skills within the broader community support framework plays a critical role in empowering individuals, enhancing self-sufficiency, and improving overall quality of life.

The proposed training program for numeracy and budget setting skills acknowledges that each individual's barriers and needs may be unique, and thus requires a multifaceted approach. Tailored training will incorporate real-world examples and hands-on practice.

Building confidence through a supportive, non-judgmental learning environment can help overcome math anxiety. Making

	<p>the connection between numeracy skills and daily life can make learning more engaging and relevant. For those in need, providing support with income maximisation, debt management, or employment opportunities creates a holistic support network.</p> <p>To generate a positive social return on investment - see the below relevant section for more details.</p>
<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 on carbon monoxide. More information can be found in the relevant section below.</i></p> <p>b. Either:</p> <p>i. Provide support to consumers in Vulnerable Situations and relate to energy safeguarding, or,</p> <p>ii. Provide awareness of the dangers of CO, or,</p> <p>iii. Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO;</p> <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 Communities 1st 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>Temperature Checks – we complete periodic 'temperature checks' with a cross section of our customer base, including our</p>

Customer Forum. These demonstrate that customers continue to support the key measures that we identified when developing our RIIO-2 plan, with a heightened requirement to support people with the cost of living crisis – hence this.

The Energy Diaries research – through extensive research with customers living in fuel poverty over a period of several months, we then engaged with experts such as Citizen’s Advice, NEA and a suite of other charities operating in this space to co-create a number of additional initiatives that Cadent could offer to its customers. This was one of these initiatives.

Charity Partnerships – we have strategic level partnerships in place with around 40 consumer advice organisations and charities. We engage regularly to assess the benefits of existing projects and consider options elsewhere, taking the opportunity to benchmark against others and seek to learn.

Centres for Warmth – the teams running the centres also fed into the development of this initiative, when considering the successes of the existing centre projects and opportunities for enhancements, based on the specific needs of the customers / households already being supported.

Information Required	Description
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Outcomes, Associated Actions and Success Criteria	<p>The partnership with Communities 1st will form part of Cadent's wider Centres for Warmth network. The Centre for Warmth project model relies on the provision of VCMA funding, materials and resource to a community centre located in an area of high deprivation, fuel poverty, and carbon monoxide risk. The increased levels of funding, resources and materials enable the community centre to ramp up its existing support for customers in vulnerable situations.</p> <p><u>Project Outcomes:</u></p> <p>Communities 1st - 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 of the dangers of CO and have a reduced risk of harm caused by CO. • Provide support to lonely local 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. 					
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Service(s)</th> <th>Summary of Service(s)</th> <th>Expected Number of Customers Reached</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Winter Centres for</td> <td>30 Community centres offering</td> <td>14,400 (primarily targeting elderly individuals, lone parent</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Service(s)	Summary of Service(s)	Expected Number of Customers Reached	Winter Centres for	30 Community centres offering
Service(s)	Summary of Service(s)	Expected Number of Customers Reached				
Winter Centres for	30 Community centres offering	14,400 (primarily targeting elderly individuals, lone parent				

	Warmth Network	warmth, support, and connection for vulnerable individuals in Hertfordshire.	households and households with multiple deprivation) in Hertfordshire.
	Educate individuals on CO and provide CO alarms	Education and resources to prevent CO poisoning.	4,000 (primarily targeting elderly individuals, lone parent households and households with multiple deprivation) in Hertsmere
	Energy advice through energy agents	Assistance in energy-saving techniques and home safety advice.	2,654 households will receive support with energy-saving advice over the course of the two-year project (primarily targeting elderly individuals, lone parent households and households with multiple deprivations)
	Raise awareness on the PSR and Benefits Advice	Essential guidance on social welfare benefits and enrolment assistance for PSR.	900 (primarily targeting elderly individuals, lone parent households and households with multiple deprivation) in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire over the two-year period
	Offer income maximisation advice - Numeracy and Budget Setting Skills Workshops	Financial literacy workshops focusing on basic math and budget management.	300 primarily targeting lone-parent households and households with multiple deprivation) in Hertsmere
	Offer income maximisation advice - Digital Inclusion Sessions	Bridging the digital divide with access, devices, and training.	200 (primarily targeting elderly individuals) in Hertsmere
	Offer income maximisation advice - Slow Cooking Courses	Cooking lessons promoting affordable, nutritious	250 primarily targeting elderly individuals, lone parent households and households with multiple deprivation) in Hertsmere

	meals using slow cookers.	
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Associated Actions

Communities 1st will implement the following associated actions to deliver the project's outcomes:

- Communities 1st will utilise a portion of the funding to recruit a Winter Centres for Warmth Network coordinator. This coordinator will be an expert at engaging local stakeholders and customers.
- The project coordinator will work with local stakeholders such as community village halls, parish councils and organisations such as food banks/mobile libraries to promote fixed Winter Centres for Warmth and increase uptake in the project.
- Cadent will provide gas safety/carbon monoxide expertise, training, and resources, as well as energy advice to Communities 1st and community venues. This will enable customers to receive essential support when visiting Winter Centres for Warmth venues.
- As well as engaging new prospective Winter Centres for Warmth Network venues, Communities 1st will continue to support existing venues, and ensure that customer's access to information and services continues.
- Communities 1st will utilise existing wider partnerships such as food banks, fire & rescue services etc. to ensure that project customers receive wider benefits beyond energy and gas safety.

Success Criteria

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

- The project will recruit and establish 30 fixed centres for warmth.
- 900 Individuals will receive specialist advice on identifying and accessing previously unclaimed benefits.
- 2,654 individuals will receive help and support on energy efficiency.
- 4,000 Individuals will receive an awareness conversation on the dangers of CO. 3,000 of the most at-risk households will also receive a CO alarm.
- 900 households will improve their awareness of the PSR. 90 of the eligible Individuals reached will also be supported to register.
- 250 households will improve their knowledge of using a slow cooker to help lower their energy consumption.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 500 households will receive education on how to budget management.
Project Partners and Third Parties Involved	Cadent will work in partnership with Communities 1 st .
Potential for New Learning	<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 have 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>
Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations	<p><u>Scale of VCMA Project</u></p> <p>Cadent will invest £416,208.00 in partnership with Communities 1st Centre for Warmth, over the two-year duration of the project.</p> <p>The project will support 14,400 households with a range of services.</p> <p>The project will benefit households in close proximity to the community centre, and those in the wider area through the specialist benefits advisors and centre activities.</p> <p><u>SROI Calculations</u></p> <p>The reach will be divided as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 300 receiving in-depth on-to-one advice on income maximisation, benefits = £515,133 2,654 will receive advice on energy efficiency = £976,061.58 900 will receive awareness advice on CO = £7,857.00 250 will receive advice on slow cooking and a free slow cooker = £59,105 14,400 will attend group sessions to help alleviate isolation and loneliness = £3,132,000 <p>Total Investment = £416,208</p> <p>Five-year gross present value = £3,545,356.58 One-year gross present value = £1,305,231.32</p> <p>Five-year net value = £3,129,148.58 One-year net value = 1,097,127.32</p> <p>SROI = £1:8</p>
VCMA Project Start and End Date	<p>Start date: November 2023 End date: December 2025</p>
Geographical Area	The project will be delivered in Cadent's East of England Network, supporting communities in Hertfordshire, Luton,

	Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, West Essex and the surrounding areas.
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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: 01/02/2024	Review Completed By: Lucy Nembaware
Stage 2: Sustainability and Social Purpose Team Management Review	
Date Management Review Completed: 08/02/2024	Review Completed By: Gurvinder Dosanjh
Step 3: Director of Sustainability & Social Purpose Sign-Off: Mark Belmega	
Director of Sustainability and Social Purpose Sign-Off Date: 09/02/2024	
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 24	
Date that Notification Email Sent to Ofgem: February 24	