

Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)
Cambridgeshire ACRE

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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	Cambridgeshire ACRE
Funding GDN(s)	Cadent company specific project
New / Updated (indicate as appropriate)	New
Role of GDN(s) *For Collaborative VCMA Projects only	Not applicable
Date of PEA Submission	September 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: £250,364.00 Large slow cookers costs: 173 x £27.84 = £4,816.32 Plaque cost: 40 x £30.00 = £1,200.00 Leaflet costs: 40 x £1,763.64 = £70,545.60 Project management costs: £13,077.04
Total VCMA Funding Required (£k)	£340,002.96
Problem(s)	<p>It is reported that deprivation in rural areas tends to be dispersed and less likely to be reflected in standard dataset measures. Many issues faced by rural and semi-rural populations often remain “hidden” as these communities are viewed as “affluent”. In areas such as Fenland, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire a few of the issues highlighted are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of affordable, smaller properties means that older people who wish to remain living close to their friends/support networks, stay in larger homes and can become financially vulnerable trying to maintain these properties. • A significant number of people are in fuel debt forcing them onto pre-payment meters where they pay higher energy prices and are missing out on other financial benefits they could be entitled to claim. • Many feel chronically isolated and have other significant unmet needs that exist largely due to unsuitable housing, ageing, digital exclusion and bereavement. • Rural homes are much less energy efficient than other households, and residents are not always able to access affordable sources of heat such as a gas connection and central heating, often due to their proximity to the gas network¹

¹ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ccecba1d939500129466a9/annual-fuel-poverty-statistics-report-2024.pdf>

	<p>Amongst this, there is a higher proportion of fuel poor households in rural areas compared to urban areas and the depth of fuel poverty in these rural households is greater, especially if their homes are off the gas grid.² Together with rurality and isolation, living in fuel poverty makes these individuals more susceptible to carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, prolonged financial difficulties, and various physical and mental health-related problems.</p> <p>Cambridgeshire ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) is an independent organisation that is a county-based member of ACRE, a national charity speaking-up and supporting rural communities. In September 2022, the charity introduced “The Cambridgeshire Community Hubs Network” and today, 40 hubs open their doors in rural villages and market towns across South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland districts. Run within existing community spaces, individuals can visit a safe and friendly environment to enjoy free refreshments and social activities, obtain information and advice, and share the company of others. The network of Community Hubs is truly community-led; coordinated and hosted by trained volunteers within the heart of local communities and supported by “Village Agents” who are specialist advisors. An evaluation of this community hub approach has shown that in rural and semi-rural areas the model works well but relies on funding.</p> <p>A partnership project with Cadent, under the Centres for Warmth project will enable the charity to strengthen “The Cambridgeshire Community Hubs Network” model - to meet the demand for year-round support, reach the most vulnerable, scale-up support in energy efficiency and income maximisation, and introduce support on CO safety and the priority services register (PSR).</p>
<p>Scope and Objectives</p>	<p><u>Project Scope</u></p> <p>From September 2024 to March 2026, Cadent will invest £340,002.96 of VCMA funding to deliver a Centres for Warmth project in partnership with Cambridge ACRE. The project will replicate other Centre for Warmth models whereby Cadent provides VCMA funding, resources, and training to enable the delivery of vital information and support on income maximisation, CO safety, energy efficiency, and the PSR. Cadent will fund Cambridgeshire ACRE to coordinate the project to continue and advance the “The Cambridgeshire Community Hubs Network”. Each hub will act as a Centres for Warmth providing a safe, warm and welcoming space for individuals to come together for social interaction, while accessing essential advice and support.</p> <p>Based on the existing “Cambridgeshire Community Hubs Network” model, a network of trained community volunteers, supported by Cambridgeshire ACRE will continue to organise and run their hubs, providing a warm space and activities that will appeal to individuals and bring them together. Simultaneously, specialised advisors referred to as “Village Agents” will work alongside the volunteers to provide one-to-one support to vulnerable individuals. The Village Agents will be visible in the communities they serve and provide support through outreaching from the community hubs and in the community, supporting those that are experiencing unmet needs and helping individuals, where suitable, to attend hubs.</p>

VCMA funding will be provided directly to Cambridgeshire ACRE to enable the delivery of the Cadent Centre for Warmth project across 40 centres and used to fund:

- A full-time Project Manager to oversee and manage the project and collate and review project data.
- Four part-time Village Agents who will deliver advice and support on income maximisation, CO safety, energy efficiency, and the PSR. Each advisor will be allocated a specific geographical area to support, and the roles will be phased in.
- The established Centres for Warmth, so that they can run ongoing community activities that will attract local individuals (with a particular focus on the more vulnerable individuals), host the Village Agents and deliver 'Carry on Cooking' demonstrations to show individuals how to shop, cook and eat health and energy efficient meals on a budget.

Project Objectives:

Cadent will measure the success of the project against the achievement of the following objectives:

- To generate a positive social return on investment - see the below relevant section for more details.
- Reach 8,640 individuals over the course of the project - individuals at risk of loneliness and isolation will receive general support through the Centres for Warmth. To note, some individuals may have a network such as their children who support them with advice and support. However, one thing that individuals seek regardless is a place to connect.
- 5,011 individuals will receive CO education to improve their CO safety awareness, and the most at-risk individuals will also receive a CO alarm. The projected reach for this objective is noticeably higher than other support areas as Cambridgeshire ACRE identified CO awareness as a key gap and focus area. There is a lack of awareness on the dangers of CO in Cambridgeshire due to limited provision of information and inadequate broadband/IT usage and people cannot afford the cost of servicing their gas appliances or sweeping the chimney if they have solid fuel leading to potentially life-threatening situations. From the total, 4,320 individuals will be reached through 1:1 conversation and 691 through leaflets (based on a 10% retention rate). The CO leaflets will be specifically used as a tool to draw in engagement and spark awareness conversations.
- 2,160 individuals will receive energy efficiency advice including advice on ways to save on energy consumption and energy bills.
- 173 individuals will receive a slow cooker and learn how to cook affordable, healthy and energy efficient meals. 432 individuals will receive slow cooking advice only, based on the assumption that they may have access to a slow cooker already.
- 4,320 individuals will receive advice about the PSR, with the aim to sign up 432 eligible individuals to the register.
- 1,620 individuals will receive income maximisation advice on a range of topics including money budgeting and debt management – external referrals will also be made as relevant.

<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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Have a positive, or a forecasted positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI) including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA Project: <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 CO. More information can be found in the relevant section below.</i></p> 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 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> c. Have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these: <p><i>Cadent and Cambridgeshire ACRE have entered into a service agreement that will contain the project objective and actions. Further detail can also be found below.</i></p> d. Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations, and, <p><i>This method of delivering support to individuals in vulnerable situations falls outside of Cadent's BAU activities and other licence conditions.</i></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><i>This project will be solely delivered through Cadent's VCMA funding.</i></p>
<p>Evidence of Stakeholder/Customer Support</p>	<p>Through engagement and research with various stakeholders, Cadent gains a better understanding of stakeholder needs and expectations, what is important, what services are needed and how to deliver them most effectively. Collectively, evidence suggests there is a demand and benefit to implementing this project model in partnership with Cambridgeshire ACRE.</p> <p>Cadent Gas Vulnerability Research In June 2024, Cadent part released the research findings from an investigation into fuel poverty gas behaviour, cost of living attitudes, concerns and behaviours and other key areas. Some of the key findings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling the cost-of-living crisis is a top priority for the fuel-poor • People in poverty prioritise addressing immediate needs over long-term planning to cope with stressors they experience at present • Knowledge of CO is a key driver for behaviour <p>Charity Partnerships</p>

	<p>Cadent has strategic partnerships with various advisory and charitable organisations. Previously, Cadent sought feedback from national rural communities' charity ACRE, particularly on how to ensure that rural and semi-rural communities can benefit from VCMA funded support. ACRE supported Cadent's strategy of implementing projects that promote togetherness in rural and semi-rural communities, encourage awareness of CO and tackle fuel poverty.</p> <p>Cambridgeshire ACRE Warm Hubs Evaluation Report</p> <p>In April 2023, Cambridgeshire ACRE published an independent evaluation report reviewing the "The Cambridgeshire Community Hubs Network". At the time of evaluation, the hubs were still only Winter Warm hubs, a 6-month pilot project led by Cambridgeshire ACRE. Regular service users, volunteers and other stakeholders provided feedback which has helped build learning around what does and does not work and acted as a mechanism for building continuous improvement into the current "The Cambridgeshire Community Hubs Network" project today. The feedback and suggestions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular Warm Hub attendees requested a year-round provision, and volunteers have said that they believe year-round hub-style provision is needed. Haddenham & Wilburton Warm Hub volunteer stated, "The needs witnessed in recent months are not seasonal but are evident throughout the year." • "Certainly, the Warm Hub has highlighted issues within our village and we can point them [attendees] in the right direction to get help... As well as being a warm place to meet, we provide a listening ear and help people to form friendships." Haddenham & Wilburton Warm Hub volunteer. • A need to build on the Warm Hubs Advice and Support Programme • People chose to attend Warm Hubs for companionship and to 'get out of the house' rather than simply to keep warm. However, being able to save putting their heating on at home was instrumental for some in deciding to first visit. <p>Following this, some of the development outcomes were that Village Agents were introduced and the hubs became a year-round provision. Up to now, the service is valued by individuals and the demand to maintain and enhance the service continues.</p>
Information Required	Description
Outcomes, Associated Actions and Success Criteria	<p><u>Project Outcomes</u></p> <p>The project aims to achieve the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals will report increased levels of household income– increasing income (and/or reduced debt) and reducing financial pressures and stress, leading to improved mental health and wellbeing • 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 and isolated individuals in rural/semi-rural areas, ensuring that they can access the community hubs and services offered via the project - tackling loneliness and isolation. • Individuals will report increased awareness of and engagement with other local support services

- Provide individuals with energy efficiency advice and individuals will report a better awareness of energy efficiency measures and improve their practices.
- Individuals will report reduced levels of anxiety in fearing a utility outage and increased awareness of the PSR
- Individuals will report an increased knowledge of cooking on a budget, healthy cooking, and use of a slow cooker to save on energy.

Associated Actions

The following associated actions will be implemented to deliver the project's outcomes:

- Cambridgeshire ACRE will effectively manage the project and support the network of 40 community hubs across East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and South Cambridgeshire.
- Cambridgeshire ACRE will appoint village agents and a project manager.
- The Village Agents will provide awareness about the PSR and will help eligible households through the registration process.
- Village Agents will provide CO awareness conversations and distributing CO alarms to the most at-risk households.
- The centres will design and co-ordinate "Carry on Cooking" sessions/ demonstrations using slow cookers provided by Cadent.
- Village Agents will provide energy efficiency advice to individuals.
- The core project delivery team will utilise the training, expertise and resources provided by Cadent.
- With the support of Cambridgeshire ACRE, the hub volunteers will continue to organise and run their hubs, providing a warm space and activities that will appeal to individuals and bring them together.
- The Village Agents will continue to work closely with the hub volunteers to facilitate and enable access to advice and support.

Success Criteria

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

- The project will reach 8,640 individuals over the project period - individuals at risk of loneliness and isolation will receive general support through the Centres for Warmth.
- 2,160 individuals will receive energy efficiency advice including advice on ways to save both on energy consumption and costs.
- 173 individuals will receive a slow cooker and learn how to cook affordable, healthy and energy efficient meals. 432 individuals will receive slow cooking advice only.
- 4,050 individuals will receive advice about the PSR, with the aim to sign up 300 eligible individuals to the register.
- 5,011 individuals will receive CO education to improve their CO safety awareness, and 1,512 the most at-risk households will also receive a CO alarm.
- 1,620 individuals will receive income maximisation advice on a range of topics including money budgeting and debt management – external referrals will also be made as relevant.

Cadent will work in partnership with Cambridgeshire Acre

Project Partners and Third Parties Involved	
Potential for New Learning	<p>A large percent of Cadent's projects are based in urban areas. Therefore, this project offers various learning opportunities as it is based in a rural/semi-rural region and uses a delivery model unique to Cambridgeshire ACRE. The project offers potential learning which can be used by Cadent, other rural community organisations and other stakeholders to effectively support rural communities. The project could provide learning on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most effective strategies, communication methods and services for engaging vulnerable individuals living within rural areas. • How using a model which harnesses on empowering and using local volunteers to lead major community initiatives, can benefit rural communities (especially as nowadays many community organisations often struggle to recruit and retain volunteers, let alone at this scale) • How the traditional Centre for Warmth model can complement existing community support models that have proven to work. • How effective Cadent’s engagement is within rural communities – are individuals aware of Cadents’ role as a GDN, the safeguarding support that is on offer and the role we play in keeping individuals “warm, safe and connected”. <p>To help improve the impact of projects, Cadent will continue to listen to their partners to try to improve the support and services provided to vulnerable individuals and enable opportunities for a continually improving, tailored approach.</p>
Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations	<p><u>Scale of VCMA Project</u></p> <p>Cadent will invest £340,002.96 in partnership with Cambridgeshire Acre to support rural communities in East Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire and Fenland. From September 2024 to March 2026, the project is forecasted to reach up to 8,640 individuals and enable vulnerable individuals to access essential information and support on energy efficiency, CO safety, income maximisation, and the PSR.</p> <p><u>SROI Calculations</u></p> <p>The reach will be divided as per below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,620 individuals will receive in-depth one-to-one advice on income maximisation = £2,781,718.20 • 2,160 individuals will receive advice on energy efficiency = £794,383.20 • 5,011 individuals will receive awareness advice on CO = £43,746.03 • 432 individuals will register to the PSR = £62,160.48 • 173 individuals will receive advice on slow cooking and a free slow cooker = £40,900.66 • 220 individuals will attend the centres and be alleviated from isolation and loneliness = £187,000.00 It is reported that rural vs urban populations are affected by loneliness and isolation differently. Therefore, as this project is based in a rural region, the rural loneliness and isolation calculation has been applied to calculate this figure. <p>Total Investment = £340,002,96</p> <p>Five-year gross present value = £3,909,908.57 One-year gross present value = £876,581.71</p>

	<p>Five-year net value = £3,569,905.61 One-year net value = £636,579.62</p> <p>SROI Ratio = £1:10</p>
VCMA Project Start and End Date	<p>Start date: 1st September 2024 End date: 31st March 2026</p>
Geographical Area	<p>The project will be delivered in East Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire and Fenland (East of England Network)</p>

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

<p>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.</p>	
<p>Stage 1: Sustainability and Social Purpose Team PEA Peer Review</p>	
<p>Date Immediate Team Peer Review Completed: 13/09/2024</p>	<p>Review Completed By: Shelley Snow</p>
<p>Stage 2: Sustainability and Social Purpose Team Management Review</p>	
<p>Date Management Review Completed: 02/10/2024</p>	<p>Review Completed By: Gurvinder Dosanjh</p>
<p>Step 3: Head of Customer Vulnerability Sign-Off: Phil Burrows</p>	
<p>Director of Sustainability and Social Purpose Sign-Off Date: 18/12/2024</p>	
<p>Step 4: Upload PEA Document to the Website & Notification Email Sent to Ofgem (vcma@ofgem.gov.uk)</p>	
<p>Date that PEA Document Uploaded to the Website: December 2024</p>	
<p>Date that Notification Email Sent to Ofgem: December 2024</p>	