

# GDN Collaborative Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

## Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

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### *Disabled Community CO Research*

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*Dan Edwards – [dan.edwards@sgn.co.uk](mailto:dan.edwards@sgn.co.uk)*

20/12/22

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

<b>Section 1 - Eligibility criteria for company specific projects (other than condemned essential gas appliance repair and replacement)</b>	
In order to qualify as a VCMA project, a project must:	
<b>VCMA Eligibility Criteria</b>	<b>Criteria Satisfied (Yes/No)</b>
<b>a)</b> Have a positive, or forecasted positive Social Return on Investment (SROI), including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA project;	<b>Yes</b>
<b>b)</b> Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>i.</b> Provide support to consumers in vulnerable situations, and relate to energy safeguarding, or</li> <li><b>ii.</b> Provide awareness on the dangers of CO, or</li> <li><b>iii.</b> Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO;</li> </ul>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>c)</b> Have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these;	<b>Yes</b>
<b>d)</b> Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations; and	<b>Yes</b>
<b>e)</b> Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding.	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Section 2 - Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing, repair and replacement projects</b>	
In order to qualify as a VCMA project, unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance servicing, repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:	
<b>a)</b> 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;	<b>N/A</b>
<b>b)</b> The household cannot afford to service, repair or replace the unsafe pipework or essential gas appliance; and;	<b>N/A</b>
<b>c)</b> 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.	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Section 3 - Eligibility criteria for collaborative VCMA projects</b>	
In order to qualify as a collaborative VCMA project, a project must:	
<b>a)</b> Meet the above company specific and boiler repair and replace (if applicable) project eligibility criteria;	<b>Yes</b>
<b>b)</b> Have the potential to benefit consumers on the participating networks; and	<b>Yes</b>
<b>c)</b> Involve two, or more, gas distribution companies.	<b>Yes</b>

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

<b>Information Required</b>	<b>Description</b>										
<b>Project Title</b>	Disabled Community CO research										
<b>Funding GDN(s)</b>	Cadent, Northern Gas Networks (NGN), SGN, Wales & West Utilities (WWU)										
<b>Role of GDN(s) *For Collaborative VCMA Projects only</b>	The specific role(s) of GDN(s) participating in a collaborative VCMA Project Project Lead – SGN Participating GDNs – Cadent, NGN, WWU										
<b>Date of PEA Submission</b>	20/12/22										
<b>VCMA Project Contact Name, email and Number</b>	Dan Edwards <a href="mailto:Dan.edwards@sgn.co.uk">Dan.edwards@sgn.co.uk</a> 07800 655582										
<b>Total Cost (£k)</b>	£30,600										
<b>Total VCMA Funding Required (£k)</b>	£30,600 Funding breakdown by GDN: <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Network</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Cadent</td> <td>£15,240.63</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NGN</td> <td>£3,536.30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SGN</td> <td>£8,283.74</td> </tr> <tr> <td>WWU</td> <td>£3,539.32</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Network	Total	Cadent	£15,240.63	NGN	£3,536.30	SGN	£8,283.74	WWU	£3,539.32
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<b>Problem(s)</b>	<p>There are approximately 14 million disabled people in the UK. That’s one in five of us. Life is much harder for many disabled people than it needs to be, and disabled people continue to be one of the most marginalised groups in society, facing barriers at work, school and in their communities.</p> <p>As GDNs we serve some of the most diverse communities across the UK, with wide, varied, and ever-changing demographics that have associated challenges and needs. This of course includes people with disabilities who are likely to have bespoke needs in terms of communication and support.</p> <p>We know from existing research and insight that many people in the UK who use carbon fuelled appliances are not aware of the dangers of Carbon Monoxide and do not have a working audible Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarm. For example, previous research carried out by the GDNs in 2020 showed that of 8,000 people surveyed 45% didn’t know that CO doesn’t have a smell, and only 42% had a working audible CO alarm. Although this and other research carried out around CO has provided insight across a variety of demographics, there has been no targeted research to understand the engagement with or understanding of CO safety information by the disabled community, or their access to CO safety devices tailored to their meet their needs.</p> <p>Many disabled people could be particularly at risk and become ill very quickly if exposed to CO. Exposure can be fatal. The risk to causing permanent damage to health can be greater to disabled people than their non-disabled peers.</p> <p>New research from the Gas Safety Register has found nearly a third (31%) of homeowners will skip booking their annual safety check this year, due to the cost of living crisis. <a href="#">HVP Magazine - Nearly a third to skip annual boiler service due to cost of living crisis</a></p> <p>It is vital that gas appliances are regularly checked and serviced to help prevent gas leaks and stop carbon monoxide being released. According to the Gas Safe Register research, only a third of homeowners know that house fires can result from not having gas appliances safety checked on an annual basis. Just under half correctly</p>										

	<p>identified that collapsing and developing nausea can indicate carbon monoxide poisoning resulting from unsafe/unchecked gas appliances.</p> <p>We know disabled people, and families with disabled children already face hundreds of pounds in extra living costs related to their impairment, compared to their non-disabled peers. Soaring inflation and the huge increases in energy costs because of the cost-of-living crisis are exacerbating the extra costs disabled people already face. Research carried out by Scope shows that 76% of disabled people have already had to cut household spending and this will push more disabled people and families into poverty. Having appliances serviced will be unaffordable to many disabled people, making CO awareness critical to their safety.</p> <p>We need to have an up-to-date clear understanding of disabled peoples' awareness and attitudes towards CO poisoning and associated risks, in order to take appropriate action.</p> <p>We know from the comparatively low number of disabled people currently registered on the Priority Services Register (PSR) that either awareness of the PSR is low amongst disabled people or they have concerns/barriers to registration.</p> <p>From Scope's recent research, of those disabled people not registered on the PSR, 73% said they have not heard about the PSR before.</p> <p>When asked about the ease of finding information about the PSR on their utility's website, 46% found it difficult to varying degrees.</p>
<p><b>Scope and Objectives</b></p>	<p><b>Scope</b>  Scope is the UK's leading pan disability equality charity, providing practical information and emotional support to disabled people and their families when it is most needed.</p> <p>In 2019 Scope launched their community research panel, which has grown to around 1,600 active members today with direct lived experience of being disabled and/or as parents of disabled children.</p> <p>Working closely with Scope we have co-designed a mixed method three-stage disabled community CO research programme utilising the Scope research panel to ensure we gain robust data and insight that can be used to inform future projects, partnerships, and campaigns. Scope will aim to recruit panel members across England, Scotland and Wales to take part in the research.</p> <p><u>Stage 1: Survey</u>  Stage one is a survey that will examine disabled people's awareness of CO poisoning and identify potential barriers that may be common in their experience. Findings from this stage will allow us to target vulnerable audiences within this group more accurately, as well as learn whether they face different barriers to other vulnerable groups.</p> <p><u>Stage 2: Interviews</u>  Guided by Stage 1 survey findings, Scope will conduct 10 in-depth interviews with disabled customers from their research panel to capture and explore individual experiences relating to both CO poisoning and PSR registration. We are aiming for this to be people from the following 5 impairment categories: mobility, dexterity and sensory impairments, mental health challenges, and those who are neurodivergent. We also aim to include those with taste and smell disorders.</p> <p><u>Stage 3: Survey</u>  Using the Stage 2 findings we will develop and carry out a survey for a wider audience of disabled people from Scope's research panel to gain a broader insight.</p> <p>Based on previous experience Scope envisage being able to deliver a finalised report approximately 9 weeks from mobilisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 weeks for recruitment and initial survey</li> <li>• 2 weeks for organising and conducting interviews</li> <li>• 2 weeks for analysis and survey build</li> <li>• 2 weeks for survey completion</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 week for final analysis</li> </ul> <p><b>Objectives:</b> Our objectives for this project are to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand disabled peoples' awareness of and attitudes towards carbon monoxide, the associated risks, and their use of CO safety devices, including exploring any access barriers around CO safety</li> <li>• Understand how we can effectively engage disabled people to help them safeguard themselves and their families from the dangers of CO</li> <li>• Identify trends in CO awareness and engagement within the disabled community to understand what works and how we can improve</li> <li>• Deliver outputs that will inform future projects and partnerships to ensure we're effectively engaging with, informing, and supporting the disabled community around CO safety</li> <li>• Understand disabled people's awareness of / attitudes towards the PSR</li> <li>• Learn more about where disabled people mostly hear or expect to find out about the PSR</li> <li>• Understand more generally the communication accessibility requirements of the disabled community to help improve future communication about the PSR, CO awareness and across all topics and support mechanisms</li> <li>• Understand more clearly disabled people's experiences when they are registering for the PSR, about the barriers to registration</li> <li>• Gain suggestions for improvements to the PSR on gas-related offers and needs</li> <li>• Seek a deeper understanding of how disabled customers would like their communications during a loss of supply</li> <li>• Learn more about how disabled people on the PSR would like to hear about gas safety and what their expectations are</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why the Project is Being Funded Through the VCMA</b></p>	<p>This project has been co-designed with Scope to gain insight on and provide awareness of CO safety with disabled customers that we as GDNs wouldn't otherwise have been able to reach, enabling us to tailor and improve future CO engagement and support for these customers.</p> <p>Although Scope operates in England and Wales, their research panel also has members in Scotland who will be engaged to take part in this research. This project takes place across all the GDN networks to ensure that regionalities and different demographics are used to understand whether attitudes to CO awareness and CO safety differ across the country. This will allow GDNs to tailor approach accordingly and determine whether a national approach to CO engagement for disabled households is appropriate.</p> <p>The outputs of the research will inform the GDNs individual and collaborative CO strategies, as well as broader vulnerability strategies relating to engagement with the disabled community.</p> <p>The research will allow GDNs to further support their workforce in their knowledge of this vulnerable group; enabling them to identify actions that they can take to make a positive difference, be more informed on CO and vulnerable groups, and develop capacity and ability in their actions and in their professional positions.</p> <p>This project meets the VCMA governance criteria as it will provide awareness of the dangers of CO and reduce the risk of CO harm, not only for those directly taking part in the project, but for all those who are more engaged on CO safety as part of future projects and partnerships that have been informed by the insight of this research.</p> <p>We have defined outcomes for this project which go beyond activities funded through other price control mechanisms and are not delivered through other external funding sources.</p>
<p><b>Evidence of Stakeholder/Customer Support</b></p>	<p>This should provide information of the customer engagement that has taken place in the development of VCMA Projects where appropriate. If there is no evidence of stakeholder engagement or customer support, this should justify why it was not appropriate to engage with stakeholders and customers.</p> <p><b>SGN Customer Engagement Group and Vulnerable Steering Group Engagement</b> During the shaping of the SGN business plan we committed to supporting 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</p>

Steering Group (VSG), have guided us to look for communities most vulnerable where the impact is greatest, 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 organisations. This partnership is supported by the VSG as it will lead to improved support for some of the most at risk in the community around CO safety and PSR registration.

#### **Scope Disability Energy Support Service feedback**

Insight from the Scope Disability Energy Support (DES) service has shown that: During the customer calls, of the customers asked, 'Do you have a CO alarm?' 63% advised they did not.

69% of customers supported through DES had an in-depth CO awareness conversation with their adviser to educate them on what CO poisoning is, the symptoms of CO poisoning, how to keep safe at home and how to report any suspected CO poisoning.

These in-depth conversations happened following all customers with gas in the home having a light touch conversation to check level of understanding on the topic, meaning that only 31% of customers had a level of CO awareness that meant they didn't require further education.

#### **CO Research January 2021**

NGN commissioned research around CO in January 2021 and some, if not all the top actions from this research will be addressed by supporting this project:

- Target increasing awareness of the dangers of CO
- Increase understanding of what CO actually is
- Encourage people to get a CO alarm
- Encourage people to test their alarms

#### **CO awareness research August 2022**

NGN commissioned PSR and CO research earlier this year and received the results in August. The results suggest that awareness of CO has gone up in 2022, with more customers claiming they are more aware (improved from 54% to 61%), and their awareness has increased over the past few years (from 48% to 57%).

More participants in 2022 recalled specific campaigns that raised awareness of CO (increased from 23% to 46%). Owning CO alarm: result is relatively stable among those who know what alarms they have, but there has been a shift from "Don't have one" to "Don't know if I have one" and "Have one but can't remember what type". This suggests that customers are more aware of gas related topics. While the energy crisis certainly plays a part in raising awareness of gas appliances this is slightly positive news.

This research gives a good benchmark to compare CO awareness of the general population with that of disabled people being engaged through this project.

#### **NGN Customer Engagement Group (CEG)**

This group provides an independent oversight into the actions we take to support our customers in vulnerable situations. 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 customers in vulnerable situations which meets the needs of our stakeholders. They support our efforts to educate people on the dangers of CO.

#### **GDN Carbon Monoxide Working Group**

This initiative is aligned to our ambition to keep people safe by raising awareness of the risks of CO, to effect behaviour change to safeguard all those at risk, and to provide access to suitable CO safety devices for people who may struggle to access one themselves. It also aligns to our collaborative strategy that states we will;

- Use insight and research to effectively target the programmes we deliver;
- Work with partners who share our joint ambition, and;
- Work to ensure inclusion to minimise communities at greater risk – those most at risk of harm and less engaged, making sure that language doesn't become a barrier to staying safe

#### **GD2 VCMA Steering Group**

This initiative was supported by all members of the strategic steering group as an important research piece that will inform future initiatives enabling us to better support some of the most at-risk customers via the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide allowance.

<p><b>Outcomes, Associated Actions and Success Criteria</b></p>	<p>Following completion of the research programme, Scope will carry out a full analysis of the findings and provide a report detailing key insight and any trends identified throughout the research, as well as the recommended next steps based on those trends and insights.</p> <p>Examples of next steps could include making current CO information more accessible to customers, more accessible messaging through partner services such as Disability Energy Support to increase understanding and engagement, and/or a targeted national campaign around CO to raise awareness and educate disabled people on CO safety. The recommendations will of course be determined when all stages of the research have been completed and analysed.</p> <p>As a result of this project and the outcome report, we will understand disabled peoples' awareness and attitudes towards CO poisoning. Including the associated risks and any barriers they face around CO safety compared to non-disabled households and other vulnerable groups.</p> <p>We will understand how we can better engage with disabled people to help them safeguard themselves and their families from CO harm.</p> <p>Findings will help with the effective provision of suitable CO safety devices that meet the needs of disabled people.</p> <p>The insight and recommendations that come from this research project will enable us to better engage and support the disabled community around CO safety leading to greater CO awareness and reduced CO harm for this particularly at-risk group.</p> <p>The PSR awareness research will improve our understanding of specific barriers that disabled people face, and their concerns about registration, enabling us to address these wherever possible, leading to more disabled people registering on the PSR and receiving additional support.</p> <p>We will share the outcomes of this research across the energy industry to enable others to improve their engagement with the disabled community around not just CO safety and PSR registration, but safety issues and communication more generally.</p> <p>All those who take part in the research, be that the survey or the in-depth interviews will have increased awareness of the dangers of CO and how to keep themselves and their households safe, as well as an increased awareness and understanding of the PSR with the ability to sign up to the PSR through the Scope Disability Energy Support service.</p>
<p><b>Project Partners and Third Parties Involved</b></p>	<p>Details of Project Partners or third-party involvement.</p> <p>SGN – Lead gas network  Cadent / Northern Gas Networks / Wales &amp; West Utilities – Collaborative partner gas networks  Disability Charity Scope UK – Lead delivery partner</p>
<p><b>Potential for New Learning</b></p>	<p>To date there has been no dedicated research to understand disabled peoples' CO awareness and any risks or barriers they face around CO safety. This project will address this and provide a report detailing insights into how we can improve CO awareness and access to suitable CO safety devices for disabled people.</p> <p>We will build on previous research on disabled peoples' awareness and barriers to access of the PSR, helping to gain a better understanding of how we can address the challenges and improve engagement, awareness, and uptake of the PSR. These insights and recommendations will also be included in the research report.</p> <p>The research and associated report will be made available to key organisations and agencies to aid in their engagement with the disabled community around not just CO safety and PSR registration, but safety issues and communication more generally. This would include but not be limited to; those within the energy industry, local authorities, fire and rescue services, The All-Party Parliamentary CO Group (APPCOG), CO charities, existing and future VCMA partners supporting disabled people.</p> <p>We would also share outcomes through our existing communications channels and the annual VCMA report and showcase event.</p>

<b>Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations</b>	<p>Working with SIA Partners we've developed a number of social proxy values aligned to the work and outcomes we and our partners are delivering. Using these along with the DNO SROI assessment tool and methodology we have carried out an assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes associated with this project, and we forecast a positive net SROI of £1.82. This includes outcomes for increased CO awareness, increased PSR awareness/registrations, and feeling part of a community, all of which provide solely societal (wellbeing) related benefits.</p> <p><b>Social Value Measurement</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>Total cost*</b></td> <td>£30,600</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total gross present value</b></td> <td>£86,300.77</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>NPV</b></td> <td>£55,700.77</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>SROI</b></td> <td>£1.82</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Total cost*</b>	£30,600	<b>Total gross present value</b>	£86,300.77	<b>NPV</b>	£55,700.77	<b>SROI</b>	£1.82
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<b>Total gross present value</b>	£86,300.77								
<b>NPV</b>	£55,700.77								
<b>SROI</b>	£1.82								
<b>VCMA Project Start and End Date</b>	16/01/23 – 31/03/23 Approx. 10-week duration overall								
<b>Geographical Area</b>	Across England, Scotland and Wales in all participating GDN network areas.								
<b>Remaining Amount in the Allowance at Time of Registration</b>	<p>Remaining funding left in the Licensee's/ Licensees' funding pot.</p> <p>Amount before this project: £8,778,737.78  Project costs: £30,600  Remaining following this project: £8,748,137.78</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: GDN Collaboration Group PEA Review  <b>Meeting date review completed:</b>  <b>Review completed by:</b></p>		
GDN:	Name:	Job Title:
Cadent	Philip Burrows	Head of Customer Vulnerability Delivery
NGN	Jill Walker	Social Strategy Project Manager
SGN	Kerry Potter	Group Social Impact and Vulnerability Manager
WWU	Elizabeth Warwick	Stakeholder Engagement Manager
<p>Stage 2: GD2CVG Panel Review  <b>Meeting date sign off agreed:</b>  <b>Review completed by:</b></p>		
GDN:	Name:	Job Title:
Cadent	Philip Burrows	Head of Customer Vulnerability Delivery
NGN	Eileen Brown	Customer Experience Director
SGN	Maureen McIntosh	Head of Customer Experience
WWU	Nigel Winnan	Head of Customer and Social Obligations



Step 3: Participating GDN individual signatory sign-off

GDN	Name:	Job Title:	Signature:	Date:
Cadent:	Philip Burrows	Head of Customer Vulnerability Delivery	<i>Philip Burrows</i> .....	13/12/2022
NGN:	Eileen Brown	Customer Experience Director	<i>E Brown</i>	16/12/2022
SGN:	Rob Gray	Director of Stakeholder and Communications	<i>Rob Gray</i>	19/12/22
WWU:	Nigel Winnan	Head of Customer and Social Obligations	<i>Nigel Winnan</i>	19/12/2022

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: January 2023

Date that Notification Email Sent to Ofgem: January 2023