

Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Quarterly Report

Organisation	Durham County Council VCMA – BRE Data Targeting Pilot
Project start date (indicate if the start date has been delayed)	June 2021
Time remaining on project from this quarter	12 months
Funding stream	VCMA
Report date	31/3/2022

Northern Gas Networks (NGN) are keen to know how the VCMA funding makes a difference to their partners and communities and understand the impact.

Quarterly reporting is referenced in schedule 3 of the services agreement that was signed by your organisation. Please therefore ensure that a quarterly report is submitted by the deadline provided by NGN. If you realise there will be a delay in submitting this report, please contact Stephanie Ord sord@northerngas.co.uk / 07704 545200 ASAP. Under VCMA, NGN needs to demonstrate compliance with the governance requirements set by Ofgem.

You will need to refer to your original Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA) document when completing this form, in order to ensure that the funding is being used specifically for the purpose originally intended. Please inform NGN if there is a problem, as we may be able to agree some changes under certain circumstances however, **you must** speak to us in advance.

The timely submission and standard of your reports is likely to affect any future applications to Northern Gas Networks under VCMA.

If you have any problems or need assistance completing this form, please contact Stephanie Ord in the first instance or Jill Walker JWalker@northerngas.co.uk, 07773 390967

Once you have completed this form, please return it to: sord@northerngas.co.uk

1b. Progress update - tell us about achievements to date

- Delivery against the outcomes and associated actions
- Progress made against success criteria as set out in the PEA / proposal
- Challenges in achieving any of the above
- Are there any changes you have had to make? (for example, slippage in dates etc.)

Delivery against the outcomes and associated actions:

The Councils BRE Housing Stock Database is used to identify settlements / dwellings that have a combination of low energy efficiency SAP Ratings, high Index of Multiple Occupation scores and high levels of fuel poverty. Households in these localities may be at a higher risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Using this information, a rolling programme of targeted letter drops and Covid safe door to door promotions is taking place to promote CO safety awareness and referrals to the PSR.

Officer has been recruited and is coordinating the promotion of carbon monoxide awareness and the PSR in all interactions face to face and on the telephone with the public, staff and partners. When home visits take place from the Councils Managing Money Better service, the client receives a NGN CO awareness leaflet and a CO alarm.

Clients are input onto the NGN portal for CO and PSR.

When interactions take place with clients, we are also promoting grants to reduce fuel poverty and increase the SAP rating and energy efficiency of dwellings. This includes making referrals for ECO grants and FPNES grants, the Managing Money Better service and fire safety visits from the Fire and Rescue Service.

Progress made against success criteria as set out in the PEA / proposal:

To date six large settlements in County Durham with low SAP ratings have been targeted (New Kyo, Stanley Hall West, Blackhall, Seaham, Coundon and Thickley). The Councils Warm Homes "energy saving tips" literature now includes CO awareness and advice information, and this is used to raise awareness and generate referrals to the PSR where advice is provided via phone calls to residents and referrals to other schemes.

Households in the above locations receive a letter from Durham County Council and our warm homes leaflet that included info on CO awareness approved by NGN.

When interactions take place with clients, we also promote ECO energy efficiency grants to reduce fuel poverty and increase the SAP rating and energy efficiency of dwellings. This includes making referrals for ECO grants and FPNES. Referrals are also made to the Council's Managing Money Better energy tariff advice service and fire safety visits from the Fire and Rescue Service. Clients are input onto the NGN portal for CO and PSR.

A Warm Homes Campaign newsletter has been developed with input from NGN. This includes a message on carbon monoxide awareness and includes a CO safety message. This info is on the Councils web site and hard copies are distributed to raise county wide awareness of the dangers of CO poisoning and the PSR.

Referrals to the PSR are now being coordinated and maximised. All of Housing Solutions Service (120 staff) have been asked to provide countywide PSR referrals

Challenges in achieving any of the above:

The national media messages regarding the numbers of Energy Supply Companies that have gone into receivership and the increase in the Energy Price Cap in April 2022 has resulted in many more residents contacting us to request assistance. This has created unforeseen pressure on the project and we are managing/prioritising a waiting list for assistance. We have been asked to include referrals to the Household Support Fund into the assistance provided to households. We have modified our assistance to provide guidance to residents on how to manage the significant increases in their energy bills. This includes increasing the promotions of the MMB service alongside the targeted CO and PSR promotions.

Are there any changes you have had to make? (for example, slippage in dates etc.):

We have had seen an increase in the numbers of residents approaching the Council due to the increases in their energy bills due to energy companies in receivership. To accommodate this additional advice and support is now included in our service in response to cope with the numbers of Energy Supply Companies that have gone into receivership.

1c. Case studies

Tell us about a particular individual who has been significantly impacted by this grant (anonymise names if required.) If your project has yet to start work with customers, please state this.

Mrs S was not using her gas central heating to heat her bungalow and instead was using a portable Calor Gas heater to heat her Living Room. Her bungalow already had a carbon monoxide alarm fitted. Advice and information was provided on the dangers of carbon monoxide and the extra moisture in the air produced by the heater could affect her ill health conditions. A leaflet was left with Mrs S and another appointment was booked after the Christmas break to see how she was getting on. We called Mrs S back after Christmas and she said she had had a fall the night before and was struggling. After calling in to see her she agreed to be referred to Adult Services for help as she was struggling to look after herself and she wanted help to stop smoking and was referred for a gas boiler service and received advice on starting to use her gas central heating and stop using the portable Calor gas heater. A referral was made to the PSR via NGN.

Section 2: Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)

NGN / Ofgem require updates on performance, to understand the difference made and impact of this project. A number of metrics set by Ofgem are specific to VCMA, therefore we need to measure performance around these areas. Please enter the appropriate numbers / details in the boxes below, to show the direct impact of your project within the different categories. We **do not** expect you to enter a number in every box, only those relevant to your project. If it is not possible to count the exact numbers directly impacted, please provide a reasonable estimate. Please also include the target number that was stated in your PEA document (if applicable), so that a comparison of target v actual can be made.

2a. How many people have directly benefitted from this project to date against target declared on PEA?	461
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2b. How many people have benefitted indirectly?	286
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Please indicate:		
	Target from Proposal/PEA:	Actual to date:
2c. Number of people signed up to the Priority Services Register	20	220
2d. Number of CO pre and post awareness surveys completed	n/a	159
2e. Number of people reached through CO awareness (leaflets, social media)		
2e. Number of CO alarms provided to vulnerable customers	n/a	10
Please indicate:		
2f. Number of new volunteers	n/a	
2g. Number of additional grants/donations secured, as a result of this funding including amounts:	121 ECO grants, 59 MMB home visits	

2h. Number of people more informed (e.g. attendance at events, workshops)	n/a
2i. Number of people trained	n/a
Please indicate the number of people in the following categories, who have directly benefitted from this project:	
2j. People with physical disabilities	61
2k. People with mental health conditions	45
2l. People living in rural isolation	10
2m. People living with a temporary vulnerability	0
2n. People facing poverty or financial hardship	382
2o. People in education	0
2p. Number of people this project has reached	461

Section 3: Additional Information

<p>3a. Description of any new learning achieved – please include in here how the learning has been disseminated if appropriate and also add any stakeholder engagement that has taken place.</p> <p>All team have viewed the CO awareness video and some were able to attend the NGN CO awareness training session in November 2021.</p> <p>More residents are approaching the service due to their concerns about energy companies going into receivership. This requirement for assistance is being used as a new way to engage with residents and stakeholders to encourage them to engage further.</p>
<p>3b. If you have any additional comments about your project, please state here (otherwise leave blank.)</p> <p>It has been noticeable that some elderly clients have a historical awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning. When asked about awareness some clients linked their knowledge to historical public awareness television cartoon they remember seeing on the television years ago.</p> <p>Some social rented tenants incorrectly presumed that their hard-wired smoke alarm was also a carbon monoxide alarm.</p>

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3c. Have you publicised the VCMA project in any way? Please provide details (social media, newsletter etc.)

We have publicised the CO and PSR but not the VCMA

If you have any photographs, leaflets, additional case studies etc. that you would like to send to us, please attach them to the email with this report. Please ensure they are anonymised if required

All of the information contained in this report is factually correct to the best of my knowledge. I confirm that the data contained within the report is accurate and understand that it may be used as part of NGN's project progress reporting to Ofgem. Please see my authorising signature below.

Name / Signature		
Organisation / role	Durham County Council	
Email Address	Cliff.duff@durham.gov.uk	
Phone Number	03000 265262	
Date	31/3/22	