

# Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Quarterly Report

Organisation	DIAL LEEDS LTD
Project start date (indicate if the start date has been delayed)	01/04/21
Time remaining on project from this quarter	0 months/weeks
Funding stream	VCMA
Report date	05/04/22

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](mailto: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](mailto:JWalker@northerngas.co.uk), 07773 390967**

Once you have completed this form, please return it to: [sord@northerngas.co.uk](mailto: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:**

**Our project started slowly due to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions having an indirect impact on us as some referral agencies were closed for face to face work. Much of our work is also carried out remotely to minimise the risks to clinically vulnerable/extremely vulnerable individuals.**

**We are also doing a lot of fuel poverty work/income maximisation for our clients to enable them to be in a better place to pay bills and reduce any arrears. Securing income- based benefits,**

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Attendance Allowance (AA) entitlements are important qualifiers for Warm Home Discount and energy efficiency grants.

Towards the end of the project we were able to do some CO safety awareness, visit clients in their own homes, general awareness raising on available services/support and a few Warm Home Discount scheme applications.

We have also secured the following for our clients:

10 assisted Warm Home Discount £140 applications

1 assisted initial Winter Fuel Payment £200 application

£420 fuel debt support for case study client at 1c

Help is ongoing to find an appropriate boiler replacement scheme for a person living alone on income – based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). The boiler is very old and inefficient – it has been kept going by a previous Green Doctor repair, but is very much at the end of its useful life.

A projected saving of £90 per annum has been achieved by supporting a person on a very low income (means tested benefits) to change from quarterly billing to paying by monthly direct debit.

27 assisted Warm Home Discount £140 applications

2 assisted initial Winter Fuel Payment £200 application

£450 for replacement cookers for 2 clients (£250 and £200)

Replacement of an ancient boiler with a new Glow Worm Micracom one and underfloor insulation through ECO3 scheme.

Macmillan grant of £300 wasn't in either of the previous reports then it needs to go in this one. It was for living expenses.

Application made for a Yorkshire Water Community Grant with a further 2 in progress.

Off the back of the VCMA funding we have secured a £2,500 Yorkshire Water Vulnerability Fund grant for a 12 months project which focuses on their PSR support and a £15,000 grant over 3 years from the Brelms Trust for holistic social welfare support of disadvantaged disabled people. We have also secured additional Community Partnering top up grant for supermarket and fuel vouchers for £7,857 minus anything that we told them about for this grant in last report. We have also secured a further 12 months of the Yorkshire Water Vulnerability Fund grant for 12 months support project from 01/03/22 £2,408.90.

We have made a big difference in the lives of highly disadvantaged vulnerable disabled people, many of whom were marginalised/ hard to reach. In terms of PSR sign ups, we have a number of clients who not only did not know about the PSR, but have said they “just wouldn’t have ever got around to doing it themselves if we hadn’t helped”. As part of our holistic service we have also been checking people’s bills and talking about their energy needs and concerns - with money and affordability being the main issues. Showing them how they can save through simple measures such as draught proofing and negotiating with suppliers to pay off any outstanding debts has all helped our clients’ physical and mental wellbeing. Unfortunately, due to the “cost of living” crisis in particular fuel price increases the “switching” part of our projects ceased to be viable from September so we are now looking at other savings such as switching to Direct Debit payments, reducing fuel debts and increasing income where possible.

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

**Welfare Benefits gains as follows: (these increase incomes and ability to pay fuel bills as well as acting as a passport to Warm Home Discount and energy efficiency scheme grants etc.)**

**Personal Independence Payment (PIP)**

**Weekly £677.65**

**Arrears £6,927.82**

**Carers Allowance**

**£67.60 per week**

**Income – based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)**

**Weekly £415.00**

**Arrears £1605.12**

**Universal Credit**

**Monthly £1,724.99**

**Arrears £3,510.97**

**State Pension**

**Weekly £538.80**

**Arrears £2,001.26**

**Pension Credit**

**Weekly £207.34**

**Arrears £151.20**

**Housing Benefit:**

**Weekly £211.70**

**Council Tax Support:**

**Weekly £17.26**

**We have facilitated 3 smart meter installations to help with energy efficiency and ease of meter readings and an urgent boiler repair for a social housing tenant.**

**Challenges in achieving any of the above:**

Our project is progressed as anticipated within the Covid 19 restrictions that our small DPULO necessarily had to follow whilst working with people who are clinically extremely vulnerable or clinically vulnerable to the risks of Covid 19.

The effects of Covid impacted on referrals from stakeholders such as foodbanks, and it also impacted on our ability to do home visits which has curtailed our CO work.

The effects of Covid continued to have an impact on referrals from stakeholders such as foodbanks, and it impacted on our ability to do home visits and face to face work throughout the project.

Covid is still playing a part as although governmental restrictions have been lifted we deal with extremely vulnerable disabled people who are quite rightly worried about catching it as it can have a serious impact on them as seen by recent events which have led to the 2 DIAL LEEDS paid staff catching Covid and being really ill leading to delays in project work and reporting.

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

As Above!

**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.

**CASE STUDY 1:**

We were contacted by the friend of a woman who has multiple physical and mental health issues to see if we could help with her benefits problems. The person concerned lives with her 17 year old daughter who also cares for her, in addition to an older daughter who lives nearby.

We established that problems had arisen following a telephone based Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claim review assessment. These are normally carried out face to face, but not during the pandemic.

The process had resulted in a withdrawal of her £60.00 per week PIP Daily Living Component and an associated loss of £67.30 Severe Disability Premium on her income-based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). It was extremely difficult to cope with such a significant loss of income and fuel arrears of £420 arose as the weeks went on.

So far, our assistance has resulted in help to get the above benefits reinstated and the arrears are due to be paid. We are going to help with trying to get her additional PIP to reflect the severe mobility difficulties that she experiences. Priority Services Register sign-ups have given her peace of mind and we will be helping with a Warm Home Discount application and raising the family's carbon monoxide awareness. Further help with the fuel arrears will also be offered as necessary.

**CASE STUDY 2:**

A woman with 2 children living with severe mental health issues and fleeing domestic violence struggling to cope with rising fuel prices and debts. Client is on Universal Credit and we helped her claim Personal Independence Payment. We also secured £200 towards a new cooker/hob as

the present one had been condemned and the landlord refused to replace. We are in the process of applying for charitable grants to help with utility debts and are supporting her to get rehoused.

#### **CASE STUDY 3:**

A 50-year-old gentleman who lives in a Leeds City Council property was struggling to keep himself warm. Mr B has mobility difficulties and his legs can swell up so he often has to sit with his leg raised.

We did a home visit and assessed his energy needs. Mr B was having problems with his benefits as he had been found fit for work, so the first issue was to sort out his weekly income. We completed a new ESA claim and secured his benefit (although he is to have further assessment of his capability for work). We also secured a food parcel as he was struggling to feed himself. We discussed draught proofing and how to set and use his thermostat. We signed him up to the PSR, and we are in the process of switching his supplier with an expected energy saving of £112.00/year.

We discussed CO and went through what it was, how it could affect him and how to stay safe. We are planning to do a Warm Home Discount in the coming months. The outcome so far is help Mr B not worry about his energy bills allowing him to keep warm and safe and to feel he has not just been "left to rot" as this is how he felt prior to our intervention.

A couple of other cases to highlight although not as in-depth include:

A 59-year lady from Hull who has moderate learning disabilities. She recently lost both her parents and is now living alone in the family home. We signed her up to the PSR and sorted out a CO alarm for her with Haltemprice Council which is monitored through the "Lifeline" scheme. We have also set up a bill and usage monitoring for her energy bills. This has allowed her to feel safer and to remain living in her home within the local community with all the benefits of her existing support networks.

A Leeds man who has physical disabilities who lives with his wife who has severe mental health issues and has severe restrictions on her mobility due to a serious accident, and his son who has severe learning disabilities. We met this gentleman via the project worker attending "walking football" sessions. We signed this client up to the PSR and provided information on our services for future use. This client said he had heard of the PSR but just couldn't cope with sorting it out with everything else he had to deal with and our offer to sign him up couldn't have come at a better time.

#### **CASE STUDY 4:**

- This lady and her husband were referred to us by one of our former foodbank user clients. They are a mixed age couple in DWP terms. He is retired, but still works part-time whilst also caring for his wife who has a physical impairment and a number of long-term health conditions.

They receive a small amount of Universal Credit each month towards their housing costs. Their only other income is her Personal Independence Payment (PIP) daily Living of £60 per week which is the standard rate.

The lady is of working age, but has insufficient national insurance contributions over the past few years to qualify for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

They are struggling to make ends meet as their income is low and are subject to the bedroom tax as they are deemed to have 2 extra bedrooms now that their children have grown up and left home.

Moving from their council house to a bungalow in the same area is proving extremely difficult due to the bidding process even though it would free up a family home.

We visited them at home and got them signed up to the PSR, helped with his first Winter Fuel Allowance claim and did a Warm Home Discount application.

We have also initiated a review of her PIP award for mobility needs to be taken into account and are trying to get a Carer amount of £163.73 per month added to their Universal Credit entitlement. So far, our efforts have been in vain even though they meet the criteria for both additional entitlements. We are hoping that medical evidence we have obtained from her GP surgery will change the DWP's point of view.

In the meantime, the lady is attending our Happiness Café sessions fortnightly at her local park and we also keep in touch by phone to offer additional social connections and peer support.

- We visited a gentleman at home who is in his mid 70s. He has chronic kidney disease and is likely to need dialysis soon. He is also being assessed for transplant suitability.

We got him signed up to the PSR on this basis and did a CO survey with him. He subsequently bought 2 CO alarms to go upstairs and down.

He was persuaded to make an Attendance Allowance claim having never claimed anything previously. We did a second home visit to fill in the form which took almost 3 hours as he found it very difficult to discuss his needs even with prompting from his wife.

Securing Attendance Allowance means that if his wife is only able to work a few hours at a local hospital then she will be eligible for Carer's Allowance which will help to maintain their income. They are also a mixed age couple so are now precluded from the more generous benefit entitlements for pensioner couples. This welfare reform happened in 2019 and can cause significant hardship.

- Yet a third mixed age couple contacted us due to experiencing financial difficulties linked to having to claim Universal Credit rather than Pension Credit and being affected by the bedroom tax.

He had become unwell suddenly and had to stop work as a result of a cancer diagnosis that unfortunately had spread to his bones. A chemotherapy alternative in tablet form has commenced alongside hormone infusions. He is still a carer for his wife who has Parkinson's.

Her State Pension has started to be paid and we managed to get her PIP Mobility increased to the enhanced rate on review. Enhanced rate Daily Living was already being paid. We referred them to Macmillan for a grant and they were given £300 to help with their finances.

They are now on the PSR, received a Warm Home Discount and her first Winter Fuel Payment after our help with the applications. We have got him into the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Support Group as unable to undertake any form of work-related activity and he is now also getting PIP enhanced rate Daily Living and Mobility. We then assisted with a Council Tax Support claim based on their new circumstances.

Their incomes are now maximised until they can transfer onto Pension Credit in a few years when he reaches his State Pension age.

All of this assistance has required a series of Covid-19 safe home visits. During our last visit we helped with getting them changed from PAYG British Gas smart meter customers to paying by monthly direct debit for their gas and electricity with a projected annual saving of £55.

We are soon to do a CO survey visit and will continue to offer social connections and peer support as necessary.

- A single woman in her 50s who has a number of physical and mental health difficulties is living on a low income of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) – just £114.10 per week.

A PSR sign-up was much appreciated alongside guidance on changing from quarterly billing for gas and electricity to paying by monthly direct debit. This has been projected to save her in the region of £90 per year. Encouragement to apply for the Warm Home Discount in September also gave her £140 towards her heating which she hadn't claimed before.

Research into grants availability for replacing an ancient boiler resulted in an energy efficient combi boiler and under floor insulation through the ECO3 scheme for a £200 contribution covered by her family.

This individual has now undertaken to do some PSR and CO training with DIAL LEEDS so that she can further spread the messages around support and safety to other vulnerable people.

## 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.

<b>2a. How many people have directly benefitted from this project to date against target declared on PEA?</b>	<b>90</b>
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<b>2b. How many people have benefitted indirectly?</b>	<b>53</b>
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Please indicate:		
	Target from Proposal/PEA:	Actual to date:
<b>2c. Number of people signed up to the Priority Services Register</b>		<b>72</b>
<b>2d. Number of CO pre and post awareness surveys completed</b>		<b>12</b>
<b>2e. Number of people reached through CO awareness (leaflets, social media)</b>		<b>245 (approx.)</b>
<b>2e. Number of CO alarms provided to vulnerable customers</b>		<b>0</b>
Please indicate:		
<b>2f. Number of new volunteers</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>2g. Number of additional grants/donations secured, as a result of this funding including amounts:</b>	<b>6 - Yorkshire Water Vulnerability Fund = £2,500, Brelms Trust = £15,000, SWTW = 2,495.30, Community Partnering £6,126.50, Community Partnering top up grant = £7,857, Yorkshire Water Vulnerability Fund 12 month Extension = £2,408.90.</b>	

2h. Number of people more informed (e.g. attendance at events, workshops)	12
2i. Number of people trained	14
Please indicate the number of people in the following categories, who have directly benefited from this project:	
2j. People with physical disabilities	60
2k. People with mental health conditions	42
2l. People living in rural isolation	1
2m. People living with a temporary vulnerability	0
2n. People facing poverty or financial hardship	27
2o. People in education	2
2p. Number of people this project has reached	414 Approx. including via social media

### Section 3: Additional Information

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>A DIAL LEEDS volunteer has acquired a much greater insight into availability of various boiler replacement schemes for people on low incomes whilst assisting a project beneficiary experiencing fuel poverty.</p> <p>Through personal and client experience we are also learning all about what happens when utilities suppliers go out of business and a new supplier is appointed by Ofgem. It is essential that we are able to assist people to transfer to the lowest possible price tariffs and to maintain their Warm Home Discount entitlements.</p> <p>Things seem to be changing all the time with the current volatility of the energy market. We are keeping up with changes as best we can in order to support vulnerable disabled people who will be significantly impacted by rising prices and the cost of living given their existing background of financial disadvantage/hardship/poverty</p> <p>Our project worker has completed the BPEC CO online course and attended the SROI presentation (which has helped us to better define our project scope and will enable us to establish effective monitoring for fully demonstrating the impact of our empowering peer support for vulnerable individuals and households). He also regularly attends NGN roundtable discussions.</p> <p>Our project worker completed a Yorkshire Water customer vulnerability briefing and attended a further NEA online day training on fuel poverty.</p>
3b. If you have any additional comments about your project, please state here (otherwise leave blank.)
<p>In addition to the KPI's listed above we have monitored the following:</p> <p>People with visual impairment – 2  People with long-term health conditions – 20  People with cognitive impairment – 5  People with a hearing impairment – 2  People with English as a second language – 2  Carers - 3</p>



We find the reporting system to be counter intuitive and not easy to follow, we would suggest either having a quarterly report that is strictly just for that quarter including budget with the final report also just a quarterly report or a rolling report that allows a rolling total ie 1<sup>st</sup> quarter = 3 months, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter = 6 months etc. One way to do this is to split reports into months for the figures (ie PSR sign ups) as we do for the Yorkshire Water reporting which then leads to a running total.

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

We have promoted the project on Social Media, (Facebook and Twitter), with regular tweets on twitter and posts to Facebook. We also have a dedicated leaflet which we have available in both electronic (PDF) form and as a physical leaflet which has been sent to both clients and stakeholders (our stakeholders include Trussell Trust Foodbanks, Cllr Jenkins and Richard Burgon MP, Seacroft Community On Top, Leeds City Council, Forum Central, Leeds Involving People. GPs plus many more). We have also used word of mouth to get to other clients and publicised the project on our website. We still have approx. 33% of our leaflets left which we will carry forward to the project extension

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.*

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