

## Yorkshire Energy Doctor (YED) - Heating for Health

<b>Funding GDN(s)</b>	<b>Northern Gas Networks</b>
<b>For Collaborative VCMA Projects:</b>	Role of GDN(s) N/A
<b>Date of PEA submission:</b>	01 April 2021
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<b>Total cost (£k)</b>	*detailed separately
<b>Total VCMA funding required (£k)</b>	*detailed separately

## 1. Problem(s)

*This should outline the problem(s) which is/are being addressed by the VCMA Project*

There are 26,581 households in North Yorkshire in fuel poverty, where people are struggling to keep warm at an affordable cost. 11.7% of these fuel poor households include someone who has a long-term health condition or disability, many of which can be made worse by living in a cold home. For example, asthma, arthritis, rheumatism, respiratory illness and circulatory problems are all exacerbated by being cold. Fuel poverty can also have a significant detrimental effect on the mental health of adults and young people, and on infants' weight gain, hospital admission rates and developmental status. Cold homes and associated issues around damp and condensation, inadequately maintained heating systems and challenges paying energy bills, can also cause new health problems. It is vital that we tackle these issues to avoid further negative health impacts amongst vulnerable groups.

There are schemes and support available to tackle all three factors that influence the likelihood that a household is fuel poor - low income, high energy prices and/or poor levels of energy efficiency. However, one of the hardest things about tackling fuel poverty is identifying those households most at risk from cold homes and encouraging them to access this support. We believe that health professionals are well-placed to do this as they:

- Are trusted by their patients;
- Conduct home visits where potential issues around cold homes and vulnerability can be more easily identified;
- Can identify first-hand any health issues that could be being caused, or exacerbated, by cold homes;
- May be the only support service that some vulnerable households are known to;
- Have a vested interest in the potential health benefits of ameliorating fuel poverty and associated issues

Despite this, several studies have identified that the health sector has been under-utilised when targeting fuel poverty support ([Shelter, Scotland](#)) and that it is challenging to engage the sector ([DECC](#)). Our own local fuel poverty project, Warm and Well North Yorkshire, similarly reports low levels of referrals from health professionals. This means that vulnerable households, who's health could be being impacted by cold homes, are going un-detected and not being made aware of the support and advice that is available to them.

### 1.1 The solution

The project aims to reduce the number of individuals with a long-term health condition who are living in fuel poverty in North Yorkshire. This will be achieved by providing fuel poverty training to health professionals, who work with some of the most vulnerable residents in local communities. It will also encourage and monitor referrals into the Warm and Well North Yorkshire single point of contact from health professionals. Awareness sessions will be delivered in health-related community settings to further identify and advise vulnerable individuals (e.g. via flu jab clinics, mental health support groups, patient participation groups.) A package of one-to-one advice and support to those households in a vulnerable situation will be provided.

## 2. Scope and Objectives

*The scope and objectives of the VCMA Project should be clearly defined including the benefits which would directly impact customers on the participating GDNs' network(s), and where the benefits of the VCMA Projects lie.*

### 2.1 Shared Purpose

The overall aim of the project is to reduce the number of individuals with a long-term health condition who are living in fuel poverty in North Yorkshire. By working with health professionals and accessing environments with key customer touchpoints, we will ensure that vulnerable households are safe, warm and have a sense of well-being.

### 2.2 The objectives of this initiative are:

- Provide fuel poverty training to health professionals who work with some of the most vulnerable residents in local communities. Covering:
  - a) the risk of fuel poverty on health, from being cold to the dangers of carbon monoxide arising from poorly maintained heating systems, to additional impacts from living in a damp environment;
  - b) how to identify households at risk of fuel poverty;
  - c) ways to encourage households to accept support;
  - d) how to integrate key 'trigger' questions into existing assessment checklists;
  - e) the schemes available and referral pathways for local support services
- Encourage and monitor referrals into the Warm and Well North Yorkshire single point of contact from health professionals
- Run awareness sessions in health-related community settings / customer touchpoints to further identify and advise vulnerable individuals (e.g. via flu jab clinics, mental health support groups, patient participation groups)
- Provide a package of one-to-one advice and support to those households in vulnerable situations.

### 2.42.3 Scope

- Income maximisation – provide a benefits check and help with ensuring households are receiving all entitlements
- Reducing energy prices – undertake a price comparison of energy suppliers and tariffs to ensure households are on the cheapest possible prices
- Improving energy efficiency – make referrals to schemes for more efficient heating systems, insulation and other energy efficiency measures
- Ensuring well-being at home – advice on reducing the risks of carbon monoxide, dealing with damp and condensation and sign-ups for the PSR

### **3. Why the Project is being funded through the VCMA**

*This should include an explanation of why the VCMA Project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria. This is a requirement*

This project qualifies under the criteria for the VCMA funding, as it will directly benefit customers in vulnerable situations, specifically those at risk of ill health and fuel poverty through living in a cold home. This includes:

- people with cardiovascular conditions;
- people with respiratory conditions (e.g. COPD, childhood asthma);
- people with mental health conditions;
- people with disabilities;
- older people (65 and older);
- pregnant women and households with young children (under 5)

Government statistics show that households that include an individual who has a disability or long-term health condition, are more likely to be in fuel poverty than a household without. This project aligns to NGN's Vulnerability Strategy around the financial hardship, physical and mental health and rurality themes.

There will be no collaboration from other GDN's nor other funded sources.

#### **3.1 Eligibility criteria**

- This project will have a positive SROI
- This project will support NGN's Vulnerability Strategy by aligning with rurality, financial hardship, mental health and physical disability themes
- Has defined outcomes as required (see outcomes section)
- Goes beyond NGN's licence obligations and price control funded mechanisms

### **4. Evidence of stakeholder/customer support**

*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.*

Within the Northern Gas Networks region, we serve 2.7 million gas-using households. The socio-economic characteristics of our region mean that we operate in many communities that are amongst the most economically deprived in the whole country. This was a key factor in our prioritising engagement with vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups of customers, telling them about our services, about what we do and how we could improve.

Each year, we undertake analysis of all the insight we've heard in the previous year to prioritise those issues our stakeholders most want to engage on. Over the past 12-18 months, we've done this in a number of ways.

#### 4.1 Customers in Vulnerable Situations (CIVS) Workshops 2019 – 2020

Asking our stakeholders what's important – using our wide range of engagement mechanisms from strategic workshops to customer perceptions, we asked stakeholders to prioritise what is most important to them. ~~This includes (including~~ digital engagement in light of CV-19. ~~)~~ During 2019-2020 we held multiple workshops with our stakeholders on the subject of CIVS. In our February 2020 annual strategic workshop, cold related ill health and fuel poverty awareness was discussed as an emerging issue. ~~customers in vulnerable situations. During~~ During our July 2020 workshop, stakeholders discussed new emerging issues due to Covid-19, what the impact of the pandemic has on hidden vulnerability and how the current pandemic impacted demand for essential services to support CIVS.

During the CV-19 specific workshop held in August 2020, our stakeholders told us some of the main impacts have been associated with an increase in mental health issues due to social isolation and job losses, food and fuel poverty. They also identified that larger energy bills was an issue due to the pandemic due to spending more time at home, especially during winter. They also identified that there was an increased risk of CO due to not being able to get appliances repaired / maintained due to financial hardship. Stakeholders also highlighted that disabled people's mental health had significantly been impacted due to lockdown and isolation. Another impact of the pandemic has been access to essential services for those living in vulnerable situations. This only serves to exacerbate existing issues around social isolation and access to services because of the rural nature of much of North Yorkshire. In some of these areas, a health worker may be the only person providing support to priority groups.

A workshop around Customer Touchpoints was held in October 2020. Stakeholders told us that to tackle fuel poverty, we need to maximise opportunities at every-day touchpoints and daily interactions, such as GP surgeries, clinics and hospitals. This project will enable YED to take a strategic and comprehensive approach to engaging with these health professionals, which will help to identify and reach a significant number of individuals, vulnerable due to living in cold homes.

In January 2021 we held a specific fuel poverty workshop. During this workshop our stakeholders said that fuel, food and general poverty are all linked, and we need more streamlined ways of working together. Specifically for this project, using health professionals and maximising customer touchpoints will help raise awareness of different support available.

#### 4.2 Customer Engagement Group (CEG)

~~This group provides Provide~~ an independent oversight into the actions we take to support CIVS. ~~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 CIVS, ~~customers in vulnerable situations~~ which meets the needs of our stakeholders.

#### 4.3 Social Indicator Mapping, Covid 19 Research and ~~Vulnerability Mapping Tool (VMT)~~

~~Social Academic research social~~ indicator mapping took place in 2019 and further research around CV-19 impact was undertaken in July 2020. This was shared as part of our stakeholder engagement. A new Vulnerability Mapping Tool has been demonstrated to stakeholders to highlight any

vulnerability gaps we have on our network. The ~~VMT system~~ allows you to add multiple factors of vulnerability together, ~~to create a heat map for where factors combine to create areas of highest need. All data can be mixed and matched such as fuel poverty and communities with health issues and older demographics.~~ ~~to answer complicated questions, e.g. see where there are a high number of older people living in low energy efficient housing and in fuel poverty.~~ This has also been updated to reflect more emerging issues.

Feedback from our social indicator mapping indicated that there are 12,835 excess winter deaths in the NGN area, with the proportion above expected highest in The Ridings patch. Stakeholders previously asked us to prioritise working with vulnerable customers in fuel poverty and customers with physical and mental health challenges. People living in fuel poverty often have to choose between heating or eating. Furthermore, fuel poverty is also prevalent in off gas grid communities and the area where this project is focussed, covers a large area of rurality. As a further consequence of fuel poverty and financial hardship, the repair, maintenance and replacement of gas appliances may not be a priority. The impact of this is an increased risk of CO poisoning, from appliances that aren't working correctly.

CV-19 research commissioned by NGN in June 2020, highlighted the conclusions below. This provides further evidence to support YED's project.

- The most severely impacted include those with multiple risk factors and vulnerabilities
- Those with severe health risks who were shielding faced multiple difficulties
- Different vulnerability factors tend to be concentrated in the same local areas
- Covid-19 impacts extend beyond vulnerable people to the organisations who support them
- Potential responses to Covid-19 impacts on vulnerable groups are wide ranging and likely to involve operational practices, communication to customers, action on fuel poverty, and help for vulnerable customers and the groups who support them.

#### 4.4 Vulnerability Strategy AAA Framework

Within our ~~V~~vulnerability ~~S~~strategy we have developed, with the help of our stakeholders, the 'AAA' framework. This helps us support our customers in vulnerable situations. Awareness, Accessibility and Action. By adapting this principles-based approach into our AAA framework, we will ensure that all customers are treated fairly and consistently. A number of NGN's strategy themes are covered in this project ie financial hardship, physical and mental health and rural isolation. ~~vulnerability~~

#### 5. Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria

*Details of the VCMA Project outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these, interim milestones and how the Funding Licensee will evaluate whether the project has been successful. Each action should have a proportion of the funding allocated.*

##### 5.1 Outcomes

- 175 health professionals receive training on fuel poverty, health and cold homes
- Development of a process/checklist by which health professionals can identify individuals at risk of cold homes and integration of this into their working practices

- 150 people receive information and advice in health-related community settings
- 100 households with health conditions referred into the Warm and Well North Yorkshire Single Point of Contact

## 5.2 Success criteria

- 100 vulnerable households receive in-depth tailored support and advice, through which:
  - a) Households helped to make average financial savings of £250 each = estimated total financial benefit of £25,000
  - b) 100 households receive a home energy check with energy efficiency improvements identified
  - c) 100 households made aware of the risks of carbon monoxide
  - d) 100 households receive information on the Priority Services Register and helped to sign up (where applicable)
- Development of an evaluation methodology for assessing the impact of the project on health

## 6. Project Partners and third parties involved

### *Details of Project Partners or third-party involvement*

- Citizens Advice mid-North Yorkshire
- North Yorkshire County Council Strategic Health Partnership
- Healthwatch
- Health Visitors
- Mental Health teams
- Primary Care Networks
- Occupational Therapists
- Home from Hospital teams
- Respiratory Nursing teams

## 7. Potential for new learning

### *Details of what the GDN(s) expect to learn and how the learning will be disseminated.*

The project aims to learn:

- The most effective ways of engaging with health professionals
- How best health professionals can identify vulnerable households and develop/share best practice based on this learning
- The most effective way(s) of encouraging individuals to take-up support offered
- The extent to which support provided can positively impact the well-being of vulnerable households

This learning can then be shared in other geographical areas and with other agencies that are working to tackle fuel poverty.

## **8. Scale of VCMA Project and SROI calculations**

*The Funding Licensee(s) should justify the scale of the VCMA Project – including the scale of the investment relative to its potential benefits. As part of this, it should provide the SROI calculation.*

This project has a positive SROI return.

### **VCMA Project start and end date**

*Detail start and end date of the VCMA Project and, where relevant, the VCMA Project that preceded this initiative.*

1st April 2021 – 31.03.2023

### **Geographic area**

*Details of where the VCMA Project will take place. If the VCMA Project is collaborative, the Funding Licensee area(s) in which the project will take place should be identified.*

The project will take place in the geographical area covered by North Yorkshire County Council, which is the county of North Yorkshire excluding the city of York. It covers the following local authority areas: Craven, Hambleton, Harrogate, Richmondshire, Ryedale, Scarborough, and Selby

### **Approved by**

Eileen Brown  
Customer Experience Director