

## Everyday Enable CIC – Welfare Support and Training

<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>	March 2024
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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*

Everyday Enable will be addressing the lack of support available for people to access the welfare benefits system. They know that people do not understand the benefit system and how to navigate it, resulting in them not having the confidence and knowledge to claim the correct benefits, resulting in poverty and rising debts. Families often having to make the decision to heat their homes or feed themselves healthy nutritional meals.

### **1.1 The solution**

This project will raise awareness amongst both individuals in the community and professionals about the welfare benefit system, and what help and support is available to those who are vulnerable. The support available includes help to claim benefits, apply for bus passes and blue badges, information about the Priority Services Register, and the importance of having a co2 monitor.

## **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.*

This project will allow Everyday Enable to offer a much needed service in the Selby area, to those who are vulnerable and living with health conditions, by supporting them to access their entitlements. Also raising awareness to other professionals across the North East of England about the welfare benefit system, how to navigate it and what other support is there available for them to refer to when needed.

### **2.1 The objectives of this initiative are:**

- To provide an average of 8 hours benefit support to 200 people in the local area.
- To raise awareness in professionals about the benefit system, who might be eligible to claim benefits and what support is available.
- To secure approximately £707,200 for people in the local area, reducing debt in the community
- Signpost people to other organisations who can help.
- Raise awareness of other support available including signing people up to the Priority Service register.
- Ensuring people have Carbon Monoxide alarms in their homes to keep them safe.

## **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 for VCMA funding, as it will provide much needed support to vulnerable members of our community to understand and access their entitlements, whilst also ensuring all other support is made available to support good health and wellbeing. We will look at ensuring all our customers are on the priority services register and that they are aware of common dangers in the home, to ensure they are safe.

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

### **3.1 Eligibility criteria**

- The project supports NGN's Vulnerability Strategy by aligning with the financial hardship and health themes.
- Has defined outcomes as required.
- Goes beyond NGN's licence obligations and price control funded mechanisms.
- NGN have calculated that this project will have a positive SROI.

## **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**

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. Since 2019 we've held regular workshops with our stakeholders, on the subject of Customers In Vulnerable Situations (CIVS). This ensures that we are well informed to address the needs of customers across our network and through collaborative projects.

Stakeholder engagement throughout 2022, told us that fuel poverty and the choice between heating and eating is becoming more prevalent. The energy and cost of living crises have further compounded this issue. This project provides a solution to helping those customers who are financially struggling and need extra help to address energy affordability. The project fully aligns with the need to help vulnerable customers in fuel poverty.

Recent social indicator mapping research carried out in June 2022, indicated that Bradford, Hull, Scarborough, South Tyneside, and Sunderland were the top five places, to emerge as having the greatest concentration of vulnerabilities within NGN's network. This was based on a combination of the following vulnerability factors:

- Fuel poverty
- Benefit claims
- No qualifications
- Long term health problem / disability

Our most recent stakeholder engagement during 2023 has informed us that financial hardship is still a key area of focus, alongside the health impacts associated with, or exacerbated by, living in cold and damp homes. Stakeholders also told us that increasing capacity for support within services would be key to addressing the immediate and longer term impacts of fuel poverty and energy affordability. This project addresses this need and ensures additional capacity to support households who may be at risk, through a well-established and trusted advice service.

Each year we use our annual Customer Perceptions Research to understand the priorities of our customers. Amongst a set of general tracker questions i.e., same questions that are asked year on year, the evidence in the most recent research (March 2023), indicated that keeping bills as low as possible ranked more highly, than providing a safe and reliable supply of gas. This is a clear indication, as to how concerned customers are about the cost of energy and the subsequent impact this will have on other bills. Customers were also asked to prioritise the list of vulnerabilities listed below:

- Mental wellbeing
- Rurality
- Temporary vulnerability
- Physical challenges
- Financial Hardship

This was the order of priority from the customers surveyed:

- Financial Hardship
- Physical challenges
- Mental wellbeing
- Rurality
- Temporary vulnerability

Financial hardship continued to be the dimension of vulnerability that most customers prioritised, with more customers in the most recent survey selecting this as their top priority. Physical challenges were second, closely followed by Mental well-being third. Rurality and Temporary vulnerability were ranked fourth and fifth.

Very recent (Autumn 2023) Bespoke Vulnerability Stakeholder Mapping research identified categories of stakeholders that are hard to reach, this included:

- People living with a disability
- Senior citizens with long term conditions
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Mental health

Health conditions which are prevalent in the NGN region are:

- Cancer and chronic kidney disease
- Musculoskeletal conditions
- Respiratory

- Mental health

Through the research carried out, the findings show that the 5 original NGN vulnerability categories have now evolved to 10 categories. These are:

1. Physical challenges, inclusive of communication issues, physical space
2. Mental wellbeing
3. Financial hardship
4. Temporary vulnerability – including post hospital recovery and pregnancy / maternity
5. Socio Demographic
6. Household composition
7. Rural Vulnerability
8. Accessibility Including language
9. Medical Dependant on Energy
10. Cultural

#### **4.2 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.

#### **4.3 Vulnerability Strategy AAA Framework**

Within our vulnerability 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. The themes of rural and financial vulnerability within the project, align to NGN's Vulnerability Strategy.

### **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**

- 1600 local people being provided with welfare benefit support.
- 1600 people being made aware of the PSR.
- 120 professionals being given welfare benefit awareness training.
- 1600 people being made aware of the dangers of CO.

## 5.2 Success criteria

- Larger number of people across NE England being better supported to navigate the welfare benefit system.
- Larger number of vulnerable people accessing their benefit entitlements
- Greater understanding amongst professionals about the benefit system and support available.

## 6. Project Partners and third parties involved

*Details of Project Partners or third-party involvement*

Everyday Enable will work closely with Yorkshire Energy Doctor, to speak key messages through their networks as well as their own. They will also work with Selby District AVS to ensure they can offer a safe space to meet with people and to promote the work which they are doing.

## 7. Potential for new learning

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

Any learning will be shared with colleagues, partners and other organisations.

## 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.*

Feb 2024 – March 2025

### **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.*

North Yorkshire, with online training across North East England

### **Approved by**

Eileen Brown  
Customer Experience Director