

Yorkshire Energy Doctor (YED) Heating for Health extension

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| Funding GDN(s) | Northern Gas Networks |
| For Collaborative VCMA Projects: | Role of GDN(s) N/A |
| Date of PEA submission: | March 2024 |
| Project contact name: | Laura Ratcliffe |
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| Total cost (£k) | *detailed separately |
| Total VCMA funding required (£k) | *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.

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 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.

2.2 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

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 The Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG)

This group provides an independent oversight into the actions we take to support our customers in vulnerable situations (CIVS). 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, which meets the needs of our stakeholders. The introduction of a dedicated role to support VCMA projects has been welcomed by the ISG.

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

- 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.

Any learning will be shared with stakeholders, including GDN's, DNO's and water companies

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 2024 – 31st March 2026

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