

## Groundwork - Green Doctor English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) project

<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>	April 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*

One of the challenges which Groundwork have come across is in accessing funding for interpreters/translators for the home visits which they carry out. They are often very long visits required to go through all their Green Doctor advice, which then reduces their capacity to support more people. Added to this there are issues relating to the Private Rented Sector (PRS) in which many people from the “ethnic minority” group are tenants. Circumstances can be complex in the PRS in regard to housing conditions, property standards and lack of landlord engagement.

### **1.1 The solution**

This project aims to increase and enable more effective support for ethnic minorities, asylum seekers and refugees. The Green Doctors would like to develop a tailored energy awareness presentation/information sessions delivered to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes across West Yorkshire.

These will involve groups of people from various countries & different levels of English understanding, attending a 2-hour in-person/face to face information/advice session incorporating many visual explanations, simple text, alongside a handout of key terms in ‘easy to read’ format. Not only will the students learn about energy, how to save money & where to access support, they will also expand their vocabulary via a follow-up session to embed the knowledge held by the class facilitator following-up on the presentation.

As with all Green Doctor interventions & advice, they will be raising awareness of the risks from Carbon Monoxide, the sources of CO, the impacts & prevention. CO leaflets will be distributed to all attendees, with translated versions made available when necessary. Similarly, we will do the same for the Priority Service Register.

## **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:**

- Increase and enable more effective support for ethnic minorities, asylum seekers and refugees
- Develop a tailored energy awareness presentation/information session delivered to ESOL classes across West Yorkshire
- Raise awareness of Carbon Monoxide and the risks from CO
- Raise awareness of the Priority Service Register

## 2.2 Scope

- Organise Energy awareness sessions to be delivered to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Providing advise on how to save money and where to access support
- Expand customers vocabulary via a follow-up session to embed the knowledge held by the class facilitator following-up on the presentation.

The scope of this project will be mainly focused on the West Yorkshire region, but we would also aim to deliver sessions more widely if there's a demand.

### 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 support customers under the category "Accessibility Including language" and who are also in financial hardship.

ere 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 directly with the financial hardship theme
- Has defined outcomes as required (see outcomes section)
- Goes beyond NGN's licence obligations and price control funded mechanisms
- Reaches a broad range of vulnerable group

### 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**

- Deliver x12 ESOL sessions per year
- PSR signups = 100
- CO awareness = 100

### **5.2 Success criteria**

- Increased awareness of carbon monoxide (CO).
- Increased awareness of the PSR
- Expand customers vocabulary via a follow-up sessions
- Development of the ESOL presentation & Easy Read handout document

## **6. Project Partners and third parties involved**

*Details of Project Partners or third-party involvement*

Groundwork will engage with various colleges across West Yorkshire who host ESOL classes, such as Leeds, Calderdale, Wakefield, Bradford Colleges, Path Yorkshire YES (Yorkshire English School & smaller, local community organisations.

## **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.*

April 2024 – 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 cover West Yorkshire with aims to develop across the Yorkshire region.

**Approved by**

Eileen Brown  
Customer Experience Director