

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Project title:	Cleveland Fire and Rescue – Stay Safe and Warm
Funding GDN(s) <i>The GDN(s) which register(s) the project</i>	Northern Gas Networks
New or updated <i>(indicate as appropriate by removing the option that does not apply)</i>	Updated-extension
Collaborative VCMA Projects <i>Specific role(s) of GDN(s) participating in a collaborative VCMA Project:</i>	N/A
Date of PEA Submission	March 2025
VCMA Project contact <i>Name:</i> <i>Email:</i> <i>Number:</i>	Laura Ratcliffe lratcliffe@northerngas.co.uk 07928501779
Total cost (£k):	*detailed separately
Total VCMA funding required (£k):	*detailed separately

Problem(s)	<p>lack of awareness around knowing the signs of CO poisoning and what to do in that situation. New legislation places a responsibility on landlords to ensure their properties have working CO alarms, but many have not acted upon this legislation yet.</p> <p>Solution</p> <p>Cleveland Fire and Rescue will identify households without CO alarms, rectify the issue as a priority, then refer landlords to housing local authority teams where appropriate to ensure that they understand their responsibilities and fulfil them in any remaining properties they are responsible for.</p> <p>We would like to extend the project to allow them to continue delivering the service and keeping more people in Cleveland safe in their homes, and building on the foundation established with the first year. Installing a further 500 CO alarms, delivering 23 community engagement events throughout the year used for safety information and signing people up to the PSR. They will also run a CO safety post on their social media channels with a link to their website for the PSR.</p>
Scope and Objectives	<p>Each household would receive and have access to the following package of support through the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer homes visit where crews ensure they have appropriate smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in their property and fit where necessary.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any other relevant risk reduction can also be issued on the visit as needed by the individuals. • Home fire safety advice is given at each property. • If the residents are struggling to keep warm in their home, warmth packs and electric heaters are issued as well as keep warm advice - outcome improved comfort. • Onward referrals are made to community organisations including Age UK, Smoking Cessation, Social Prescribers • Cleveland Fire Brigade has a befriending service for lonely and isolated older people that residents can also be referred into for additional support. <p>This project will deliver interventions to 500 households across the Cleveland districts of Hartlepool, Stockton, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland. The key objectives of the project are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To keep our most vulnerable residents safe from harm, through the delivery of a multi-agency collaboration project. • To install carbon monoxide alarms into the homes of the most vulnerable residents • To educate vulnerable groups of the dangers of Carbon Monoxide poisoning and how to protect themselves from it.
<p>Why the Project is being funded through the VCMA</p>	<p>This project qualifies under the criteria for VCMA funding, as it will support a wide range of vulnerable customers who are living in financial hardship and fuel poverty as well as raising awareness of CO and the PSR. As the project has mental wellbeing and financial hardship themes, it aligns with NGN'S Vulnerability Strategy too.</p> <p>This project aims to support our Centres for Warmth in assisting their communities with immediate crisis support, to deal with the significant impacts of fuel poverty, as well as other financial hardship.</p> <p>There will be no collaboration from other GDN's nor other funded sources.</p> <p>Eligibility criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project has a positive SROI • This project will support NGN's Vulnerability Strategy by aligning with the Financial Hardship theme and the wider vulnerability categories of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial hardship • Accessibility, including language • Socio-demographic • Cultural • Mental Wellbeing themes • Has defined outcomes as required

	Goes beyond NGN's licence obligations and price control funded mechanisms
Evidence of stakeholder or customer support	<p>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.</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement throughout 2022, 2023 and 2024, 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. This was based on a combination of the following vulnerability factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuel poverty • Benefit claims • No qualifications • Long term health problem / disability <p>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.</p> <p>Through research carried out in 2023, the findings show that the 5 original NGN vulnerability categories have now evolved to 10 categories. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical challenges, inclusive of communication issues, physical space • Mental wellbeing • Financial hardship • Temporary vulnerability – including post hospital recovery and pregnancy / maternity • Socio Demographic • Household composition • Rural Vulnerability • Accessibility Including language • Medical Dependant on Energy • Cultural

Feedback from our Spending allowances well - health focus (September '23) workshop, indicated that one of the biggest concerns was health, specifically the link between living in a cold, damp home and the impact on health. Health projects are a priority for NGN this regulatory year and the need for winter warmer packs and heat the person items are growing as the cold weather sets in.

Through extensive engagement with stakeholders, we are seeing a number of key themes coming through consistently in terms of the impact of health and increased risks associated with cold, damp homes. Some notable observations and key areas are:

- We're seeing evidence of more expensive fuel costs for those with disabilities and those living with specific health conditions
- We're seeing a rise in mental health issues within our network – and acknowledging this as a barrier to engagement in longer term support
- We're acknowledging increases in the risk of CO poisoning – and looking at ways to identify and address this

Feedback from our annual VCMA Showcase Event (July 2024) included questions around how GDN's can help people who are not traditionally eligible for support, so many are in private rented or mortgage properties and do work. This project will help vulnerable customers regardless of their property tenure. Stakeholders also mentioned enhanced health risks that cancer sufferers face. This project will help keep customers living with cancer warm and well in their own homes.

Feedback from our Supporting Communities Together Event (October 2024) told us that the support is needed now more than ever to help customers stay warm and well in their own homes. Stakeholders also mentioned that if bills can't be lowered by price per kWh, then support advice initiatives re: other ways to stay warm should be available to customers. Stakeholders also mentioned that NGN should support customers this winter by providing practical support in the form of winter warm packs, vouchers etc.

Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG)

This group previously known as the Customer Engagement 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. The ISG work with NGN, to create the content of the Customers In Vulnerable Situations (CIVS) workshops, previously detailed in the document.

Vulnerability Strategy (Updated Spring 2024)

NGN's dedicated Customers in Vulnerable Situations Strategy is continually reviewed to reflect changes in need. The most recent update was in June 24, reflecting the increase in the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide

	<p>Allowance from c£7m to £20m. This ongoing strategy review continues to be informed by Stakeholder feedback. The six strategic principles, detailed below, form the basis of the strategy. Different support mechanisms and approaches have been mapped against each of the six principles, reflecting priority areas from stakeholder feedback.</p> <p>The six key priority areas identified by our stakeholders are summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority Area 1: Increased focus on health • Priority Area 2: Collaboration and linking up partners and funding • Priority Area 3: Increasing capacity for support within partner organisations • Priority Area 4: Connecting and responding to different aspects and complexities of vulnerability • Priority Area 5 – Continued support for those in financial hardship • Priority Area 6 - Scaling up existing projects
Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria	<p>This project will deliver interventions to 500 households across the Cleveland districts of Hartlepool, Stockton, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue and install 500 Carbon Monoxide detector alarms. • 23 community engagement events delivered. • 1,500 people reached by social media on CO safety • Cleveland Fire Brigade staff would encourage 275 vulnerable residents to sign up the Priority Services Register.
Project Partners and third parties involved	Collaboration between the Fire Authority and the 4 local councils; Hartlepool Borough Council; Stockton Borough Council; Middlesbrough Council & Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Potential for new learning	Any learning will be shared with stakeholders, including GDN's, DNO's and water companies.
Scale of VCMA Project and SROI calculations, including NPV	<p>This project has a positive SROI return.</p> <p>SROI: £3.28</p> <p>NPV: £124,839.43</p>
VCMA Project start and end date	February 2025 - March 2026
Geographical area	Stockton, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland.
Internal governance and project management evidence	<p>VCMA Governance Group Meeting: 31st January 2025</p> <p>Outcome of meeting: Approved</p>
Approved by: Job Title:	<p>Eileen Brown</p> <p>Customer Experience Director</p>
Signature:	