

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Project title:	Skills 4 Work Gateshead – A trusted source of information and practical support (project extension)
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 07928 501779
Total cost (£k):	*detailed separately
Total VCMA funding required (£k):	*detailed separately

Problem(s)	Problem
	<p>Young people with multiple disabilities are often not included in key information. Many organisations feel it is information that is not necessary to them until a crisis situation arises. Skills 4 Work believe in a proactive approach and to provide information for now or the near future of their lives. All the young people they work with have aspirations to have their own property in the future and equip them with the required work and life skills to make this a reality and not a dream. They understand that many of their families lead complex home lives and therefore try to support key messages in a supportive, relaxed way, whilst still cascading correct information. Many of the families live in some of the most deprived parts of Gateshead, which can be the hardest to engage in topics related to energy saving, safety measures. As a consequence, many will be left behind in the absence of knowledge in these topics.</p> <p>The solution</p> <p>Skills 4 Work have 3 warm spaces which were created in partnership with local partners due to a high level of isolation/deprivation in that particular area of Gateshead. They offer a unique approach to their warm spaces as they are run by the young people and community volunteers who are supported by their trained staff. They will use these warm spaces as a way of developing confidence and self esteem in the young person, before they look at finding them individual work placements in the local business community.</p>

	<p>Reason for extension</p> <p>To increase sign-up for PSR and raise awareness of ‘preparing for a power cut’/ supply interruption.</p> <p>The office is now based within a Gateshead Family Hub, which allows Skills 4 Work the opportunity to engage with young families and other providers who use the services within the Family Hubs. This was not the situation in February 2024 and therefore the organisation was not aware of the additional reach and information sharing that could be generated. They have had a very positive response to their engagement with the 14 organisations they are currently working with and wish to engage further groups via this additional funding.</p> <p>The funding will allow them to offer additional hours to the sessional workers who are working on the project and have a clear understanding of the PSR. Following the attendance of the Project Lead at a recent Northern Powergrid conference, Skills 4 Work feel that they can support the additional sign-ups that are required by March 2025, via these new links. As well as raising awareness of what to do in the event of a supply interruption.</p>
Scope and Objectives	<p>Extension only:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of the PSR / additional support and benefits • Sign families onto the PSR
Why the Project is being funded through the VCMA	<p>This project qualifies for VCMA funding, under the relevant criteria, as it will support those customers living in vulnerable situations who require extra support to stay warm in their own homes.</p> <p>The project has the potential to cover all of NGN's Customers in Vulnerable Situations (CIVS) Strategy, specifically around socio demographic, temporary vulnerabilities and mental health. This aligns with the VCMA criteria.</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"> • Customers who will be engaging potentially have vulnerabilities that will fall under one or more vulnerabilities identified under NGN's CIVS Strategy • Has defined outcomes as required (see outcomes / deliverables section) • Goes beyond NGN's licence obligations and price control funded mechanisms

<p>Evidence of stakeholder or customer support</p>	<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 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 may require additional support and benefit from receiving extra help in the event of an energy supply interruption, in order to be able to heat/eat. The project fully aligns with the need to help vulnerable customers with additional support.</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement during 2023 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.</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 <p>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/financial situation.</p> <p>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</p>
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	<p>bills can't be lowered, then support / advice initiatives regarding other ways to stay warm should be available to customers.</p> <p>Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG)</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Vulnerability Strategy (Updated Spring 2024)</p> <p>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 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
<p>Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria</p>	<p>Success criteria / deliverables for extension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign up 180 Gateshead residents onto the PSR • Raise awareness of supply interruptions / power cuts and issue printed literature for residents to retain • Help customers in vulnerable situations to stay warm and well in their own homes • Provide torches and power banks when available via partner organisations • Engage with Green Doctor to support understanding and invite to Warm Space – lunch groups • Engage with Citizen's Advice Gateshead and invite to Warm Space – lunch groups

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness via attendance at Gateshead MECC monthly meetings
Project Partners and third parties involved	Green Doctors, CA Gateshead, Gateshead MECC
Potential for new learning	Increase in awareness and knowledge of PSR / associated support from both gas and electricity. Any learning will be shared with stakeholders, including GDN's, DNO's and water companies
Scale of VCMA Project and SROI calculations, including NPV	This project has a positive SROI return. SROI: £6.75 NPV: £332,682.57
VCMA Project start and end date	February 2025 - January 2026
Geographical area	This project will take place within NGN geographical area
Internal governance and project management evidence	VCMA Governance Group Meeting: 26 th November 2024 Outcome of meeting: Approved.
Approved by: Job Title:	Eileen Brown Customer Experience Director
Signature:	