

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Project title:	The Rainbow Centre – Centre for Warmth
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>	New
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>The Rainbow Centre in Scarborough was established in 1997 as a social action project by St. Mary's with Apostles Church in Scarborough to meet the needs of people in crisis in the local area. Over the years they have grown and offer an open door to anyone who is in need of help with any issues they are facing, offering compassion, support and hope.</p> <p>As a social action centre, they help vulnerable people in crisis who present with a wide range of issues including homelessness, poor mental health, domestic violence, poverty and drug & alcohol problems amongst many others. Many of the clients lead chaotic lifestyles.</p> <p>The number of people accessing the day service is increasing and it is vital that they continue to do this as they are the only service in Scarborough providing this kind of support.</p> <p>The centre is based in Castle Ward which is ranked in the top 20% Lower Super Output Areas as well as one of the top 3 deprived areas in North Yorkshire. Up until recently, the ward was ranked in the top 10% but due to the changes to the ward boundaries this does not give a realistic reflection as the position has not changed. In fact, 85% of North Yorkshire's most deprived residents live in Scarborough.</p> <p>Average weekly earnings in Scarborough are significantly below the average for England and has one of the lowest weekly earnings compared with the other districts in North Yorkshire. This coupled with the seasonal nature of the work in the town means many people are struggling financially.</p>
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Scarborough has the second highest rate of homelessness among all districts in North Yorks. There are currently approximately 35-45 people registered with the local authority as homeless and 68 former homeless people living in licensed accommodation at risk of eviction due to chaotic lifestyle habits in the town. In addition, there are 100+ families living in temporary accommodation which includes B&Bs and guesthouses, with many having to reside like this for over for over 12 months. However, this does not reflect the true picture as many homeless people are hidden, i.e. sofa surfers or sleeping in cars, or intentionally go under the radar. Additionally, they are experiencing an influx of working people who are struggling financially as their salary is insufficient to cover their household bills including energy bills. These people are accessing their foodbank to ensure they have enough food to feed their families.

Solution

There are a number of initiatives at the centre including:

Home@Rainbow- In November last year, consultation was undertaken with homeless clients to gain some understanding about their needs and whether their support was meeting these. They learned that they perceived the centre as their 'home' especially after a long, cold night sleeping rough on the streets.

They converted one of their communal spaces into a day centre to provide a warm, welcoming and non-judgemental space to relax. This space is equipped with reclining chairs and blankets for those who want to sleep, a TV, board games, books as well as access to a computer which enables them to look for a new home, apply for benefits, search for employment as well as stay in contact with family via email.

All visitors accessing Home have access to free food and hot drinks for the duration of their stay as well as being able to use shower and laundry facilities. Additionally, there is a mobile barber visiting the centre once a fortnight providing haircuts and grooming as well as access to an NHS Homeless Support Nurse who looks after all their medical needs and appointments.

Each day they have on average 35 homeless visitors to their day centre and these numbers are rising. This is due to an influx of homeless people coming to the coast for the summer as well as the withdrawal of a social landlord resulting in the closure of a number of HMOs in the town, which has led to nearly 60 people becoming homeless overnight.

Rainbow Money- Community debt is a major problem in the Scarborough area, causing heartache, family break-up and potentially exacerbating issues surrounding substance misuse and homelessness. Rainbow Money provides vital support and impartial advice to community members who have found themselves with serious money or debt problems by providing:

- Help with Debt Relief Orders (DRO)
- Support with Debt Management Plans (DMP)

- Support with Bankruptcy
- Support with Budgeting
- One off Advice

Client Support-

All clients accessing the client support service are means tested to ensure that qualifying people and those most in need are supported. Food parcels are

provided to single households, families, pensioners, homeless, asylum seekers, and employed people earning low incomes.

All clients are supported by client support workers to help identify the issues such as poor physical and mental health, drug and alcohol addiction, housing issues, financial problems including debt, fuel poverty etc, which are impacting on their lives.

Client support workers help with:

- Maximising incoming, including benefits
- CO awareness
- PSR registration
- Energy efficiency
- Gas & electricity vouchers
- Clothing, bedding and household items
- Food parcels
- Signposting to other agencies

By offering this wrap around support, they aim to enable clients to become more resilient and less reliant on the foodbank in the future.

The Centre for Warmth concept was developed to ensure a holistic approach to supporting fuel poor households within a community setting. A Centre for Warmth Strategy has been developed and approved by our independent Governance Panel on 30th July 2024.

Centre users will receive a combination of services such as:

- energy advice
- CO awareness and advice
- income maximisation through benefit entitlement checks and managing debt
- free or reduced cost food/clothing
- fuel top up vouchers
- connections to other NGN funded partner information/assistance

Plus training, information, advice and services bespoke to their individual neighbourhoods. All provided in a warm safe space designed to improve

	health and wellbeing, increase household income, and help communities better manage their energy.
Scope and Objectives	<p>The Rainbow Centre is a Centre for Warmth based in Scarborough. The Centre will expand its core services, will employ 6 client support workers, Rainbow Money Manager as well as pay for the registration to Community Money advice.</p> <p>They aim to support 2600 clients over a 12-month period as part of this project.</p> <p>The objectives of this initiative are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of clients and their families • To maximise income through benefit maximisation and debt management and/or budgeting support • Reduce fuel poverty • Continue to employ 7 members of staff to cover critical service area • Identify rough sleepers, vulnerable people and those in crisis • Provide 1-1 advocacy support to enable clients to access relevant and appropriate support for their needs • Provide CO awareness and advice • Increase awareness and registrations of PSR <p>Scope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client support staff and volunteers trained to offer energy efficiency advice • Help with Debt Relief Order (DRO) • Support with Debt Management Plan (DMP) • Support with Bankruptcy • Support with Budgeting • Gas & electricity vouchers • Clothing, bedding and household items • Food parcels • Signposting to other agencies • Discretionary meals • Access to statutory and voluntary agencies for additional support • Warm space and subsidised café • Support to open a bank account • Support to acquire or maintain a tenancy
Why the Project is being funded through the VCMA	<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>NGN's Centre for Warmth approach affords an opportunity for partners to pay, retain and upskill centre staff and volunteers to expand on their current</p>

	<p>service provision. The aim of which is to empower them to provide the above range of services. Therefore, being able to help their communities with immediate crisis support, to deal with the significant impacts of food and 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>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.</p> <p>Customers in Vulnerable Situations (CIVS) Workshops</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>The topics of the workshops are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending allowances well - Health focus, Energy affordability – 12th September 2023 • Energy affordability – staying warm and healthy at home – 21st November 2023 • Meeting demand – capacity and resilience – 6th February 2024 • Annual Strategic Workshop – April 24 <p>Stakeholder engagement throughout 2023 and 2024 told us that financial hardship, fuel poverty and health were the key areas of focus. In particular directing people towards good quality energy efficiency and fuel poverty advice. With regards to the concern about health this was specifically the</p>

link between living in a cold, damp home and the impact on health. 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 that additional capacity to support households who may be at risk, through a well-established and trusted advice service. This project will also ensure a holistic structured approach, tackling an immediate need to support fuel poor households and 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.

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 (Spring 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

	<p>Through the research carried out, 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>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
Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria	<p>The centre will provide dedicated, confidential and comprehensive support through Home – will provide a welcoming, warm and non-judgemental space for rough sleepers. They will be provided with hot food, showers, clothing, toiletries and a laundry.</p>

	<p>Support will be provided to overcome any barriers preventing them to accessing housing.</p> <p>Rainbow Money – will provide face to face support to help people through the debt relief order process to enable them to become debt free, as well as budgeting support to prevent debt reoccurring.</p> <p>Client support – will provide a holistic, wraparound service to ensure people receive support that is tailored to their needs. Working with other agencies, they will have access to a wide range of services which will enable them to move on, become more resilient and less reliant on services.</p> <p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1000 people will be made aware of carbon monoxide (CO) • 500 people will have an increased knowledge of CO • 1000 people will be made aware of the PSR • 200 people will be supported to register on the PSR • 500 people will receive energy information • 500 people will receive energy efficiency advice • 1000 people will receive with income maximisation advice • 100 people will receive debt relief and/or budgeting advice • 750 people will receive fuel vouchers • 1000 people will receive discretionary meals • 200 people will be supported to secure and/or maintain a housing tenancy • 50 people will be supported to open a bank account
Project Partners and third parties involved	<p>They have many partnership agencies dropping into the centre to provide support including the housing department from the Local Authority, Mind, North Yorkshire Horizons Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Service, Citizens Advice Bureau, NHS Homeless Support Nurse, GamCare (gambling support) Sexual Health Clinic and the Hepatitis C Trust – each providing support for specific issues which the homeless clients may be facing.</p> <p>Most recently, they have developed a partnership with Shelter and HSBC to trial project to allow homeless people to open a bank account, which is needed to be able to apply for a tenancy, apply for benefits or get a job. If successful, HSBC intends to roll the project out across all their branches in the UK.</p>
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: £3.36</p> <p>NPV: £157,464.62</p>
VCMA Project start and end date	November 2024-October 2025
Geographical area	Scarborough

Internal governance and project management evidence	VCMA Governance Group Meeting: N/A Outcome of meeting: Our Centre For Warmth Strategy was approved at Governance in July 2024.
Approved by:	Eileen Brown
Job Title:	Customer Experience Director
Signature:	