

# Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

## Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA) SUFRA

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*Amanda Jones*  
*Safeguarding and Community Partnership Lead*  
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## Gas Network Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Governance Document - Project Eligibility Criteria

<b>Section 1 - Eligibility criteria for company specific projects (other than condemned essential gas appliance repair and replacement)</b>	
In order to qualify as a VCMA project, a project must:	
<b>VCMA Eligibility Criteria</b>	<b>Criteria Satisfied (Yes/No)</b>
<b>a)</b> Have a positive, or forecasted positive Social Return on Investment (SROI), including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA project;	<b>Yes</b>
<b>b)</b> Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>i.</b> Provide support to consumers in vulnerable situations, and relate to energy safeguarding, or</li> <li><b>ii.</b> Provide awareness on the dangers of CO, or</li> <li><b>iii.</b> Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO;</li> </ul>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>c)</b> Have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these;	<b>Yes</b>
<b>d)</b> Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations; and	<b>Yes</b>
<b>e)</b> Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding.	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Section 2 - Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing, repair and replacement projects</b>	
In order to qualify as a VCMA project, unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance servicing, repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:	
<b>a)</b> A GDN has to isolate and condemn unsafe pipework or an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role;	<b>N/A</b>
<b>b)</b> The household cannot afford to service, repair or replace the unsafe pipework or essential gas appliance; and;	<b>N/A</b>
<b>c)</b> Sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including national, devolved or local government funding) to fund the unsafe pipework or essential gas appliance servicing, repair or replacement.	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Section 3 - Eligibility criteria for collaborative VCMA projects</b>	
In order to qualify as a collaborative VCMA project, a project must:	
<b>a)</b> Meet the above company specific and boiler repair and replace (if applicable) project eligibility criteria;	<b>N/A</b>
<b>b)</b> Have the potential to benefit consumers on the participating networks; and	<b>N/A</b>
<b>c)</b> Involve two, or more, gas distribution companies.	<b>N/A</b>

**Gas Network Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)  
Governance Document - Project Registration Table 2**

Information Required	Description
Project Title	Centre for Warmth – Sufra NW London
Funding GDN(s)	Cadent company specific project
Role of GDN(s) *For Collaborative VCMA Projects only	Not applicable
Date of PEA Submission	November 2023
VCMA Project Contact Name, email and Number	Name: Phil Burrows Title: Head of Customer Vulnerability Social Programme Delivery Email: Phil.m.burrows@cadentgas.com Number: 07773 545451
Total Cost (£k)	Centre Costs - £101,618.00 Project management costs - £3,349.44 Slow Cookers (100) - £2,476.75  Total £107.444.19
Total VCMA Funding Required (£k)	Total = £107.444.19
Problem(s)	<p>Sufra NW London is a local charity established in 2013 to address both the causes and consequences of impoverishment in the community. Based on St. Raphael's Estate, Brent's most disadvantaged neighbourhood, our Community Hub provides a lifeline for people in crisis – including families living in extreme poverty and people who are vulnerable, homeless, and socially isolated. We provide them with the emergency aid and professional advice they need to survive, empower them to learn new skills and improve their wellbeing, and help them to find work and become financially stable</p> <p><b>Problems facing people in Brent</b></p> <p>Even before the rise in energy costs this year, 17% of households in Brent were in fuel poverty, compared to 13% of households across England. The marginalised communities we support find it difficult to access professional welfare advice, due to the limited availability of accredited services in the area, such as Citizen's Advice Brent and Brent Hubs (A Brent Council initiative), both of whom we work with and are equally as oversubscribed.</p> <p>Our aim is to address some of the key problems that underpin food poverty – such as benefit disruptions, energy advice, housing problems and other financial difficulties.</p> <p>Our queues at our bi-weekly Advice Drop-Ins have doubled in size since this summer, because of us serving over 700 people a week with food aid and other services (with that figure</p>

increasing constantly), and the workload has become unmanageable for our current Advice team. There is a need to increase capacity within the department to help us meet this demand.

## Fuel Poverty

<sup>1</sup>The Office for National Statistics (ONS) calculates poverty in two ways; before housing costs (17.9% of households in Brent are in poverty) and after housing costs (33%<sup>1</sup> of households in Brent are in poverty – the sixth highest in London). Higher housing costs in London mean that these costs consume a large proportion of households' income, and we can see this clearly in the Brent figures.

Almost one in five households in Brent suffer from fuel poverty, according to a recent Government report.

<sup>2</sup>Figures from the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy showed more than 20,000 homes in Brent experience fuel poverty, which represents around 17 per cent of all homes in the borough.

According to the Low-Income Low Energy Efficiency indicator, which defines fuel poverty, a household is fuel poor if they live in a property with an efficiency rating below band D, typically indicating higher energy costs, and fall below the poverty line once these costs have been accounted for. It often means people living in these circumstances cannot afford to keep their homes warm and well-lit or must sacrifice other living costs to do so.

## Debt

<sup>3</sup>In 2017 the highest proportion (17%) of Step Change clients lived in London, almost 4,000 from Brent. London clients had higher average incomes (£1,440 vs £1,350) but spent a higher proportion of this income on essentials, such as rent or fuel (57% vs 50%). Most of this difference in the cost of essentials was associated with higher housing costs. A higher proportion of London clients with housing costs were behind on their rent or mortgage payments compared with the UK in general (36% vs 29%) and average amounts owed in rent or mortgage payments were higher than nationally (£1,400 vs £950 for rent; £4,450 vs £3,380 for mortgage arrears). Average credit card (£7,210 vs £6,760), overdraft (£1,600 vs £1,440) and payday loan debts (£1,090 vs £940) were all higher for London.

A high proportion had energy bill arrears: Clients living in Brent had the second highest proportion of clients in arrears with

<sup>1</sup> [democracy.brent.gov.uk/documents/s120055/Poverty%20Commission%20Update.pdf](https://democracy.brent.gov.uk/documents/s120055/Poverty%20Commission%20Update.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [www.kilburntimes.co.uk/news/21938088.20-000-homes-brent-experience-fuel-poverty-says-report/](https://www.kilburntimes.co.uk/news/21938088.20-000-homes-brent-experience-fuel-poverty-says-report/)

<sup>3</sup> [www.stepchange.org/Portals/0/documents/Reports/london-in-the-red/brent-debt-statistics-2017.pdf](https://www.stepchange.org/Portals/0/documents/Reports/london-in-the-red/brent-debt-statistics-2017.pdf)

	<p>electricity and gas bills at 28.0% and 27.0% compared with London averages of 21.5% and 18.6% respectively.</p> <p>Debt problems can weigh on people's mental health and the stress can harm physical health as well. Poor health can lead to debt becoming unmanageable, through higher costs or loss of employment and income. There was a risk during the pandemic that personal debt problems could spiral out of control.</p> <p>Many people try to ignore debt until it gets to a point where they can't. Accessing help and advice is difficult and people can sometimes wait weeks to get an appointment.</p> <p><b>Raising awareness of Carbon Monoxide.</b></p> <p><sup>4</sup>An alarming 326 cookers, fires and boilers in Runcorn and Widnes were found to be unsafe by National Grid engineers.</p> <p>One in six households across the North West were found to have an unsafe appliance when inspected.</p> <p>Many customers who live in deprived areas have little or no awareness of the dangers of CO. Appliances are often left unserviced due to financial constraints and CO alarms are often viewed as a luxury item.</p> <p>Families that are struggling to provide food for their family do not see staying CO safe as a priority.</p>
<p><b>Scope and Objectives</b></p>	<p>Cadent will provide with Sufra NW London £107,444.19 of VCMA funding to deliver a two-year centre for warmth.</p> <p><b><u>Centre for Warmth.</u></b></p> <p>The two-year 2022-2024 agreement replicates the previous project model in other Centres for Warmth, whereby specialist benefits advisors are employed using the VCMA. This service provided vulnerable households with essential financial support and created a very strong SROI.</p> <p>Alongside specialist benefits advice, the centre will also offer essential information on carbon monoxide safety and the priority services register.</p> <p>Programme manager – This person will oversee the project and the trainee advice workers.</p> <p>2 x Trainee Advice assistants - the training scheme will be their entry point into advice work, Cadent will then train and support them to undertake a Level 3 in Advice and Guidance. The trainees would be employed on a part-time contract, 4 days a week (featuring one day off site attending workshops, webinars, and their Level 3 accreditation) Alongside their training the assistants will aid and support our</p>

<sup>4</sup> [www.runcornandwidnesworld.co.uk/news/11603817.halton-residents-warning-of-the-dangers-of-carbon-monoxide-poisoning/](http://www.runcornandwidnesworld.co.uk/news/11603817.halton-residents-warning-of-the-dangers-of-carbon-monoxide-poisoning/)

advisors with the caseload and ease the burden, allowing them to support more customers.

## **Winter Warmer Programme**

This will consist of multiple workshops which focus on energy and money management, supporting our guests to understand their gas and electric bills and helping them access fuel vouchers, as well as distributing winter coats, electric blankets hot water bottles, slow cookers to help our customers keep warm through the predicted harsh winters. Cadent will supply 20 large and 10 small slow cookers for this workshop.

The Centre for warmth project aims to reach approximately 2,000 people over the two-year period.

- 874 people receiving Income maximisation advice.
- 874 people receiving Energy efficiency advice.
- 2,000 people will engage with others tackling loneliness and isolation.
- 300 will be registered on the PSR and over 2000 will be engaged in conversations relating to the PSR.
- 400 Carbon monoxide alarms will be supplied to vulnerable people with over 800 people receiving CO awareness advice.
- 30 Families will attend the Community cooking course to increase knowledge of cooking methods. Cooking on a budget , cooking more efficiently

## **Project Objectives**

Cadent will measure the success of the Centre For warmth Sufra NW London against the achievement of the following objectives:

- To deliver income maximisation advice to approximately 874 households per annum.
- To deliver energy efficiency advice to 874 households per annum.
- To deliver Carbon monoxide safety advice to approximately 800 per annum
- Provide 400 alarms per annum to households that do not have one
- To alleviate stress and anxiety regarding keeping the home warm for approximately 2,000 customers per annum
- To support approximately 300 people to sign onto the PSR register per annum
- Raise awareness to 2000 people on the PSR register

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To generate a positive social return on investment - see the below relevant section for more details</li> <li>• To educate 30 Families on how to cook more efficiently, healthier and on a budget by hosting the Slow cooker sessions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why the Project is Being Funded Through the VCMA</b></p>	<p>We believe that the project meets all of the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance eligibility criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a positive, or a forecasted positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI) including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA Project: <p>The project delivers a positive forecasted social return on investment. This is based on achieving the target reach for income maximisation, registrations to the PSR and education on carbon monoxide. More information can be found in the relevant section below.</p> </li> <li>Either: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide support to consumers in Vulnerable Situations and relate to energy safeguarding, or,</li> <li>Provide awareness of the dangers of CO, or,</li> <li>Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO;</li> </ol> <p>The project delivers services that meet all three elements of this criteria. For example, the specialist advisors will help households maximise their income, enabling residents to afford the cost of heating their home to an adequate level. The project will also raise awareness of the dangers of CO and promote registration to the PSR.</p> </li> <li>Have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these: <p>Cadent and SUFRA have entered into a service agreement that will contain the project objective and actions. Further detail can also be found below.</p> </li> <li>Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations, and, <p>This method of delivering support to customers in vulnerable situations falls outside of Cadent's BAU activities and other licence conditions.</p> </li> <li>Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved, or local) funding. This project will be solely delivered through Cadent's VCMA funding.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Evidence of Stakeholder/Customer Support</b></p>	<p>Temperature Checks – we complete periodic 'temperature checks' with a cross section of our customer base, including our Customer Forum. These demonstrate that customers continue</p>

	<p>to support the key measures that we identified when developing our RII0-2 plan, with a heightened requirement to support people with the cost-of-living crisis – hence this.</p> <p>The Energy Diaries research – through extensive research with customers living in fuel poverty over a period of several months, we then engaged with experts such as Citizen’s Advice, NEA and a suite of other charities operating in this space to co-create several additional initiatives that Cadent could offer to its customers. This was one of these initiatives.</p> <p>Charity Partnerships – we have strategic level partnerships in place with around 40 consumer advice organisations and charities. We engage regularly to assess the benefits of existing projects and consider options elsewhere, taking the opportunity to benchmark against others and seek to learn.</p> <p>Centres for Warmth – the teams running the centres also fed into the development of this initiative, when considering the successes of the existing centre projects and opportunities for enhancements, based on the specific needs of the customers / households already being supported.</p> <p>Stakeholder feedback – Working with various Stakeholders we can understand the needs of customers living in vulnerable situations across our networks. Regular conversations and check ins with organisations such as Citizens Advice, National Energy Action, and Groundwork. These regular check ins allow us to gain feedback on the projects we are or should be supporting and ensuring that the projects are in the best interests of our customers. The guidance we are being given is consistently around supporting customers living in fuel poverty and especially considering the current energy crisis.</p> <p>Stakeholder feedback – We have sent out questionnaires to organisations we deal with and some that have an interest in the customers we are looking to support, and we have received overwhelming support and confirmation that the projects we are supporting are appropriate and are helping those most at risk.</p>
<p><b>Information Required</b></p>	<p><b>Description</b></p>
<p><b>Outcomes, Associated Actions and Success Criteria</b></p>	<p>The partnership with Sufra NW London will form part of Cadent’s wider Centres for Warmth network. The Centre for Warmth project model relies on the provision of VCMA funding, materials and resource to a community centre located in an area of high deprivation, fuel poverty, and carbon monoxide risk. The increased levels of funding, resource and materials enable the community centre to ramp up its existing support for customers in vulnerable situations.</p> <p><b><u>Project Outcomes</u></b></p> <p>The Sufra NW London - Centre for Warmth Project aims to achieve the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals will report increased levels of household income.</li> </ul>



Individuals will report an increased awareness on the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) and have a reduced risk of harm caused by CO.

- Provide support to lonely local residents, ensuring that they can access the community centre and the services it offers.
- Provide individuals with energy efficiency advice and carbon monoxide awareness.
- Individuals will report reduced levels of anxiety in fearing a utility outage.

### **Associated Actions**

The Sufra NW London will implement the following associated actions to deliver the project's outcomes:

- Individuals will report increased levels of household income through working with the centre's specialist benefits advisors. The specialist benefits advisors will support households to identify and access previously unclaimed benefits.
- Individuals will report reduced levels of anxiety in fearing a utility outage through be assisted to register to the Priority Services Register (PSR). Centre staff will all receive an awareness on the PSR and will help eligible households through the registration process.
- Clients will report an increased awareness on the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) and have a reduced risk of harm caused by CO. This will be achieved through the centre's staff providing CO awareness conversations and distributing CO alarms to the most at-risk households.

### **Success Criteria**

The success of the project will be measured against meeting the below criteria:

- The combined projects will reach approximately 2,000 customers across the course of the 2 years.
- Around 874 households will receive specialist advice on identifying and accessing previously unclaimed benefits/income maximisation
- Around 874 households will receive help and support on energy efficiency.
- Around 800 individuals will receive an awareness conversation on the dangers of CO. Approximately 400 of the most at-risk households will also receive a CO alarm.
- Around 2,000 households will improve their awareness of the PSR. Approximately 300 eligible households will also be supported to register.

<p><b>Project Partners and Third Parties Involved</b></p>	<p>Cadent will work in partnership with Sufra NW London to deliver the project over 2 years.</p>
<p><b>Potential for New Learning</b></p>	<p>Since the Centre for Warmth project began Cadent has learned that the more deprived areas on their networks face the same problems for e.g., fuel poverty, low income etc. But we have also found that each area seems to be dealing with specific issues and they deal with these in differing ways.</p> <p>To enable these findings to be shared we have decided to set up a quarterly forum where the Centres get together to share best practice, funding, stories, and tips.</p>
<p><b>Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations</b></p>	<p><b><u>Scale of VCMA Project</u></b></p> <p>Cadent will invest £107,444.19 in partnership with Sufra NW London over 2 years.</p> <p>This VCMA project will be delivered across a two-year partnership with Sufra NW London. The project will support approximately 2,000 households with a range of services.</p> <p>The project will benefit households near the community centre, and those in the wider area through the specialist benefits advisors and community outreach workers.</p> <p><b><u>SROI Calculations</u></b></p> <p>Total investment = £107,444.19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 874 people supported with benefits and debt advice: £1,500,754.14 x 2 =£3,001,148.28</li> <li>• 874 people supported with energy efficiency advice: £321,430.98 x 2 = £642,861.96 x 2 = £1,285,723.92</li> <li>• 800 people advised on CO: £6,892.19 x 2 =£13,786.38</li> <li>• 400 CO alarms issued to families: £4,363.87 x 2 = £8,727.74</li> <li>• 300 PSR sign-ups: £43,167.00 x 2 = £86,334.00</li> <li>• 2,000 tackle social isolation: £276,000 (for 2x year only as the risk of experiencing loneliness and isolation can increase again after the project stops delivering support)</li> <li>• 30 replacing a traditionally cooked meal by using a slow cooker £6,251.10 x 2 = £12,502.20</li> </ul> <p><b><u>5-year SROI calculations:</u></b></p> <p>5-year gross present value= <b>£4,684,222.52</b></p> <p>5-year Social Return on Investment = <b>£4,576,778.33</b></p> <p>(Minus investment Centre costs: £101,618.00</p> <p>Project management: £3,349.44</p>

Slow cooker costs: £2,476.75)

### **1-year SROI calculations:**

1-year gross present value= **£909,244.50**

1-year Social Return on Investment = **£887,755.66**

### **Supporting households to maximise their income**

Cadent worked with SIA Partners to evaluate the average 5-year gross present value of supporting households to maximise their income. SIA Partner's based their analysis on the "actual" data from a 3-month project between Cadent and NEA, and historic data from NEA over the past 3 years.

- SIA Partners calculated an average 5-year gross present value of supporting households to maximise their income of £3,001,148.28

### **Educating customers on the dangers of carbon monoxide**

Cadent also employed SIA Partners to evaluate the forecasted social return on investment of several RIIO-GD2 business plan elements. These elements included CO education, CO alarm distribution and the repair/replacement of gas appliances.

SIA Partners pointed to a number of factors that influenced the social value generated by educating customers on the dangers of carbon monoxide:

- A reduction in A&E visits linked to CO;
- A reduction in long term hospitalisations linked to CO;
- A reduction in deaths caused by CO;
- A reduction in time of work due to injury caused by CO;
- A reduction in ambulance call outs linked to CO;

SIA Partners calculated the average 5-year gross present value of a Co-educational conversation to be £8.73 - this is based on a 1-2-1 conversation with an 80% retention rate.

### **Distributing carbon monoxide alarms to the most at-risk households**

Approximately 200 of the most at-risk households will receive a free CO alarm over the course of the two-year project.

SIA Partners calculated the average 5-year gross present value of issuing a CO alarm to be £10.91.

### **Supporting households to register to the Priority Services Register**

	<p>Cadent worked with SIA Partners to evaluate the average 5-year gross present value of supporting households to register to the PSR. SIA Partner's based their analysis on the DNO proxy bank value for an avoided stress management course.</p> <p>SIA Partners evaluated an average 5-year gross present value of £143.89 for a single PSR registration.</p> <p><b><u>The Cost of Loneliness</u></b></p> <p>The Centre for Warmth project will reach customers living in urban areas of Cadent's network. BBC report found that 46% of England's urban population is aged 65 or over. One-fourth of the population aged 65 years and older reported feelings of loneliness. Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology reported a net present value of £6,000 for people who reported being lonely most of the time. This figure was across a 10-year period and equates to £600 per annum. This research concluded that older people who feel lonely are at greater risk of developing conditions such as dementia and depression. [The health foundation reported that 21% of older people who live alone, or face feelings of loneliness visit their GP at least once a month. This places pressure on front-line services since many people who experience loneliness think of their GP as someone they can relate to and who will listen to them, engaging in an open, friendly dialogue. This equates to an overall benefit of £1,656,000 across the entire customer group supported through the project.</p> <p>This project aims to reach 2,000 people through the 24- month project, equating to a saving of £1,200.00 per customer.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 2,000 people using centre</li> <li>2. 46% of the population are over 65 = 920 people</li> <li>3. 25% of 920 people are lonely with health conditions = 230 people</li> </ol> <p>230 x £1200 (£600 per annum)= £276,000.00</p>
<p><b>VCMA Project Start and End Date</b></p>	<p>Start Date 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022 End Date 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024</p>
<p><b>Geographical Area</b></p>	<p>The project will be delivered in Cadent's North London network. Supporting communities and benefitting customers located in Brent.</p>
<p><b>Remaining Amount in the Allowance at Time of Registration</b></p>	<p>Remaining funding left in the Licensee's/ Licensees' funding pot.</p>

## Gas Network Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Governance Document - PEA Control Table

In order to ensure that a VCMA project is registered in accordance with the Ofgem VCMA governance document (incl. project eligibility assessment), the below table should be completed as part of the project registration process.	
Stage 1: Sustainability and Social Purpose Team PEA Peer Review	
Date Immediate Team Peer Review Completed: 17/02/23	Review Completed By: Gemma Norton
Stage 2: Sustainability and Social Purpose Team Management Review	
Date Management Review Completed: 17/03/23	Review Completed By: Phil Burrows
Step 3: Director of Sustainability and Social Purpose Sign-Off: Mark Belmega	
Director of Sustainability and Social Purpose Sign-Off Date: 23/03/23	
Step 4: Upload PEA Document to the Website & Notification Email Sent to Ofgem ( <a href="mailto:vcma@ofgem.gov.uk">vcma@ofgem.gov.uk</a> )	
Date that PEA Document Uploaded to the Website: March 2023	
Date that Notification Email Sent to Ofgem: March 2023	