

# Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

## Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

*Centres for Warmth –UKEFF (UK Education & Faith Foundation)*

---

**Philip Burrows**

Head of Customer Vulnerability Delivery

August 2022

*Updated December 2024*



## Gas Network Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Governance Document - Project Eligibility Criteria

Section 1 - Eligibility criteria for company specific projects (other than condemned essential gas appliance repair and replacement)	
In order to qualify as a VCMA project, a project must:	
VCMA Eligibility Criteria	Criteria Satisfied (Yes/No)
a) Have a positive, or forecasted positive Social Return on Investment (SROI), including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA project;	Yes
b) Either: i. Provide support to consumers in vulnerable situations, and relate to energy safeguarding, or ii. Provide awareness on the dangers of CO, or iii. Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO;	Yes
c) Have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these;	Yes
d) Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations; and	Yes
e) Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding.	Yes
Section 2 - Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing, repair and replacement projects	
In order to qualify as a VCMA project, unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance servicing, repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:	
a) 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;	N/A
b) The household cannot afford to service, repair or replace the unsafe pipework or essential gas appliance; and;	N/A
c) 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.	N/A

Section 3 - Eligibility criteria for collaborative VCMA projects	
In order to qualify as a collaborative VCMA project, a project must:	
a) Meet the above company specific and boiler repair and replace (if applicable) project eligibility criteria;	N/A
b) Have the potential to benefit consumers on the participating networks; and	N/A

c) Involve two, or more, gas distribution companies.	N/A
--	-----

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

Information Required	Description
<b>Project Title</b>	Centres For Warmth – UKEFF Centre
<b>Funding GDN(s)</b>	Cadent
<b>Role of GDN(s) *For Collaborative VCMA Projects only</b>	Not applicable - Cadent specific project
<b>Date of PEA Submission</b>	August 2022  <b>Updated December 2024</b>
<b>VCMA Project Contact Name, email, and Number</b>	Name: Phil Burrows, Email: phil.m.burrows@cadentgas.com Number: 07773 545451
<b>Total Cost (£k)</b>	£208,080 (to be paid to centre) £6,504.00 (based on distributing 20 CO alarms per month @ £13.55) Project management costs £ 3000 <b>Total – £217,584</b>  <b>Updated December 2024</b>  <b><u>Additional costs for 15-month project:</u></b> Centre costs: £143,550.00 Slow cookers: £2,784.00 Leaflets: £1,763.64 Project Management cost 4%: £5,923.91 Total: £154,021.55
<b>Total VCMA Funding Required (£k)</b>	£217,584(£208,080) to be paid to centre)  <b>Updated December 2024</b> £371,605.55
<b>Problem(s)</b>	UKEFF is an area located in Oldham on Cadent's North West network and has high levels of deprivation.  High levels of deprivation can, and are often linked to broader issues such as fuel poverty, increased carbon monoxide risk, and financial hardship.  <b><u>Unemployment</u></b>  According to Labour market indicators, working-aged people living in the most deprived areas are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as the national

average. Furthermore, the unemployment rate in the top decile of IMD areas is 17%, compared with an average of 8% across England (and 4% in the least deprived areas).

#### Fuel poverty

Statistics suggest that a higher percentage of people living in areas of high deprivation experience unemployment and have a lower income as a result.

They are more at risk of being in fuel poverty, as they may not have enough income to adequately heat their homes. They are more likely to turn their heating off or down, resulting in cold, damp living conditions, and an increased risk of suffering from associated illnesses such as respiratory issues, high blood pressure and depression/anxiety.

Many industry observers predict that the rates of fuel poverty national fuel poverty will rise significantly over the year ahead, due to increases in the energy price cap and wider challenges with the cost of living.

#### Debt

According to the Citizens Advice Bureau, households in the lowest income group are three times more likely to be in debt, with the value of the debt being up to six months' worth of their income. Additionally, customers who rent are twice as likely as those who have a mortgage to owe more than six months of their income.

When factoring in unemployment, low income, drug and alcohol abuse and mental health, the chances of people being in debt are significantly higher. These people either do not have access to or believe there is a stigma to seeking advice on debt.

#### Risk of exposure to carbon monoxide and levels of deprivation

Around 40 people living in the UK die from carbon monoxide poisoning each year. An additional 4,000 people attend accident and emergency each year as a result of carbon monoxide and 200 people are left hospitalised.

Issues such as fuel poverty and high household debt can influence a customer's risk of exposure to the dangers of carbon monoxide. An unavailability of household income can mean that many customers do not have the means to regularly service their gas appliances and/or purchase audible carbon monoxide alarms.

#### **Updated December 2024**

With the increasing cost-of-living continuing to affect the community of Oldham, it is vital that UKEFF can continue to access the funding to keep the Centre for Warmth project going. Oldham has both the highest relative and absolute child poverty rates (36.2%) and

	<p>(29.8%) in Greater Manchester,<sup>1</sup> which presents the opportunity to extend the current project to further support families who face this reality.</p> <p>Due to increased inflation, staffing and core costs are an ongoing issue at UKEFF Centre for Warmth. This means to deliver the same level of welfare advice with the increased demand, there is a need for full time caseworkers to offer a more consistent level of support and undertake the more complex casework.</p>
<b>Scope and Objectives</b>	<p><u>Project scope</u> Cadent will provide UKEFF with <b>£208,080</b> of VCMA funding over 2 years to enable the delivery of an initial 24-month Centre For Warmth project.</p> <p>The funding will be utilised by the centre to provide a range of services to local residents living in vulnerable situations.</p> <p>These services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of support to residents by issuing a range of advice including home energy efficiency, debt management, benefit entitlement checks/applications and gas safety.</li> <li>• Signing up appropriate attendees to the PSR;</li> <li>• The delivery of Carbon monoxide safety advice and where appropriate alarms.</li> <li>• Deliver general gas safety advice</li> </ul> <p>The project aims to reach approximately 1200 people over the course of the initial 24-month project. This total reach (some people will receive more than one service) will be divided between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1200 income maximisation/debt support</li> <li>• 1200 energy efficiency advice.</li> <li>• 1200 carbon monoxide awareness.</li> <li>• Issue 240 CO alarms</li> <li>• 1200 PSR sign ups;</li> </ul> <p><u>Project objectives</u></p> <p>The project contains a series of objectives that success will be measured:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support customers across the project area living in isolation, fuel poverty, and at risk of exposure to carbon monoxide;</li> <li>• To deliver income maximisation/home energy efficiency advice to approximately 1200 households;</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.resolvepoverty.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Poverty-profile-example-Local-Authority-Oldham.pdf>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To encourage and support eligible customers to sign up to the PSR - we forecast that approximately 1200 customers will register to the PSR through this project;</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Updated December 2024</u></b></p> <p>Cadent will provide UKEFF with an additional £154,021.55 for a 15-month extension. The funding will enable the centres to provide additional services as listed below.</p> <p><b><u>Project Objectives</u></b></p> <p>The success of the project will be measured against achieving the below objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver PSR advice to 600 individuals.</li> <li>Register 250 individuals to the PSR.</li> <li>Provide energy efficiency advice to 750 individuals via in-depth one-to-one or group conversations.</li> <li>Provide 600 individuals with income maximisation services.</li> <li>Provide 100 slow cookers at dedicated events and as individual needs emerge.</li> <li>Provide carbon monoxide awareness conversations to 600 individuals.</li> <li>Distribute 100 carbon monoxide alarms.</li> </ul> <p>Please note that the above figures are in addition to the original numbers.</p>
<p><b>Why the Project is Being Funded Through the VCMA</b></p>	<p>Cadent believe that this project meets all the required VCMA eligibility criteria.</p> <p><b>a. The project is forecasted to have a positive SROI. Please see the relevant section for more information.</b></p> <p>We believe this project has the deliverables necessary to create a positive social return on investment - see the below section for more details.</p> <p><b>b. The project will either:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>i. Provide support to consumers in vulnerable situations, and relate to energy safeguarding, or</b></li> <li><b>ii. Provide awareness on the dangers of CO, or</b></li> <li><b>iii. Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO</b></li> </ul> <p>The project will provide support to customers living in vulnerable situations through energy efficiency advice/income maximisation. The project will also offer customers education on the dangers of CO and issue audible alarms to particularly at-risk households.</p>

	<p><b>c. The project has defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve them.</b></p> <p>This project has clearly defined outcomes and associated outcomes, the meeting of which will quantify success. Further information on the project's outcomes and associated actions can be found in the relevant section below.</p> <p><b>d. The project goes beyond the activities funded through other price control mechanisms or required by licence obligations.</b></p> <p>The method of delivering support to customers living in vulnerable situations is innovative, as it utilises partnerships with key community stakeholders. This will allow Cadent to distribute essential advice to one of a customer groups that has been historically difficult to engage.</p> <p><b>e. Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved, or local) funding.</b></p> <p>This project will be delivered solely through Cadent's VCMA funding.</p>
<p><b>Evidence of Stakeholder/Customer Support</b></p>	<p>Cadent conducted extensive stakeholder and customer research in May 2022 following the completion of RIIO-GD2 year one. The research's aim was to assess customer/stakeholder opinion on Cadent's allocation of VCMA spend and gain insight on where we should direct VCMA funding in the future.</p> <p>61% of stakeholders (the highest proportion by individual category) supported Cadent increasing its VCMA allocation on projects aimed at tackling fuel poverty.</p> <p>The UKEFF Centre For Warmth project focusses on tackling fuel poverty by offering energy/income advice to at risk households.</p> <p>Cadent's <sup>2</sup>independent Customer Engagement Group report for its RIIO-GD2 business plans contains feedback on a variety of proposals, including Cadent's ambitions for tackling fuel poverty.</p> <p>The report supported Cadent's holistic approach to tackling fuel poverty, whereby a household is supported with a combination of services/advice.</p> <p>The Customer engagement group recognised the need for a holistic approach that supports a household with its fuel prices (FPNES), energy efficiency (advice/repair and replacement) and household income (income maximisation).</p>

<sup>2</sup> <https://cadentgas.com/nggdwsdev/media/Downloads/business-plan/Cadent-CEG-report-with-appendices.pdf>



	<p>The Centre For Warmth partnership with UKEFF will allow Cadent to apply a holistic approach to supporting fuel poor households. Residents will receive a combination of services such as energy advice and benefit entitlement checks, all of which are designed to increase household income and help residents better manage their energy.</p> <p><b><u>Updated December 2024</u></b></p> <p>In 2023 energy prices rose moving 28,000 households into fuel poverty.<sup>3</sup> This means that it is more vital than ever to improve key drivers such as income maximisation and energy efficiency advice and support, in order to lift more households out of fuel poverty. The Centres for Warmth project seeks to address this by offering training, resources and bespoke support for customers.</p> <p>Furthermore, engaging with experts who have carried out extensive research with customers living in fuel poverty, such as Citizen's Advice and NEA has fed into the Centres for Warmth model and corresponding material.</p> <p><b>Quote from UKEFF project lead:</b></p> <p>"Staffing and core costs are an ongoing issue for UKEFF and being able to access funding to keep the project going is vital. We have accessed small pockets of funding but nothing long term to make this a sustainable project. The funding received from Cadent in the past 2 years has enabled us to build the project and its reach."</p> <p>"In our last review of the organisation, we identified the dire need for full time caseworkers to offer a more consistent support service, including the ability to carry out the more complex casework, as the support we offer minimally now is such a unique service and not available elsewhere. At the centre they are the first point of call and offer the crisis support and then triage into the caseworkers, which reaches all sectors of the community."</p>
<b>Information Required</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Outcomes, Associated Actions and Success Criteria</b>	<p><u>Project outcomes</u></p> <p>The VCMA project will be delivered in partnership with UKEFF and aims to support approximately 1200 residents with energy/safety/loneliness issues across an initial 24-month project period.</p> <p>The UKEFF Centre For Warmth project aims to achieve the following outcomes:</p>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fuel-poverty-factsheet-2024>



- Provide support and advice to customers on numerous topics including benefit entitlement checks, homelessness, energy advice, fuel bank vouchers, income maximisation and mental health support.
- Provide support to lonely local residents, ensuring that they can access the community centre and the services it offers.
- Provide residents with energy efficiency advice and carbon monoxide awareness and general gas safety

## Associated actions

- Cadent's funding will be principally used to employ and train two community advisors. The advisors will have the skills to provide services aimed at tackling fuel poverty, provide support on energy efficiency measures, assist with debt consolidation, and deliver benefit entitlement checks. The advisors will also be skilled at providing awareness on the dangers, signs and symptoms of CO, and facilitating community activities that support lonely and isolated residents.

## Success criteria

The success of the project will be evaluated against the meeting of the project's objectives. These objectives include:

1. The project will reach approximately 1200 customers across the course of the initial 24 months. Customers will be engaged through a variety of methods including: 1-2-1 sessions, home visits, or community centre drop in clinics;
2. Approximately 1200 people will sign-up to the PSR;
3. 1200 customers will get CO advice and a further 240 CO alarms

As well as aiming to reach a target number of customers, Cadent and UKEFF will review the qualitative benefits/indicators of the project as part of the final evaluation.

Meeting of the below indicators will help Cadent determine the success of the project:

- Customers will realise increases in household income through ensuring that they are claiming the benefits that they are entitled to;
- Homeless local residents are supported with financial, wellbeing and safety advice;

- Customers will report a decrease in anxiety and stress due to receiving support with home energy, financial and wider issues;
- Isolated members of the community will report an improvement in mental wellbeing through experiencing lower feelings of loneliness;
- Customers will report an increased awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide and an increased feeling of safety at home;

## **Updated December 2024**

The project extension will build on aspects of the project that have proven to be successful thus far. The project will utilise learning outcomes from years one and two and introduce approaches that will enable as many individuals as possible to benefit from support.

### **Associated Actions:**

Cadent will continue to provide the funding, resources and training required to support UKEFF for an additional 15 months to ensure the centre can continue delivery the Centre for Warmth project. To achieve this, UKEFF will:

- Continue to effectively deliver advice and support to vulnerable individuals through casework and outreach work.
- Ensure centre staff will continue to be upskilled to enable the delivery of quality advice and support.
- Ensure individuals have up-to-date information on energy efficiency, the PSR, CO and income maximisation appointments and drop-in sessions for individuals in the community to access support.
- Offer benefits advice and other assistance in the form of telephone calls, benefit applications, completion of other forms as well as referrals to other agencies.
- Use the VCMA funding to fund the salaries of the caseworkers, a contribution to the Programme Manager and Programme Administrator to support the project delivery and the outreach and support workers.

### **Success Criteria:**

The success of the extension will be measured against achieving the additional objectives:

- Deliver PSR advice to 600 individuals.
- Register 250 individuals to the PSR.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide energy efficiency advice to 750 individuals via in-depth one-to-one or group conversations.</li> <li>• Provide 600 individuals with income maximisation services.</li> <li>• Provide 100 slow cookers at dedicated events and as individual needs emerge.</li> <li>• Provide carbon monoxide awareness conversations to 600 individuals.</li> <li>• Distribute 100 carbon monoxide alarms.</li> </ul>
<b>Project Partners and Third Parties Involved</b>	UKEFF (UK Education & Faith Foundation)
<b>Potential for New Learning</b>	<p>The UKEFF Centre For Warmth project offers many potential areas of learning that Cadent can adopt for other VCMA-funded projects in RIIO-GD2.</p> <p>One of the main rationales behind funding the project is the number of local residents living in vulnerable situations and fuel poverty. The centres also focuses on supporting isolated members of the community, an area where previous Cadent projects had not directly focused on. This project will combine the VCMA-focussed services of CO education and energy efficiency advice, with activities that support the mental wellbeing of lonely residents. This will provide Cadent with learning on the effectiveness of combining both types of support and the best method(s) of delivering it.</p> <p>When assessing options for VCMA projects, we considered the effectiveness of directly engaging with end customers (rather than using a project partner). This project will provide insight on the effectiveness of working with community stakeholders such as UKEFF. We believe that these stakeholders are trusted members of communities, and Cadent's partnerships with them allow us to engage previously difficult to reach customers with VCMA-funded services.</p> <p>The partnership with UKEFF will also provide Cadent with learning on customers receptiveness to support from Gas Distribution Networks in the midst of an energy crisis. Some customers may be unaware of the industry's structure between suppliers, shippers and GDNs; and the project will offer good learning on customer's attitudes towards support offered by energy companies.</p> <p><b><u>Updated December 2024:</u></b></p> <p>This project allows Cadent the opportunity to reach areas affected by high levels of deprivation and fuel poverty. Through data capture we will be able to measure the numbers who receive advice, support and assistance from the centre. This information will be used to formulate the impact we have made quarterly and gather case studies which will demonstrate outcome and impact.</p>
<b>Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations</b>	<u>Scale of VCMA project</u>

The UKEFF Centre For Warmth project will deliver support for an initial 24-month duration. The project will focus on the provision of advice to approximately 1,200 customers.

#### Social return on investment calculations

- 1200 income maximisation/debt support
- 1200 energy efficiency advice
- 1200 carbon monoxide awareness.
- 1200 PSR sign ups
- Issue 240 CO alarms
- Forecasted 5-year social return on investment gross = £3,078,035
- Investment = £217,584
- Forecasted 5 year social return net £2,860,451
- Forecasted 5-year gross present value from the issuing energy advice = £840,120
- Forecasted 5-year gross present value from income maximisation = £2,060,532.00
- Forecasted 5-year gross present value from providing customers with CO awareness/alarms = £4,712
- Forecasted 5 year gross present value from registering customers to the PSR = £172,668
- SROI Ratio: £1:£13

#### **Updated December 2024**

Cadent will invest a further £154,021.55 in partnership with UKEFF Centre for Warmth.

For the full duration of the project, including the original and extension of the project, Cadent will invest £371,605.55 over 39 months.

- 1,800 individuals will receive income maximisation advice = £3,090,798.00
- 1,950 individuals will receive energy efficiency advice = £717,151.50
- 1,800 individuals will receive advice on CO = £15,714.00
- 1,450 individuals will be registered to the PSR = £208,640.50
- 566 individuals will receive a slow cooker and advice on cooking healthier meals = £133,813.72
- 224 individuals will alleviate loneliness = £436,800.00

Five-year gross present value = £4,602,917.72  
One-year gross present value = £967,623.54

	<p>Five-year net present value = £4,231,312.17 One-year net present value = £863,583.54</p> <p>SROI Ratio: £1:10</p>
<b>VCMA Project Start and End Date</b>	<p>Project start date: 01/01/2023 Project completion date: 31/12/2024</p> <p><b>Updated December 2024</b> Project end date: 31/03/2026</p>
<b>Geographical Area</b>	The project will be delivered to communities in and around the Oldham area of our North-West network.

### 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 PEA Peer Review	
Date Immediate Team Peer Review Completed: 28/03/25	Review Completed By: Gemma Norton
Stage 2: Sustainability and Social Purpose Team Management Review	
Date Management Review Completed: 28/03/25	Review Completed By: Guv Dosanjh
Step 3: Head of Consumer Vulnerability Social Programmes Sign-Off: Phil Burrows	
Head of Consumer Vulnerability Social Programmes Sign-Off Date: 28/03/25	
Step 4: Upload PEA Document to the Website & Notification Email Sent to Ofgem (vcma@ofgem.gov.uk)	
Date that PEA Document Uploaded to the Website: March 2025	
Date that Notification Email Sent to Ofgem: March 2025	