

Wales & West Utilities Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

The Hafan Project

ACE - Action in Caerau & Ely

Rachele Verdini

Rachele.Verdini@wwutilities.co.uk

May 2024

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:

- a) have a positive, or a forecasted positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI) including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA Project;
- b) either:
 - i. provide support to consumers in Vulnerable Situations and relate to energy safeguarding, or
 - ii. provide awareness of the dangers of CO, or
 - iii. reduce the risk of harm caused by CO;
- c) have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these;
- d) go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations; and
- e) not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding.¹

Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing, repair, and replacement

In order to qualify as a VCMA Project, unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance² servicing, repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:

- a) a GDN has to isolate and condemn unsafe pipework or an an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role;
- b) the household cannot afford to service, repair or replace unsafe pipework or the essential gas appliance; and
- c) sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including national, devolved or local government funding) to fund the unsafe pipework or the essential gas appliance servicing, repair or replacement.

¹ If part, but not full, funding is available through an external funding source for an eligible project, VCMA funding can be used for the remaining amount.

² Essential gas appliances are gas fuelled heating systems (including gas boilers and gas fires), and gas cookers.

Information required for the registration of VCMA projects

Information required	Description
Project title	The Hafan Project
Funding GDN(s)	Wales & West Utilities
New/ Updates PEA	New PEA
Date of PEA submission	June 2024
VCMA Project contact name, email and number	Nerys Sheehan - 07702 211 056 - nerys@aceplace.org
Total VCMA funding required (£)	£49,989.50
Problem(s)	<p>Since Covid19 and the Cost of Living Crisis, Action for Caerau and Ely (ACE) has seen the demand for their crisis support increase significantly. Historically, they supported an average of 12 people a week through twice weekly energy advice drop-in sessions. In response to the Cost of Living Crisis from early 2022 through to present, they have been offering daily crisis support sessions of 10 1-1 appointments at the Dusty Forge Community Centre (where ACE is based) and seeing around 40 - 50 people per week. These provide immediate assistance accessing emergency fuel and food vouchers as well as identifying underlying issues that can be addressed in follow up sessions through our community support project or referred to other agencies and services if more appropriate. Through this work, ACE recognised that there are many vulnerable community members struggling to leave their homes due to illness/disability, or face other barriers to engagement, and therefore are not able to access the services described above.</p> <p>ACE identified an opportunity to address this limitation by adapting and expanding their food and fuel poverty crisis support delivery model to align with their successful social prescribing service ('YourSpace project'). This enabled them to better target the most vulnerable members of our community, who are struggling with financial issues and have increased vulnerabilities due to health conditions made worse through living in cold / damp homes. This target group does not directly access available support and requires additional engagement through primary health care</p>

Criteria

	<p>referrals or other trusted services they are already engaging with.</p> <p>ACE have recently been awarded a new two-year contract from Cardiff and Vale University Health Board which will expand the YourSpace social prescribing project to two new Primary Care Cluster areas - Cardiff North and Cardiff South West, so this project now covers approximately half the population of Cardiff. Although this provides greater capacity to identify and refer people to crisis and longer-term support, addressing the underlying issues contributing to fuel poverty, ACE has limited staff capacity to be able to extend this to all the relevant patients. The expansion to North Cardiff also increases the likelihood of reaching people above and beyond social housing, such as homeowners who are struggling to adequately heat their homes. Therefore, there will be increased opportunities for ACE to support homeowners in accessing insulation / heating schemes such as the Welsh Government's Warm Home Scheme.</p> <p>The YourSpace team currently takes referrals directly from GPs via a secure system that identifies patients' needs and vulnerabilities. Our team of Community Connectors supports patients to access services including wellbeing groups and activities to reduce social isolation while tackling the underlying issues around housing. A recurring cause is the lack of financial resources for patients to be able to afford sufficient fuel and this is particularly the case for those who have chronic physical and mental health difficulties. Those with physical and mental health issues are more at risk of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Under-heating their homes● Exposure to CO due to old appliances, poor ventilation due to attempts to retain warmth by covering up essential ventilation● Living in poor standard housing - with poor insulation and harder-to-heat homes● Increased risk of deterioration of existing health conditions due to living in a cold home● Lack of awareness of the PSR and the benefits of sign-up
--	--

Criteria

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not engaging with other support services to help them stay safe and warm (e.g. Care and Repair, NEA) • Living in poverty due to low income/unclaimed benefit entitlement
<p>Scope and Objectives</p>	<p>As part of this project, the existing ACE Energy Specialist Caseworker will dedicate 2.5 days / week for the duration of the funding (0.5 full time equivalent) to supporting vulnerable households through face-to-face advice sessions. The existing staff member has significant experience and has the City and Guilds Energy Awareness Level 3 qualification., allowing them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct home visits to asses energy usage, efficiency, behaviour and home safety • PSR Sign-up • Provide income maximisation through benefit entitlement checks • Support customers to access existing and future schemes such as Welsh Government's Warm Home Scheme <p>The Caseworker will provide targeted advice to those with health conditions that are exacerbated by cold homes, delivering outreach sessions in GP Surgeries within the Cluster during Asthma/Flu Clinics to target those with respiratory conditions.</p> <p>In addition, the Caseworker will begin the process of upskilling our Community Connectors so that they can offer practical financial support to the patients they are working with. The Community Connectors will undertake NEA training to better identify and understand the impacts of fuel poverty on health, CO awareness training as part of their induction, and internal training to offer immediate crisis support. They will then be strategically placed in cluster surgeries to deliver weekly “drop-in sessions” focused on light-touch energy advice and the following services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issuing foodbank vouchers/fuel vouchers

Criteria

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing PSR sign-ups for those with identified vulnerabilities • Referring patients with more complex needs to our specialist caseworker for more in-depth support <p>The project will also include a Community Support Coordinator (0.5 day / week) to support with evaluation and reporting, line management, and the development of internal referral processes. They will play an important role in sharing learning and information through our networks, including any changes to energy related support programs. This will include representing ACE at the Cardiff Affordable Warmth Steering Group and NEA fuel poverty forums.</p> <p>Overall, the project aims to support 1620 vulnerable individuals through both light touch interventions delivered by the Community Connectors Team and the intensive support provided by the Project Caseworker.</p>
<p>Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria</p>	<p>Throughout the duration of the project, 1620 vulnerable individuals will be supported for an average cost of £31 per intervention.</p> <p>The YourSpace Community Connector team is expected to achieve the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver 270 energy advice / support drop-in sessions within GP practices across the cluster group (1 session per cluster each week) • Support a total of 1620 patients with light touch energy advice/crisis support (estimated as 6 patients per session x 270 sessions) • Support 1200 patients to sign up for the PSR • Provide financial benefit through fuel vouchers and light touch energy support with an estimated value of £51,678. This is based on an average benefit per household of £31.90 achieved in previous work over the last 12 months after a similar level of support.

Criteria

	<p>The part-time Project Caseworker will provide bespoke intensive energy advice and support to 525 particularly vulnerable household. This breaks down into the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 100 households supported to access Welsh Government's Warm Homes Scheme/EcoFlex schemes with potential to save an average of £460 per year following the successful application and installation of energy saving measures. Savings have been calculated based on average savings for home energy improvements installed through the NEST scheme in Cardiff (NEST Impact report 2023). Eligible households with health conditions made worse by cold / damp homes will be specifically targeted for this.• 300 households supported to access Welsh Water social tariffs with forecasted savings of approximately £200.00 per household.• 200 households supported in applying for Home Safety Visits and installation of CO and fire alarms through South Wales Fire and Rescue Service• 200 households supported to access identified unclaimed benefits through benefit entitlement checks and make successful benefit claims for a forecasted total value of £400,000.• Community awareness sessions delivered during Gas Safety Week/Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week in partnership with Care and Repair/NEA Cymru across the project area. 6 sessions in total - 3 per week across each cluster for each awareness week, reaching 12 individuals per session on average. <p>ACE will use 3 different methods to monitor the financial and wellbeing impact of the project, which will enable them to track progress and evaluate effectiveness through both qualitative and quantitative data. The three methods involve are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Cardiff and Vale University Health Board's secure system (Elemental)
--	---

Criteria

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) relying on before and after scores as a result of engagement with the project • ACE's bespoke Case Management System (Lamplight) <p>ACE will disseminate key outcomes of this project and share good practice through regular Local Primary Health Care Cluster Multi Disciplinary Team meetings. In addition, they will share learnings from this project within external forums such as the Cardiff Affordable Warmth Steering Group and the South Wales Anti Poverty Coalition Group.</p>
Project Partners and third parties involved	<p>The three Primary Care GP Clusters will play a vital part in service delivery as will the Independent Living Service within Cardiff County Council. ACE also works closely with Care and Repair Cymru, who they refer into where appropriate and with the South Wales Fire Service (Ely Fire Station) to ensure that those who are identified as highly vulnerable have a fire safety assessment. They work with a network of financial inclusion partners including Cardiff Council's Money Advice Service, Christians Against Poverty Debt Advice and are active members of the Cardiff Affordable Warmth Steering Group, Anti-Poverty Cross Party Action group. They also attend Financial Capability Forum meetings and NEA fuel poverty forums to share learning and good practice.</p>
Potential for new learning	<p>The project will give us the opportunity to focus our efforts on those with health conditions due to cold homes in the Cardiff area, specifically those with respiratory conditions, which would not otherwise engage with us. While helping us bridge the gap between health and fuel poverty, this project can provide valuable insight into the local community and how to reach those affected by physical and mental health conditions. This project also has the potential to build upon the network of referrals across different organisations, linking to the NEA National Health programme and Warm Wales' social prescribing work.</p>
Scale of VCMA Project and SROI calculations, including NPV	<p>We have taken the forecasted numbers expected by ACE throughout the delivery</p>

Criteria

	<p>period and calculated the following SROI over the duration of the project using the GDN-specific SROI tool:</p> <p>Total Gross Present Value = £1,204,153.43 Net Present Value = £1,154,753.60 SROI per £1 spent = £23.38</p>
VCMA Project start and end date	This project will begin July 2024 and last until March 2026.
Geographical area	This project will deliver support across 3 Primary Care Clusters in South West, West and North Cardiff (covering around half of the city).