

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

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Better Housing Better Health Fuel Poverty Support (BHHB)

National Energy Foundation (NEF)

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October 2024

Criteria

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 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	Better Housing, Better Health Fuel Poverty Support (BHBH)
Funding GDN(s)	Wales & West Utilities
New/ Updates PEA	New
Date of PEA submission	03/01/2024 Updated – October 2024
VCMA Project contact name, email and number	Sophie Shorney Sophie.shorney@wwutilities.co.uk 07583 076147
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£306,010.00
Problem(s)	<p>In October 2021, it was estimated that four million UK households were living in fuel poverty (National Energy Action). It was recognised that half of low-income households were still living in hard to heat homes, and the rate of improvements are well below what is needed to lift people out of fuel poverty by a target date of 2030. Since then, the UK’s energy prices have more than doubled rapidly and it is currently estimated that there are over 6.5 million households living in fuel poverty in the UK using the 10% measure.</p> <p>Typical energy bills under the January to March 2024 price cap were almost 60% higher than in winter 2021/22. Although the price dropped in April this year, the annual energy cost for a typical household in the UK is £1,690. We can say with some certainty that the effects of the cost-of-living crisis will continue to be felt by the most vulnerable in our community. Half of low-income households are still living in hard to heat homes.</p> <p>Nationally, Citizen’s Advice helped over 220,000 people with crisis support in 2023 – their highest figure to date. They are also seeing a marked increase in people presenting with complex problems, and multiple debts so when someone presents with energy issues, such as affordability, billing, and customer service, they also need support in other areas. As the cost-of-living crisis continues, driven in no small part by energy expenses, this crisis disproportionately affects low-income households. One in three UK households is struggling with the financial weight of fuel poverty, which extends into other essential areas such as food and heating.</p> <p>Navigating the available support services proves to be an intricate challenge for those most in need. Variances across local authority regions, rapidly changing government policies, coupled with the complexities of accessing support, can be too much for many customers to manage independently. Many vulnerable</p>

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	<p>households remain excluded from vital assistance, trapped in the cycle of poverty and living in a cold and unhealthy home as a result.</p> <p>For the most vulnerable individuals in the UK, the very idea of home should encompass comfort and security. However, it is most likely that it is vulnerable customers that are living in a cold and poorly insulated home. The National Energy Foundation (NEF) recognises the urgency of the matter and is committed to bridging the gap. Our mission extends beyond providing mere advice; we envision comprehensive assistance that leverages partnerships and funding to not only mitigate fuel poverty but also elevate overall warmth and wellbeing. By tackling income disparities, managing financial burdens and debt, and enhancing energy efficiency and warmth, we are dedicated to delivering tangible, lasting change to the lives of those who deserve it most.</p>
<p>Scope and Objectives</p>	<p>The foundation of the support through this project is fuel poverty advice and intervention supporting those most in need. NEF will work with households for as long as needed, guiding them through a comprehensive range of interventions to improve their personal circumstances to not only mitigate fuel poverty, but also elevate overall warmth and wellbeing. Services will be delivered through a range of engagement activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dedicated Helpline: Expand the current dedicated helpline to offer personalised assistance and guidance to households struggling with fuel poverty, providing a reliable point of contact for immediate support. - Tailored Case Worker Support: Offer comprehensive case worker support that includes expert energy efficiency advice thorough assessments of eligibility for energy efficiency grant-funded schemes , determination of eligibility for the fuel poor network extension scheme, assistance with energy bill advocacy, crucial carbon monoxide safety conversations, installation of locking cooker valves, and access to the Priority Services Register - Home Visit Service: Working in collaboration with existing services within the area to provide an in-depth home energy visit service, where a case worker will visit the home to undertake a more in-depth energy assessment to determine the range of energy advice and interventions. Any ongoing support will then be followed up through our internal team with a dedicated action plan to improve the personal circumstances of that household.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-person Outreach: Deploy dedicated outreach teams to engage with communities in need directly at community locations and events (e.g., food banks), delivering on-the-ground support, informed advice, and valuable information about available resources to those most vulnerable. - Comprehensive Support Services: Ensure a comprehensive approach by facilitating access to health, income, and housing support services that extend beyond energy-related concerns. Connect households with vital resources such as healthcare services, debt relief programs, income and benefit entitlement checks, Local Authority Services and support from charitable organisations.
<p>Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria</p>	<p>The project aims to deliver the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance Accessibility: Increase the availability and accessibility of the Better Housing Better Health (BHBH) support service to vulnerable individuals in areas of high deprivation, ensuring that those most in need can easily access the resources and interventions offered. - Reach over 10,000 households through targeted outreach, referrals, and direct marketing information on the energy advice and support services available – either to inform and empower them to improve energy efficiency, access financial assistance, or to invite them to a personalised support session to provide facilitation to access help. - Deliver Personalised Support: Facilitate at least 3,500 personalised energy sessions for households, addressing their unique needs and challenges related to cold and poorly insulated living spaces, thereby improving their overall warmth and wellbeing. Speak to all residents about PSR sign ups and carbon monoxide safety. - 750 households will be supported through the distribution of emergency fuel vouchers and fuel poverty measures - Enhance Partnerships and Capacity: Collaborate with diverse referral partners, including health and social care entities, local authorities, and community groups, to extend the reach of the BHBH service to vulnerable individuals. Train 175 staff members from these partners to effectively identify, refer, and support households in need of BHBH assistance. <p>To summarise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overall reach: 10,000 - In depth energy efficiency advice: 3,500 - Smart Metering support: 3,500

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PSR Registrations: 600 - Income maximisation support: 2,000 - CO Conversations/awareness: 3,500 - Debt write off: 250 - Front Line Staff Training: 175 <p>The impact of these outcomes will be measured through the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - implementation of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness and impact of the BHBH support service - collection and analysis of data to track measurable outcomes, gather feedback, and continuously improve NEFs ability to alleviate fuel poverty and enhance the lives of vulnerable households
<p>Project Partners and third parties involved</p>	<p>NEF will deliver this project and will not enter any formal contracted partnerships. However, to ensure success on this project they will engage with a range of supportive partners across the region including Local Authorities, Health and Social Care Organisations, Debt Management Partners such as Cornwall Energy Advice Service, Mental Health Support Organisations including Samaritans, Mind and Mental Health UK and Local Community Groups including Citizens Advice.</p>
<p>Potential for new learning</p>	<p>The project will develop and implement a number of initiatives which can help inform future learning and delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational Initiatives: Programs designed for frontline workers who work in organisations dealing with the public face-to-face (especially if they may be working with potentially vulnerable members of community e.g. local services such as libraries, schools, community centres etc). They can receive NEF’s fuel poverty training outlining what fuel poverty is, the types of people who are especially vulnerable, how to spot the signs of fuel poverty and how to have conversations around energy. It details how NEF can help and what types of support they offer. It outlines easy interventions that can be delivered directly as well as more complex interventions that can be referred on to NEF. The aim of the training is to empower customer facing colleagues to identify people in fuel poverty and offer very basic low-level advice and support as well as providing the tools and knowledge of referring into NEF for the larger issues. NEF estimate that approx. 40% of colleagues will be able to support and signpost and around 20% will directly refer. Training s delivered through informative workshops, distribution of educational materials, and awareness campaigns that promote understanding of fuel poverty, energy efficiency, and sustainable energy practices.

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	<p>- Monitoring and Evaluation: To ensure the project is a success and to help identify and mitigate risk, learning and best practice, NEF will establish a rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework to consistently assess the program's impact and effectiveness. Regular evaluations will drive continuous improvement and provide a clear measurement of the achieved outcomes, ensuring the programmes ongoing success in combating fuel poverty and enhancing the well-being of vulnerable households.</p>
Scale of VCMA Project and SROI calculations, including NPV	<p>We have taken the forecasted numbers expected by NEF and calculated the following SROI over the delivery period using the latest GDN shared SROI model and rulebook:</p> <p>Total Gross Present Value = £4,024,432.11 Net Present Value = £3,718,422.11 SROI per £1 spent = £12.15</p>
VCMA Project start and end date	October 2024 – March 2026
Geographical area	<p>This project will be delivered across the southwest of our network focussing on Devon and Cornwall.</p> <p>Cornwall: Camborne and Redruth, North Cornwall, Southeast Cornwall, St Austell, Newquay, St Ives, Truro, Falmouth</p> <p>Devon: Central Devon, North Devon, Plymouth Sutton and Devonport, Torbay, Torridge and West Devon, Southwest Devon, Totnes</p>