

Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

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

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Carbon Monoxide (CO) Safety Centres

Lifeskills & Dangerpoint

Paisley Henderson paisley.henderson@wwutilities.co.uk
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Sophie Stone Sophie.Stone@wwutilities.co.uk
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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	Carbon Monoxide (CO) Safety Centre Projects
Funding GDN(s)	WWU
New/ Updated PEA	Updated March 2025
VCMA Project contact name, email and number	Paisley Henderson paisley.henderson@wwutilities.co.uk 07970 654577
Total Cost (£)	£104,217 Updated November 2024: Additional £14,000 Lifeskills Total cost: £118,217 Updated March 2025: Total cost: £114,517 (new costs reflective of actual spend over first 3 years delivery and forecast spend for remaining 2 years)
Total VCMA funding required (£)	Dangerpoint: Total: £35,717 for GD2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £6,500 per annum for entire 5-year period • £3,217 for one year contract starting in March 2022 for adults with learning difficulties and special needs students Lifeskills: Total: £68,500 for GD2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project spend March 2022 to Dec 2024 spend - £37,000 • Core funding Jan 2025 – March 2026 - £13,000 (£6.5k per annum) • Additional project costs April 2024 – March 2026 = £18,500 Updated November 2024: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity booklet 24/25 - £14,000 (£7000 per annum 24/25) Updated March 2025 Dangerpoint: £32,017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £3,217 for one year starting in March 2022 for adults with learning difficulties and special needs students • Total sponsorship costs of £28,800 for entire 5-year period, as per below table

	Year	Sponsorship costs	Activity book costs
	21/22	£5000	£700
	22/23	£5000	£750
	23/24	£5000	£750
	24/25	£5000	£800
	25/26	£5000	£800
	Total:	£25,000	£3,800
	<p>Lifeskills: £82,500</p> <p>Project costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £3500 per annum April 22- April 24 = £7000 Cost uplifted by £10,500 = new project cost total £17,500 Project extension April 24-Mar 26 = £18,500 Activity booklet 24/25 = £14,000 (£7000 per annum 24 & 25) <p>Sponsorship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core funding £6500 per annum for entire 5-year period (£32,500) 		
Problem(s)	<p>The Problem:</p> <p>We are committed to raising awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) and educate customers on how to keep them and their family safe. We provide key gas safety information on how to safely maintain their appliances and how to reduce the risk of CO in their home.</p> <p>What is Carbon Monoxide (CO)?</p> <p>You can't see it. You can't smell it. You can't taste it. Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, poisonous gas that is released when any fossil fuel doesn't burn properly.</p> <p>Breathing it in can make you unwell, and it can kill. Even low levels of exposure, over a long period, can cause serious health issues.</p> <p>Severe CO poisoning causes approximately 60 accidental deaths per year in England and Wales (NHS). Exposure to carbon monoxide at sub-lethal levels cause non-specific symptoms, (e.g., headaches, nausea, dizziness). This means exposure to carbon monoxide could be under-reported.</p> <p>Low awareness</p>		

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	<p>Research has shown that awareness of CO remains low and is lowest in young adults, with only a quarter understanding the risks or what to do if they suspect the presence of CO.</p> <p>Our figures in 2021 revealed that those who we interacted with had an average awareness of 4.8/10 in relation to the dangers of CO.</p> <p>Gas and CO safety customer research carried out collaboratively by all GDNs in 2020 showed awareness of CO poisoning fatality was significantly lower amongst younger people (82% for 16-24yr olds compared to 92% overall) and this age group is far less likely to have a working audible CO alarm (26% compared to 63% of 65 – 74yrs) and less likely to think it important to have gas appliances annually services (79% compared to 97% for 65-74yr olds). It also showed that nearly half (49%) of 16-24yr olds thought that CO had a smell. This signified that this is a cohort who are at greater risk due to their attitude to CO risks and associated preventative measures.</p> <p>Why are younger people more at risk?</p> <p>Children are more at risk from the dangers of carbon monoxide than most adults and this is due to several factors. There is also the additional factor that children are not always in control of their environment and are reliant on adults in keeping them safe. This means that they have little control over whether the people they live with service their appliances or get an audible CO alarm.</p> <p>From a health perspective, children are at higher risk for CO poisoning because they breathe faster than adults. CO can build up in a child's body and replace oxygen in their blood. The child's brain, organs, and tissues can be damaged from a lack of oxygen. A child may have long-lasting (permanent) damage to the brain or heart. This depends on the amount of CO exposure. Severe carbon monoxide poisoning can cause nervous system symptoms days or weeks later. This is known as delayed neurologic syndrome. In some cases, CO poisoning can lead to death.</p> <p>Engaging at the right level</p> <p>HSE conducted research around health and safety attitudes in young people which showed how the importance of Health and Safety was widely recognised. The young learners talked about wanting H&S information to be clear, concise, and relevant, with an explanation of the risks and the response in language they could understand and a format that they were able to visually engage with.</p>
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	<p>Educating adults</p> <p>As temperatures drop and people turn up their heating, new research from Energy UK's 'CO Be Alarmed!' campaign reveals that–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • over 17 million people – are at risk from CO poisoning as they don't have a CO alarm in their home – despite 94% saying they are aware of the risk. • 54% don't know that a lazy yellow flame on appliances such as cookers is a warning sign • 76% were unaware that increased condensation inside windows is a red flag • 55% didn't know to look out for sooty stains on or around appliances such as cookers. • 49% of respondents didn't know that breathlessness is a symptom of CO • 38% were unaware that nausea can be a sign of poisoning • 32% were unaware that headaches can mean an appliance is emitting CO <p>Supporting those with Learning Difficulties</p> <p>People with learning disabilities have poorer health than the general population, much of which is avoidable. This means that people with learning disabilities experience health inequalities, often starting early in life. The impact is serious. As well as having a poorer quality of life, people with learning disabilities die at a younger age than their non-disabled peers.</p> <p>There are five determinants of health inequalities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greater risk of exposure to the social determinants of poorer health such as poverty, poor housing, unemployment, discrimination and isolation. 2. Increased risk of health problems associated with specific genetic, biological and environmental causes of learning disabilities. 3. Communication difficulties and reduced understanding of health issues. 4. Personal health risks and behaviours such as poor diet and lack of exercise. 5. Problems with access to healthcare provision
Scope and Objectives	<p>Our Commitment</p> <p>In our Business Plan for RIIO GD2 we made a commitment to reach at least 10,000 people a year through either face-to-face contacts, or by providing educational materials; demonstrating success by a CO survey of understanding before and after the</p>

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	<p>engagement. We will target all ages and demographics with our messages.</p> <p>In addition, we committed to reaching 250,000 homes a year with CO awareness messaging through our usual communications for connections, planned and emergency work, and through social media channels.</p> <p>Our Ambition</p> <p>To keep people safe by; raising awareness of the risks of CO arising from both appliances connected to the mains gas network and other sources, to effect behaviour change to safeguard all those at risk, and to provide access to suitable CO safety devices for people who may struggle to access one themselves.</p> <p>Objective:</p> <p>Raise awareness of the dangers of Carbon Monoxide (CO) and educate customers on how to keep them and their families safe.</p> <p>Scope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver life-like scenarios in the educational facility on the dangers of CO to 15,000 children and teachers per year • Deliver training to professional support workers to be able to deliver accurate and engaging CO specific messages/ activities at the centre • Provide information leaflets for all groups to take home detailing potential hazards, CO and gas safety advice and available safety devices. • Develop and deliver a short quiz to demonstrate the awareness of participants before and after awareness sessions. • Update the existing gas cooker hob at facility, providing a more interactive experience for participants in training and awareness sessions. • Provide reporting, case studies, and contribute to showcase event to demonstrate the impact of the partnership to beneficiaries accessing the support and awareness provided by the centres <p>Additional Project Scope – Vulnerable Adults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide bespoke sessions to Adults with Learning Difficulties on the dangers of CO
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a minimum of 430 free CO alarms to people with learning difficulties (<i>400 through Lifeskills and 30 through Dangerpoint</i>) • Following training sessions delivered by Wales & West Utilities, provide follow on services to include but not limited to registration to the Priority Services Register (PSR), and access to Locking Cooker Valves (LCVs). <p>NEW ADDITION FOR MARCH 2024 PEA – LIFESKILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New activity and top up education for CO hazard exercise – gas, CO safety now integrated throughout the tour. New CO segment added in host talk, additionally and advertising for Gas Safety Ambassadors (GSA) visits • Renew SPEN activities – specialist tour with CO & gas safety activities <p>Carry on supplemented year 6 programme until March 2026 (includes 2 page advert in booklet, QR code to direct to WWUs ‘crack the code’, CO stickers, CO quiz, multiple CO & gas safe scenarios)</p> <p>Updated November 2024:</p> <p>In addition to the above services, WWU will increase the funding for Life skills for the creation and printing of 20,000 activity booklets, which will be given to all children who visit the centre to take home. The booklet will include at least two dedicated pages on gas safety and carbon monoxide awareness, as well as signposting the national gas emergency number.</p>
<p>Why the Project is being funded through the VCMA, and how this aligns to GDN’s VCMA Strategy</p>	<p>This should include an explanation of why the VCMA Project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria, a CO awareness and our work to minimise risk and prevent harm is explicit in the definition of the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA).</p> <p>The VCMA supports the GDNs individual business plans and ambitions and can be utilised for VCMA projects focusing on supporting vulnerability and carbon monoxide safety initiatives. The requirements are stipulated as to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide support to consumers in Vulnerable Situations and relate to energy safeguarding, or • provide awareness of the dangers of CO, or • reduce the risk of harm caused by CO; <p>How does our project meet the criteria?</p> <p>By providing CO safety information and in some instances, CO alarms we are both providing awareness of the dangers of CO and reducing the risk of harm caused by CO with the intention</p>

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	that people take this messaging on board and take further action to prevent it. By partnering with Dangerpoint (North Wales) & Lifeskills (Bristol) we are satisfying the WWU project specific needs by working with those who only operate in our geographical area.								
Evidence of Stakeholder/ Customer support	<p>In our business plan, we provided extensive evidence of support from stakeholder for us to continue to raise awareness of CO.</p> <p>At a stakeholder prioritisation and value for money workshop, attendees ranked investment in CO awareness raising, alongside other vulnerability support as their top priority.</p> <p>During discussions between our 30-strong representative Citizens’ Panel on supporting people living in vulnerable situations, participants commented on the significant potential impacts of carbon monoxide poisoning and the need to ensure the safety of customers in relation to this issue.</p> <p>During extensive GD2 business planning customer and stakeholder engagement in 2018 and 2019, there was overwhelming support for increased investment to support people in vulnerable situations, including raising awareness of the risks of CO for at-risk groups.</p> <p>Further customer research carried out in 2020/21 to trend customers’ prioritisation of GD2 delivery commitments and attitudinal profiling, showed that supporting investment in consumer vulnerability including raising awareness of CO risks, remained a highly-ranked customer priority – fourth in a ranking of 25 customer priorities.</p> <p>Updated November 2024:</p> <p>All GDNs have committed to spending VCMA money within four strategic pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Fuel Poverty & Energy Affordability2. Services Beyond the Meter3. Supporting Priority Customer Groups4. Carbon Monoxide Awareness <p>This project aligns to strategic pillar four.</p>								
Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria	<table><tr><th colspan="3">Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria</th></tr><tr><td>Anticipated Project outcomes (the difference it will make)</td><td>Associated Actions (what we will do to achieve the outcome)</td><td>Success Criteria (How we know the outcome has been achieved)</td></tr></table>			Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria			Anticipated Project outcomes (the difference it will make)	Associated Actions (what we will do to achieve the outcome)	Success Criteria (How we know the outcome has been achieved)
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Anticipated Project outcomes (the difference it will make)	Associated Actions (what we will do to achieve the outcome)	Success Criteria (How we know the outcome has been achieved)							

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vulnerable adults are provided with an accredited CO alarm that meets health and safety standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist accessible CO alarms available for customers who need them 430 CO alarms provided to vulnerable adults who visit the Safety Centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CO alarms are distributed to vulnerable adults with information and advice provided for guardians and carers 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are better informed of the role that WWU play in keeping their communities safe and have a better awareness of CO to pass onto family members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of the dangers of CO and what action to take to prevent and report it Provide supporting literature with our alarms that contains key safety information and WWU referral details Collect data via their questionnaires around awareness before and after Engage 15,000 children per year through with our CO messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear increase in awareness measured through the CO questionnaire. Monitor visitor numbers & CO alarm reports 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vulnerable adults are referred for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain referrals for the PSR and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the sign ups through 	

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	<div> <div>additional support measures through one link</div> <div>other support measures</div> <div>these methods</div> </div> <p>Updated November 2024:</p> <p>Lifeskills will provide 20,000 children with an activity booklet which will including at least two dedicated pages on gas safety, carbon monoxide awareness and signposting to the national gas emergency number and WWU 'Crack the COde' competition. Children can take the activity booklet home with them or into school, where they are likely to share the information with their friends and family.</p>
Project Partners and third parties involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dangerpoint (North Wales) • Lifeskills (Bristol)
Potential for new learning	<p>We will be able to identify the awareness of CO of the younger generation before and after the tour to determine the effectiveness of the project in raising awareness of CO.</p> <p>We will use the return data from both parties and any collected feedback to continually review the impact this programme is having on those engaged.</p>
Scale of VCMA Project and SROI calculations, including NPV	<p>We have taken the projected support measures identified by Lifeskills and DangerPoint and used them as inputs for our SROI model. The output shows a net £5.51 benefit for each £1 invested in the projects.</p> <p>Updated November 2024:</p> <p>We have taken the forecasted numbers expected by Lifeskills only throughout the delivery period and calculated the following SROI over the duration of the project:</p> <p>Total Gross Present Value = £101,619.47 Net Present Value = £27,240.22 Positive SROI per £1 spent = £0.37</p> <p>Please note that the updated SROI calculation was completed using the GDN-shared SROI rulebook released in September 2024, which produces stricter and more accurate results compared to previous models.</p>
VCMA Project start and end date	<p>Lifeskills project- Original March 2022- March 2024, Extension April 2024- March 2026</p> <p>Dangerpoint project- March 2022- March 2023</p> <p>Safety Centres Sponsorship- April 2021- March 2026</p>
Geographical area	<p>North Wales Dangerpoint</p> <p>Bristol Lifeskills</p>

Internal governance and project management evidence	<p>Updated November 2024:</p> <p>Lifeskills project proposal has been reviewed through various industry working groups including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GDN Carbon Monoxide Working Group (monthly)- VCMA Steering Group <p>This project is also supported by stakeholders (as outlined above).</p> <p>The project will be managed and led by WWU Community & Partnership Officer, with support of the VCMA team and will consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Quarterly review meetings- Stage gate review after 1 year of delivery- Ongoing reviews throughout the duration of the project <p>regarding delivery of outcomes, including regular audits of reporting requirements - this will feed into lessons learnt and shared best practice to ensure the project is successful in delivering value for money and maximising outcomes for customers and communities.</p>
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