

## Age Scotland – Safe and Warm Homes, helping older people live in safe and warm homes

Funding GDN(s)	SGN
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	
Date of PEA submission:	01 April 2021
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Total cost (£k)	*provided separately
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	

## 1. Problem(s)

*This should outline the problem(s) which is/are being addressed by the VCMA Project.*

Many older people face unique challenges in managing a safe and warm home, that older people need to consume more energy, are less likely to engage in the 'energy switching' market, therefore miss out on the opportunity to reduce energy cost via competition.

Older people although eligible for a number of energy schemes are often not aware of these initiatives designed to safeguard their needs as energy consumers, services including the Priority Services Register, the Warm Home Discount and other industry initiatives to increase personal.

We also understand that older people who own their own homes are less likely to be living in an energy efficient property or have their gas appliances routinely serviced putting them at greater risk of living in a cold, damp home or being at greater risk of CO exposure.

Our operational teams go into older people's home's, they see our customers presenting examples of problems living often beyond the impact of 'energy' and are not comfortable walking away – perhaps simply functioning day-to-day. These issues our front line teams see include:

- Lack of food – the person may be very thin.
- The home may be cold.
- The person living there may be unable to move around properly and require home adaptations.
- Carers they might see could require support themselves as the occupier might have had a sudden deterioration.
- The front door may be unlocked meaning the occupier is unsafe.
- The occupier might seem very sad – they may simply need friendship. For some, their pet or television is the only company they have for months.

The occupier might need help and want to ask the attending responder for help, or vice versa.

Our operational teams see the challenges that older people face and would value the skills in effectively identifying and engaging older people to be able to provide a safe and trusted referral into a specialist team with expertise in supporting older people.

With a clear training and a checklist in partnership with Age Scotland, supported by SGN, we can ensure all responders linked to our broader referral programme which includes other frontline responders will have the knowledge and resources to refer to Age Scotland and get direct, efficient help to the person in need without hesitation or hiatus.

Age Scotland can provide wrap-around support tailored around each occupier's individual circumstances.

In addition to helping those in need, the secondary effect is that the responder may themselves suffer from finding an occupier in need.

According to PULSE/ people surveys, responders state they are concerned they 'are unable to help' and feel they are 'leaving' the occupier. They feel helpless which in turn negatively affects their own health and wellbeing and subsequent ability to work effectively.

With the increased pressures Covid 19 has had on older people, we need specific insights to ensure that we understand the barriers that older people face from being able to get a fair deal and access the relevant schemes. With this insight we intend to engage the Age Scotland network to understand and measure impact of campaigns designed to increase awareness of the support utilities provide.

## 2. Scope and Objectives

*The scope and objectives of the VCMA Project should be clearly defined including the benefits which would directly impact customers on the participating GDNs' network(s), and where the benefits of the VCMA Projects lie.*

**There are seven areas to the scope of our partnership:**

1. Provide a bespoke training programme for front line engineers at SGN to identify needs in older people and how to effectively engage and increase engineer confidence into referrals
2. Complete annual older people insights survey on energy matters, overall confidence, access to energy switching and other energy initiatives to monitor engagement on energy market
3. To provide an accessible and efficient National Portal for emergency gas engineers/ and other front-line responders (foundation for other organisations)
4. Increasing CO Awareness in older people and providing a accessible CO alarm to older people who need this installed in partnership with Scottish Fire and Rescue
5. To provide a dedicated energy advisor skill set to supporting older people with their energy needs alongside existing benefits and helpline teams
6. To build our support networks and reach into hard to reach communities including ethnic minorities
7. Starting in year one with the view to build support services over the next three years to develop the energy related advice and provision of information and support Age Scotland provide.

As a partnership we are committed to providing an inclusive service for all older people. We are improving our reach by ensuring that we consider activities that will improve inclusivity of ethnic minority groups and provide depth/ breadth of service to those in need of reasonable adjustments.

We will build on existing partnerships with organisations such as Sight Scotland and provide two way appropriate referrals. The helpline team have access to LanguageLine in order to support specific communication requirements to support the effective engagement of customers who require interpreter support in BSL or to communicate in a language other than English.

### 3. Why the Project is being funded through the VCMA

*This should include an explanation of why the VCMA Project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria. This is a requirement*

This project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria as it will provide energy safeguarding services including direct advice and support to consumers in vulnerable situations including those at risk or living in fuel poverty. The services delivered will also include CO Safety as the team will be providing access to CO alarms and ensuring that all service users who are at risk of CO exposure are provided with CO advice services and a CO alarm where required, completing the CO Awareness Survey at completion.

#### 3.1 Eligibility Criteria

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

- a. We forecast that the initiative will have a positive SROI for gas consumers
- b. Will support customers in vulnerable situations with both energy safeguarding and increase awareness of CO and reduce the risk of harm caused by CO
- c. Has defined outcomes as detailed in the outcome section
- d. Goes beyond our price control funded mechanisms and licence obligation
- e. This project goes beyond existing services for older people to access help and support to reduce utility costs and gain confidence in using energy safely, efficiently and affordably.

## 4. Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

*This should provide information of the customer engagement that has taken place in the development of VCMA Projects where appropriate. If there is no evidence of stakeholder engagement or customer support, this should justify why it was not appropriate to engage with stakeholders and customers.*

### 4.1 Customer Experience Roadshows 2018

During 2018, we surveyed 500 emergency engineers and asked them to name the top 5 scenarios where they found it difficult to walk away from following a gas emergency visit. Our top category for engineers was leaving a vulnerable customer in a vulnerable circumstance facing financial hardship, as 'witnessing a customer living in a cold home, fuel poverty, evidence of damp and condensation, lack of credit on meter' was something that our teams did not want to walk away from. This was especially hard in the winter months where the impact of living in a cold and damp home is greater on health and wellbeing. They were also worried about supporting customers who were living with dementia and other age-related conditions that can be a barrier for clear communication with customers'.

### 4.2 Moving Forward Together – Stakeholder Workshops held during 2018 and 2020

Sharing our top 5 categories with our stakeholders during our engagement workshops in 2018 they agreed that providing essential emergency funding for customers in vulnerable circumstances should remain one of our top priorities due to the impact of Covid on our most vulnerable customers in relation to affordability. In addition, our stakeholders wanted to see us approach affordability broader than 'gas', that customers who face financial hardship need support with all of their utilities, water, gas and electricity should be approached as essentials services.

### 4.3 Customer Engagement Group 2019/20

Shaping our business plan to support customers in vulnerable circumstances we have committed to over the 5-year price control supporting over 250,000 vulnerable customers use gas safely, affordably and efficiently. We have a three-tiered approach and tier 1, 2 and 3 priorities include providing independent support to help provide vulnerable customers with independent access to affordable energy.

### 4.4 Vulnerable Steering Group

During 2020/21 our Vulnerable Steering Group has helped us shape our vulnerability strategy and our priorities for GD2. For year 1 we prioritised key initiatives to support our most vulnerable customers and they recommended that we work closely with Age Scotland based upon their proven track record of effectively engaging and supporting older people in Scotland with advice and support services aligned to personal wellbeing and safety.

Age Scotland has substantial experience of successful projects based on this delivery model of expert advisor support and workshops for older people delivered where they normally meet. This has been successful for projects including Power of Attorney, financial capability, older veterans, and early-stage dementia. A specialist team member based in the helpline can:

- Help older people with technically difficult enquiries.
- Increase the skills and knowledge of the advice team.
- Keep energy issues at the front of advisers' minds in the context of the holistic advice they provide.

Age Scotland's Community Development team supports a network of 542 member groups across Scotland. We have unparalleled access to older people the length and breadth of the country and years of experience.

## 4.5 Age Scotland's Housing Survey Outputs

Energy efficiency Approximately three quarters of respondents (73%) were 'very satisfied' and 'fairly satisfied' with the heating levels in their home. Those less satisfied with current heating levels tended to be respondents with a disability, long-standing health problem and a gross annual income of less than £10,000.

19% of respondents had not had any energy efficiency measures installed in the last ten years but, of those who had, they were most likely to have had a new boiler fitted (43%) and loft insulation (37%). Respondents who had had energy efficiency measures installed had used their own finance (49%) with 6% using a grant and 3% a loan.

45% of respondents were aware of Home Energy Scotland (61% in 2018) and these were most likely residents of small towns and rural areas. Over half the sample (55%) were unaware of each of the three Scottish Government schemes to assist with energy efficiency measures with Home Energy Scotland's advice service having the highest awareness of the three at 28%.

7% of respondents always struggled to pay their fuel bills – 27% of respondents with a long-standing health problem and 35% with a disability stated that they 'always struggled to pay' and 'sometimes struggled to pay' their fuel bills. 61% of respondents had used less energy such as turning down the heating and 54% had taken low-cost energy efficiency actions more often to help manage energy costs. The motivation to do so was to lower energy bills (87%) and the associated environmental benefits (39%).

The majority of respondents (93%) had heard of smart meters and 32% had already had one installed. 26% of those who had had a smart meter installed felt that it had had a positive impact (ie lower energy bills, better understanding of bills) and 23% stated that there had been a negative impact (ie energy bills had not been reduced) whilst 22% felt it was too early to say.

42% of Age Scotland: Housing Survey 2020 | Page v respondents without a smart meter did not think there would be any benefits of having one fitted suggesting that more work needs to be done to communicate the benefits associated with smart meters.

50% of respondents would consider asking the Scottish Government/Energy Savings Trust/Home Energy Scotland for information about energy efficient grant schemes. Reasons for not taking action to manage energy costs were that respondents were happy with the warm of their home (37%), they were happy with bills as they were (24%) and that it was too much hassle (19%).

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/our-impact/policy-and-research/political-briefings/national-housing-survey/>

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/our-impact/policy-and-research/political-briefings/housing-needs-of-older-people---panel-research/>

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/our-impact/policy-and-research/political-briefings/orkney-housing-survey/>

## 5. Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria

Armed with an Age Scotland checklist and training, each responder can refer and signpost and provide a total package ensuring the security and safety of the occupier. There will be peace of mind for both responder and occupier leading to all-round positive outcomes.

Age Scotland already support a network of older people with enquiries related to financial concerns that are impacting the health and wellbeing of older people. The Age Scotland team currently provide resources and information and importantly are linked with other key support service partnerships like 'Care and Repair' and 'Home Safety Visits' however they don't have the teams dedicated with the skills or resources to be able to coach or support an older person to change their energy consumption behaviours, address energy debt, apply for schemes like the Warm Home Discount or the Priority Services Register, which would address the concerns identified in the Age UK Housing Survey outputs around how to keep a safe and warm home.

Building capacity in the community, advice and benefits teams to ensure that the Age Scotland team have the skills to empower older people to engage in the energy market, to access sign up to services and schemes where they are eligible and to increase the safety and warmth of their homes as a result.

This project would enable us to employ three qualified energy rights employees to:

- Provide a specialist energy telephone advisor to support people who call our helpline
- Enable generalist helpline advisers to provide more in-depth energy advice
- Provide energy awareness training to all our staff, volunteers, and project partners (people affected by dementia and older veterans)
- Develop our current energy information resources [age-scotland-warm-and-well-guide.pdf](#) ([ageuk.org.uk](#)) in response to project feedback
- Contribute regular content to Age Scotland's Advantage magazine, team newsletters and policy consultations.
- Deliver energy rights workshops online and (when safe) face-to-face for our member groups, partner charities and other older peoples' groups and services
- Tailor interactive workshops to meet the needs of the audience which would normally include content about:
  - Facts and myths about energy efficiency
  - Learning from older people sharing their experiences
  - The health-related impacts of living in a cold home
  - The value of joining the priority services register.
  - Shopping around for lower tariffs (eg Citrus Energy support)
  - Referrals to the Age Scotland helpline for benefit checks to identify unclaimed benefits
  - Advice about current schemes to promote energy efficient homes
  - New regulations about linked fire alarms including carbon monoxide detectors and other equipment to support safety at home
  - Information on Smart meter rollout
  - How to deal with Energy scam cold calls
  - Energy related benefits and the warm home discount
  - Fire and CO safety

### 5.1 Outcomes

- Training of frontline teams (SGN)
- Referral portal
- Annual insights survey

- Training of frontline teams (Age Scotland)
- Dedicated skills and resources in the advice and benefits team to support older people
- Promotion and Community Events on energy and CO awareness

## 5.2 Success Criteria

- Number of referrals from employees
- % increase in awareness and confidence in energy matters for older people (use energy safely, efficiently and affordably)
- Number of people supported to reduce energy costs
- Number of people engaged on energy switching
- Number of PSR referrals
- Number of people who feel that they have the wellbeing impacts of being supported by the service
- Number of people accessing home adaptations
- Number of people having a CO Alarm installed and a CO awareness survey completed
- Number of energy / utility events
- Over 5,000 older people engaged on safely, efficiently and affordable use of energy

We will use our robust measurement and evaluation framework incorporating specific project outcomes and indicators to ensure maximum efficacy. We can feed back to you and show how we have delivered and achieved the impact we aimed for.

Expected actions, outcomes and success criteria are:

- Advisors have capacity and knowledge to answer energy related enquiries.
- There will be additional energy-related calls to our helpline.
- We will produce several additional energy-related resources on paper and online.
- An increase in number of people attending workshops.
- We will receive feedback from workshops about the difference we have made to people's lives.
- We will see a reduction in fuel poverty.
- Older people will be well informed and empowered to make changes to their supplier and packages.
- Older people will feel warm at home.
- We will forge further creative partnerships to enable online access.
- We will see improved health and wellbeing in our older people.
- There will be an increase in home adaptations and repairs.
- We will accrue many positive case studies to share and feedback to SGN.
- There will be increased PSR registrations.
- Older people will recognise and defer to us as energy advice experts.
- CO and fire safety awareness will be increased and CO Awareness Survey's will be completed.

To monitor our impact in line with the above, we will:

- Build in questions in targeted, concise questions in our customer satisfaction survey.
- We can track through reporting using our 8x8 system (advanced telephony system) how many referrals to our service there have been.
- Collate compliments.
- Pull statistics regarding the numbers relating to income maximisation which will help older people afford to live better.
- Ensure we are scrupulous in our training by monitoring the success of workshops, ensuring optimal service delivery.

## 6. Project Partners and third parties involved

*Details of Project Partners or third-party involvement*

Lead partner: Age Scotland

The project will incorporate the schemes of other utilities and essential service providers

## 7. Potential for new learning

*Details of what the GDN(s) expect to learn and how the learning will be disseminated.*

We do not know what we are going to find when we do this. We do know that we will be able to develop a service which will show us exactly what people need. We expect to learn from customer insights almost immediately and will finely tune the service we are providing.

Our aim is to reach the hard-to-reach or 'seldom heard' and we have the capacity, flexibility, and knowledge to achieve our aims.

We look to capture customer feedback in:

- Adviceline insights via cases
- Workshop feedback
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys
- Training module feedback

We look to collect insights on the levels of engagement and confidence older people in Scotland have on managing their utilities safely and affordably. We look forward to using this insight to develop our engagement programme and services we expect to be able to share these insights with both our stakeholders in Scotland and interested partners and stakeholders to improve access to services designed for older people and confidence in engaging with utilities including the PSR and Warm Homes Discount as well as shopping around for the best tariff for their home.

## 8. Scale of VCMA Project and SROI calculations

*The Funding Licensee(s) should justify the scale of the VCMA Project – including the scale of the investment relative to its potential benefits. As part of this, it should provide the SROI calculation.*

Age Scotland have handled 46,000 calls in 2020, we will be raising further awareness with our new benefits training role and workshops. It seems appropriate to align this energy project with benefits advice as the commonality is income maximisation and being energy aware is a key element in improving lives of older people. Of these enquiries 32% are in relation to benefits enquiries currently. As awareness grows our reach will also.

### Social Value Measurement

Working with leading social impact research consultancy Simetrica we have developed a bespoke social value bank of financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to our services for vulnerable customers. The approach used to estimate social value is based on best practice endorsed by HM Treasury for the evaluation of social policy, and utilises values from the Treasury's Green Book where applicable.

Although we understand that there are a large number of service users who will be eligible for the skilled energy advisor we anticipate that it will take 1-3 months to train and build confidence in the team offering the support services which will impact the initial outcomes. We forecast that we will provide over 2,000 older people with support through the service in our first year.

We will be looking further at SROI and the wellbeing impacts related to connecting older people to wider wellbeing services, friendship and broader advice services.

\*SROI assessment provided separately

### **VCMA Project start and end date**

*Detail start and end date of the VCMA Project and, where relevant, the VCMA Project that preceded this initiative.*

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2021- 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024**

### **Geographic area**

*Details of where the VCMA Project will take place. If the VCMA Project is collaborative, the Funding Licensee area(s) in which the project will take place should be identified.*

**Scotland**

### **Approved by**

Rob Gray

Director of Stakeholder Relations and Communications