

Fire and Rescue Service Partnerships

Funding GDN(s)	SGN
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	
Date of PEA submission:	01 September 2021
Project contact name:	Dan Edwards
Project contact number/email:	dan.edwards@sgn.co.uk
Total cost (£k)	
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	*detailed separately

1 Problem(s)

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

Many people in the UK who use carbon fuelled appliances are not aware of the dangers of Carbon Monoxide (CO) and do not have a working audible CO alarm. Of 8,000 people surveyed in 2020 45% didn't know that CO doesn't have a smell, and only 42% had a working audible CO alarm.

Young people are one of the groups least aware of the dangers of CO, of 1,679 16-24yr olds surveyed only 31% knew that CO didn't have a smell, this was the lowest percentage of all the age groups surveyed. Of those same 1,679 16-24yr olds only 26% stated that they had a working audible CO alarm, again, the lowest percentage across all the age groups. There is a clear need to educate young people on the dangers of CO, not only to improve their awareness and keep them safe from CO harm, but to empower them to share that learning with their peers and households, extending the reach of that education, raising CO awareness and reducing CO harm as a result.

11 regional Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) across our network areas provide Home Safety or Safe & Well services that provide risk prevention and wider health and wellbeing interventions for vulnerable households. Through partner engagement we have learned that the provision of funding is inconsistent for CO safety, including engagement and access to CO alarms.

In many cases the alarms provided are also restricted to standard standalone CO alarms and not accessible offerings. With some of the most vulnerable groups at risk from CO harm and fire being those with sensory and/or cognitive impairment, there is a need to provide accessible CO and fire alarms tailored to meet their needs.

We serve some of the most diverse communities in the UK, with wide, varied, and ever-changing demographics that have associated challenges and needs. This can include different age groups, hard-to-reach communities, people with disabilities, the financially vulnerable, or any other customer segment likely to have bespoke needs. We understand that diverse communities require tailored communication to ensure the risks and mitigations are understood to maintain a safe and warm home.

We know that some of the most vulnerable people in our community are not aware of the provisions that can be provided by their utilities to maintain a safe and warm home, including free or discounted gas connections, Priority Services Register sign-up, independent energy advice or Locking Cooker Valve installations.

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.

2.1 Objective

To support vulnerable customers to use energy safely efficiently and affordably in our communities by working with organisations delivering relevant services to reduce risk to vulnerable customers.

By working in partnership with Fire and Rescue Services across our networks we will be able to support the funding of consistent services around gas and CO safety by tailoring and delivering in home interventions that reduce harm and increase health and wellbeing for the household.

We will also look for opportunities to collaborate with regional partners to onward refer customers in need for support services tailored to meet their needs.

2.2 The Scope

Programme is for the full five-year period however delivery outcomes will be reviewed annually.

The partnership aims to deliver the following, with a regional approach dependent on regional need:

- Through FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well visits increase CO awareness and reduce CO harm for vulnerable and at risk customers through the provision of CO education on; the dangers, the symptoms, and the signs of CO, as well as prevention/safeguarding measures and what to do if CO is suspected.
- Ensure vulnerable customers supported through FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well visits that do not have a working audible CO alarm receive a CO alarm correctly installed to reduce and mitigate the risk of CO harm for them and their household.
- Ensure vulnerable customers with sensory or cognitive impairment supported through FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well visits that do not have a working or suitable accessible CO alarm receive an accessible CO alarm tailored to meet their needs correctly installed to reduce and mitigate the risk of CO harm for them and their household.
- Provide access to our additional support services to all FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well customers as many of these will be hard-to-reach customers who we may not otherwise have engaged.
- Ensure FRS Home Safety and Safe & Well teams, advisors and volunteers are trained on the correct installation and setup of standalone and accessible CO and fire alarm systems.
- Measure CO awareness levels of customers supported through FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well visits to track increase in awareness.
- Capture case studies from both FRS staff and the customers they support about the benefits of the visit and in particular the provision of CO awareness and alarms.
- Work with FRS Education teams to incorporate CO safety education into their education programmes for young people. This CO safety education should include education on; the dangers, the symptoms, and the signs of CO, as well as prevention/safeguarding measures and what to do if CO is suspected.
- Work with individual FRS's within our network areas to deliver tailored support to target groups in their communities that; increases CO awareness, reduces CO harm, and/or provides broader support for customers to enable them to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably.

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 has been co-designed with the FRS's within our network area to meet the VCMA eligibility criteria, it has been assessed to provide a forecasted positive SROI and will actively educate vulnerable households on CO whilst reducing the CO risk by installing appropriate CO alarms to meet need.

This project will also provide broader support to help vulnerable customers use energy safely, efficiently and affordably, including but not limited to; energy advice referrals, funded gas connections, PSR referrals, Locking Cooker Valve installations and targeted support for hard-to-reach or at risk groups to address key issues.

For all FRS's that fall entirely within our network area 100% of the funding is coming from us, with no collaboration from other GDN's or other funded sources. For any FRS's where their footprint overlaps with another GDN we will look to collaborate with the GDN(s) in question to provide shared services and funding accordingly based on the split of the FRS area. We have defined outcomes for this project around increased CO awareness, provision of CO safety solutions, additional support services for vulnerable customers and CO education for young people.

3.1 VCMA Eligibility Criteria below:

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.

4 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

4.1 Regional Fire and Rescue Services

Our regional FRS's are recognised as being well placed to identify hard-to-reach and high-risk groups/customers, as well as their associated challenges and any needs specific to them at a regional level. They aim to sustain people in the community, in safe and suitable homes - preventing harm, injury, hospital admission and loss of life. Firefighters, paramedics, police, and teachers make up the top, most trusted professions in the UK, according to IFSEC Global Survey. Through a reciprocal and joined up approach Fire Officers are a valuable asset to community partners such as SGN, as they are able to engage with hard-to-reach customers and can often be the first on the scene or have initial eyes-on before other services in a welfare concern or crime situation.

FRS's provide Home Safety or Safe & Well visits for customers in the most vulnerable situations, the following list of factors that align to our vulnerability principles of supporting those most at risk would trigger a Home Safety or Safe and Well visit, or a referral for one from a community partner.

- The person is aged over 65 years
- No working smoke detector
- Has Telecare (base unit, pendant and linked smoke detector)
- Cannot hear a standard smoke detector and lives alone
- Has permanent physical disability or frailty affecting their ability to either summon help or escape safely in an emergency
- A long-term illness, where medication has an impact on them responding in an emergency
- Permanent mobility difficulty
- Smokes inside the home; signs of burn marks or smoking in bed
- Hoarding at clutter rating 4 and above; affecting access to rooms, loading and escape routes
- Cognitive impairment affecting their ability to react and respond in an emergency
- Equipment that has impact on safety in the home; oxygen therapy, air flow mattress, mobility scooters, walking aids, e-cigarettes
- Arson threat; domestic violence affecting their safety and escape in their home
- Substance abuse where it impacts safety in the home
- Any other health, wellbeing, or safety issue.

4.2 2019 SGN CO Roundtable Events

In November 2019 we held two CO roundtable events, one in each of our network areas, with key stakeholders, including representatives from Scottish Government, Gas Safe Register, Corgi Services, RoSPA, Local Authorities, Gas Safe Charity and CO – Gas Safety to discuss our GD2 business planning on CO and gain feedback on our short term GD1 focus and longer term GD2 focus.

Feedback we received during these events told us; “You need to target an intervention that isn’t about an FCO visit, instead working with those who visit these types of people (living in poverty and not servicing their appliances)”, and “Make a referral for a free CO Alarm installation for vulnerable customers through trusted partners”.

Working with FRS's addresses both of these suggestions as the CO intervention is not related to a visit by one of our First Call Operatives (FCO) and the referral for the Home Safety or Safe & Well visit can be made by any organisation or family member.

4.3 2019 SGN First Call Operative CO Survey

In 2019 we surveyed our engineers to ask about CO to find out what they see when visiting homes and how they think we should support our customers and communities.

From this survey the most common issue found by our engineers when attending a property in relation to CO was a CO battery/alarm failure.

When we asked what we should do to solve the issues, the top three answers to this gave a very clear direction. These answers were:

1. Install a free CO alarm
2. Provide literature with pictures and guidance on how to identify the signs of CO
3. Referral to fire and rescue for installation of free CO alarm and offer of other available support

Our engineers clearly think we need to be providing the installation of a CO alarm and educating customers on the dangers of CO and how to identify the signs, as well as linking with FRS's to access other available support. All of which aligns to the scope and objectives of this project.

4.4 Vulnerable Steering Group

During 2020/21 our Vulnerable Steering Group has helped us shape our vulnerability strategy and our priorities for GD2. Our Vulnerable Steering Group recommended Fire and Rescue Services as a key partner for us to work with to support our most vulnerable customers throughout GD2. Recognising the link we already have through our Additional Services Referral process and the alignment of safety messaging around CO.

4.5 GDN CO Collaboration Group

Through our ongoing involvement and engagement with the GDN CO collaboration group it is evident that working with trusted partners, in particular Fire and Rescue Services, is seen as best practice by all four GDNs when trying to support and engage customers in vulnerable circumstances around the dangers of CO, inline with other home safety messages including fire safety, smoking cessation, hoarding, scam advice and access/mobility issues.

4.6 SGN RIIO GD2 Business Plan

In the process of shaping our RIIO GD2 Business Plan we engaged stakeholders and customers about our plan to support 50,000 customers each year through a three tiered approach, and what services/initiatives should be included within each of those tiers. During our Positive Impact round table event our stakeholders emphasised the importance of partnerships to increase the value of our allowance in generating positive outcomes for customers. Feedback from our Customer Service & Supporting Vulnerable Customer – Shaping the Business Plan Qualitative Workshops suggested potential tier two initiatives should include the provision of additional services through referral partners and specifically coordinating with Fire and Rescue home safety checks.

5 Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria

Details of the VCMA Project outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these, interim milestones and how the Funding Licensee will evaluate whether the project has been successful. Each action should have a proportion of the funding allocated.

5.1 Outcomes for the 5-year programme

Our partnership with Fire and Rescue Services within our network areas for the duration of GD2 will provide the following outcomes for some of our most vulnerable and at-risk customers and customer groups, as well as the FRS teams that support them:

- Home Safety or Safe & Well customers will receive CO alarms tailored to meet their needs as part of their FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well visit, including;
 - standard standalone CO alarms
 - interlinked hard of hearing CO and fire alarm systems for deaf/hearing impaired customers
 - combined CO and smoke verbal alarms for blind/visually impaired customers, or those with cognitive impairment
- FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well team members will, where required, receive training on the correct installation of;
 - standard standalone CO alarms
 - interlinked hard of hearing CO and fire alarm systems
 - combined CO and smoke verbal alarms
- Customers will be more aware of the risks of Carbon Monoxide and how to mitigate these following an FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well visit.
- Home Safety or Safe & Well customers will be supported by their utilities Priority Services Register, providing them with the security and support they will need during an unplanned outage.
- Home Safety or Safe & Well customers will receive independent energy advice to help them;
 - be on the best tariffs for their personal circumstances
 - manage and pay their own utility bills going forward and avoid going into debt
- Home Safety or Safe & Well customers who are at risk of using their gas cooker in an unsafe manner will be referred to us and wherever possible have a Locking Cooker Valve installed completely free of charge enabling them to retain their independence at home and providing reassurance to friends, family and carers.
- Home Safety or Safe & Well fuel poor customers who are not connected to the gas network will be referred to us and wherever possible will receive a free or discounted gas connection through our Help to Heat fuel poor network extension scheme.
- Young people will be educated on CO safety through FRS education programmes.
- We will work with our regional FRS's on targeted initiatives for hard-to-reach groups where the FRS has identified a need we can support.

5.2 Success criteria

- All customers visited by FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well teams within our network area will have a greater understanding of the dangers associated with Carbon Monoxide and as such their risk of CO harm will be reduced.
- CO awareness surveys will be completed as part of FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well visits to capture the customers awareness on the dangers of CO pre and post discussion/visit.
- On average each year 16,000 customers visited by FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well teams who either do not have a working audible CO alarm, or do not have sufficient working audible CO alarms for their requirement will have a suitable number of CO alarms correctly installed in their home.

- On average each year 2,250 deaf/hard of hearing customers visited by FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well teams who do not have a suitable accessible fire and CO detection system will have an accessible interlinked hard of hearing CO and fire alarm system installed, setup and explained to them.
- On average each year 800 blind/visually impaired or cognitive impaired customers visited by FRS Home Safety/Safe & Well teams who do not have a suitable accessible fire and CO detection system will have a verbal combined CO and smoke alarm installed, setup and explained to them.
- An increased number of Home Safety or Safe & Well referrals will be submitted by SGN engineers and contractors via our Additional Service Referral app or Careline, measured through our monthly Additional Services Report.
- Case studies from staff at each FRS about the partnership and what the ability to provide CO alarms and the other support our partnerships allow means for them.
- Case studies from a sample of customers each year to find out what difference having a CO alarm installed, being made aware of the dangers of CO and any other additional support provided as a result of our partnership has made to them.
- FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well customers offered the support to assess eligibility and sign up to the PSR with an expectation of 60% registration.
- FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well customers offered energy advice including information about who to call in an emergency, smart meters, Winter Fuel Payments, Warm Homes Discount, how to check if you are on the best tariff, tariff switching and energy efficiency advice.
- FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well customers offered information on and access to the gas safety Locking Cooker Valve.
- FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well customers offered information on and access to our Help To Heat fuel poor network extension scheme.
- CO education material is included in the education programmes of multiple FRS's within our network area.

6 Project Partners and third parties involved

Details of Project Partners or third-party involvement

Fire and Rescue Services we will be working with who will be providing Home Safety or Safe & Well visits for customers in vulnerable situations across our network areas, providing CO awareness and where required installing alarms to customers most at risk from the dangers of CO via their Safe & Well teams. These Fire and Rescue Services are:

- Buckinghamshire
- Dorset and Wiltshire
- East Sussex
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight
- Kent
- London
- Oxfordshire
- Royal Berkshire
- Surrey
- Scotland
- West Sussex

Fireblitz Extinguishers Ltd who will be the supplier of the standalone and accessible interlinked hard of hearing CO and fire alarm systems. They will also be providing training for Home Safety or Safe & Well teams on the correct installation and setup of both alarm types as required.

Safelincs Fire & Safety Solutions who will be the supplier of the verbal combined CO and smoke alarms for customers with visual or cognitive impairment.

SGN, we are funding the CO alarms via Fireblitz and Safelincs that will not only enable Home Safety and Safe & Well teams to install these for customers in vulnerable situations, but also give them the confidence to provide customers with comprehensive CO awareness information knowing they can back it up with the installation of a CO alarm suitable for the customers need(s). We will also be facilitating the training being carried out by Fireblitz of FRS team members on the correct installation and setup of the standard CO alarms and the accessible interlinked hard of hearing CO and fire alarm system where required. Throughout this project we will also track any measurable outcome achieved as a result of our partnerships to enable us to provide the respective FRS with performance reviews and trigger improvement plans and additional training if required.

7 Potential for new learning

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

We expect to learn from this project;

- The level of CO awareness for customers in vulnerable situations across our networks both pre and post Home Safety or Safe & Well visit via our CO awareness survey responses. This will help us identify areas of improvement or best practice and support or share accordingly.
- What information customers find useful and is this the best way for them to receive it. This will help frame future CO messaging via Home Safety or Safe & Well visits and more broadly to similar demographics or customer groups.
- Due to the focus on inclusion as part of this project we expect to get a better understanding of effective ways to identify, engage and empower customers with sensory disability, enabling us to provide better support on this and other future projects
- We will assess whether FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well teams are more comfortable having CO awareness discussions with the customers they support knowing they can offer and correctly install/setup free CO alarms.
- We will assess whether our own engineers are more likely to refer customers for FRS Home Safety or Safe & Well visits knowing these visits now provide a more holistic service incorporating CO awareness, alarm installation and our other additional support services.

We will be monitoring and evaluating project progress and impact with each FRS regularly to enable us to refine and improve our processes and partnerships at an individual FRS level. We are keen to learn from this project and for successes and best practice to be incorporated into future deliver and shared with our broader stakeholders and partners.

Our learnings will also be shared as part of a wider project throughout each year of our VCMA funding at our annual showcase event.

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.

This project is working with the Fire and Rescue Services that operate within the SGN network areas across Scotland and the South. They provide Home Safety or Safe & Well visits to some of the most vulnerable and at-risk customers across our networks. Across the five years we require a ringfenced budget based on anticipated values which will be reviewed annually with each FRS against target and performance. As such the anticipated costs are:

- 80,000 standard CO alarms
- 1,250 deaf/hard of hearing accessible interlinked hard of hearing CO and fire alarm systems made up of 1x Hearing Impaired Controller, 1 x Wireless Heat Alarm, 1 x Wireless Smoke Alarm, and 1 x Wireless CO Alarm
- 10,000 deaf/hard of hearing accessible interlinked hard of hearing Wireless CO sensors
- 4,000 verbal combined CO and smoke alarms
- Shared awareness and promotional material design and print costs

Additional support services

- Signposting/referral to other partner agencies who can support with health or wellbeing needs.

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.

*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 September 2021 to 31 March 2026

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.

SGN Southern and Scotland network footprint

Approved by

Rob Gray

Director of Stakeholder Relations and Communications