

Green Doctors – Kent

Funding GDN(s)	SGN
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	
Date of PEA submission:	01 September 2021
Project contact name:	Kerry Potter
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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.

During 2021, it is estimated that three million English households are living in fuel poverty (Dept for Business, Energy and Business Strategy). Nearly half of low-income households are still living in hard to heat homes, and the rate of improvements is well below what is needed to lift people out of fuel poverty by a target date of 2030.

Carbon monoxide poisoning poses a serious risk to health, with around 200 people hospitalised and 40 people dying annually in the UK due to unintentional exposure - those most at risk are the under 14s and the over 65s, accounting for 31 per cent and 25 per cent of hospital admissions respectively. (ROSPA,2020). We understand that there has been increased risk of carbon monoxide poisoning due to Covid 19, which is causing more people to have to stay at home, either for the purposes of shielding, enforced lockdown, or due to working from home, with those who are 'vulnerable' most likely to impacted.

In addition, as support services have had to adapt due to Covid 19, highly vulnerable individuals, particularly those who are digitally excluded and those unable to communicate confidently in English, are more likely to have 'fallen through the gaps'. This means that they are less likely to have support networks to help them deal with arising issues that would put them at greater risk of fuel poverty and carbon monoxide exposure for reasons such as, being unable to afford maintenance, repairs or replacements or due to fear of having people in homes at this time.

There are key areas geographically that we have identified where these conditions are mostly likely. Working with our data and insight partner Energy Savings Trust we understand that areas in coastal Kent (Medway, Thanet and Folkstone) have a significantly higher than the national average number of; older people, indicators of financial vulnerability, instances of fuel poverty resulting in poor health, and digital exclusion rates. They also have a higher risk of mortality from these issues, so a tailored approach is required to be able to provide safe and effective support.

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.

Delivered in partnership with Groundwork South and Groundwork London's Green Doctor teams, and co-funded by the regional network companies and Smart GB this project aims to support around 900 vulnerable households with independent and bespoke support to keep a safe and warm home for less. The Green Doctor teams are linked in with regional support services in health and social clinics, where they will be providing tailored front-line training to help key workers effectively identify people in need of support to achieve a safe, affordable and warm home.

The partnership will deliver;

- A dedicated team of experienced Groundwork Green Doctors across coastal Kent with the skills to provide utility services not limited to industry initiatives including PSR (water and energy), Warm Home Discount, Winter fuel payments, tariff and energy switching, water social tariff, debt support, information on smart meters, gas safety, Locking Cooker Valves and who to contact in an emergency (0800 111 999 and 105)
- A joined up service between trained referral partners which includes training front line teams to identify and effectively refer people into the Green Doctors team who face issues with affordable utilities with the outcomes of improving the quality of people's lives, their mental, physical and financial wellbeing
- A robust network of regional and relevant secondary key partnerships to ensure access to utility services as well as health and wellbeing services that are specific and local to client need. Current network includes; Kent County Council, Thanet Council, Gravesham District Council, Kent Coastal Volunteers, Porchlight, NHS social prescribing networks, foodbanks, community support groups, refugee and asylum support, carer, and regional care support teams.

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 will provide support for households that are financially vulnerable and hard to reach due to communication barriers, including those who are digitally excluded, to access key services including the PSR, interventions that address fuel and water poverty and broader safeguarding / wellbeing services whilst delivering a positive Social Return on Investment. The project will provide holistic utility efficiency advice and CO safety interventions, empowering each householder to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably. The project will work collaboratively with expert agencies to maximise positive impacts beyond energy, increasing the health and wellbeing of the individual supported and deliver defined outcomes.

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

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 Groundwork South / London – Green Doctors customer feedback

Customer engagement is central to the way that Groundwork operates. We know that the Green Doctor programme is highly effective in meeting the needs of service users with feedback surveys indicating a 98% satisfaction rating. We use feedback surveys to understand the quality of our intervention and to be able to improve the service to be more responsive to need. As we introduce the gas safety and water support into the Green Doctor 1 to 1's and outreach work in the community we will continue with the feedback surveys to ensure that we deliver the gas safety message effectively to the client group.

Customer testimonial;

“The Green Doctor was a great help. I live on my own and need to save a bit of money and I now I feel a lot better about my energy bills. He helped me to go on U-Switch to change supplier, which saved me a lot of money. He also showed me how to use my combi-boiler more efficiently, which I didn't know anything about. He did me a big favour, I found it really useful.”

4.2 SGN RIIO GD2 Business Plan & Customer Engagement Group 2019/20

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 recommended tier-two initiatives should include supporting those most vulnerable to living in a cold and unhealthy home, as well as connecting with NHS prevention and community support teams.

4.3 Moving Forward Together – Stakeholder Workshops 2018 and 2020

Sharing our top 5 scenarios with our stakeholders during our engagement workshops in 2018, and updated retests in 2020 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 their utilities, and that water, gas and electricity should be approached as essentials services.

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 with established charities that support people most in need. It is with guidance and support from our dedicated Vulnerable Steering Group that SGN prioritise the regions in our geographic area that are most in need, and to support those most likely to need support from their utility company due to low incomes and financial vulnerability. This project is co-designed with Groundwork South, UK Power Networks, and Southern Water to provide tangible support to achieve a safe and warm home. An approach that has been endorsed by our strategic panel, as it looks to provide a holistic and empowering service in partnership with other utilities.

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

The Groundwork Green Doctor team will work to directly support 900 people who are financially vulnerable or in hard to reach communities, in the most at risk communities in Kent, Folkstone and Hythe, providing access to independent and impactful solutions to using energy safely, efficiently and affordably. The partnership will be embedded within the community, linked closely with a network of regional service providers and training to support effective referrals with organisations including; Arches Local Trust, Kent Mind, Porchlight, Live Well Kent, Men in Sheds, and health care providers providing expert support to address the barriers people face to a safe and warm home. The project aims to provide the following outcomes to service users;

- The skills to identify and effectively refer people who would benefit from the tailored support
- For eligible people to be supported by their utilities Priority Services Register, providing them with the security and support they will need during an outage and tailored support with costs
- Eligible households referred for assessment into the FPNES scheme
- Be on the best tariffs for their personal circumstances
- Manage and pay their own utility bills going forward and avoid going into debt
- Be more aware of the risks of Carbon Monoxide and how to mitigate these
- Keep healthy and warm
- Have reduced stress, and improved health and wellbeing
- Be more able to cope at home

5.2 Success Criteria

To engage and train frontline support teams to effectively support and refer people into the Green Doctors team, and to provide 900 people with the ability to maintain a safe and warm home, improving their health and wellbeing and building skills and confidence to manage their household utility costs.

- 30 training sessions for front line support workers (gas safety and fuel poverty)
- 25 community workshops on using utilities, including energy, safely, efficiently, and affordably
- Translator services used by the Green Doctor team with case studies to detail impact
- 900 customers supported to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably via a contact channel that works for them (circa 300 telephone consultations / 600 in person across home visits and workshops)
 - 300 PSR sign ups energy and water
 - 450 CO Safety discussions and feedback captured via the CO awareness survey
 - service users will experience decreased stress/worry around utility costs through case-based solutions (small measures, emergency funding, tariff support and access to FPNES)
- Funding for the programme has been set up based upon mobilisation of new resources and against quarterly delivery milestones for the remaining time of the contract.

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

- Monitor outcomes against services provided
- Monitor who is making use of the service - customer demographics, vulnerabilities and needs
- Survey service users for satisfaction and impact

- Work closely with our partners to ensure that we all understand the issues faced to continue to develop our services by need
- Provide case studies of the impact of the programme on frontline support and impact of individuals supported by the initiative (partner and individual)

6. Project Partners and third parties involved

Groundwork South – programme lead and lead delivery partner providing the advisory teams, training, events, and the support services to service users.

SGN – lead gas network providing funding and support to the delivery team including training and access to broader referral partners and direct services for customers including but not limited to Locking Cooker Valves, CO alarms and access to the Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme.

UK Power Networks – lead electricity network providing funding and support to the delivery team including training and access to broader services including access to the energy PSR.

Southern Water – regional water network providing funding and support through social tariffs the water PSR and small water efficiency measures.

Frontline support agencies including but not limited to; Arches Local Trust, Kent Mind, Porchlight, Live Well Kent, Men in Sheds to identify and refer service users in for support and refer.

7. Potential for new learning

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

Through ongoing monitoring of the impact of our initiative on frontline support organisations and service users, our partner Groundwork South will produce insights and an annual evaluation report including case studies that will provide insights for GDNs into; customer behaviour, barriers faced, effective engagement, and the impact of accessing independent support to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably. We will share the lessons learned around effective training and engagement of hard to reach communities.

Groundwork South will disseminate the annual evaluation report and case studies through their broader stakeholder network which includes network companies, front line staff and to other partners who may find this relevant e.g. local authorities.

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.

Groundwork Green Doctor programme has recently reviewed their SROI outcomes using the SROI HACT tool, developed by Simetrica-Jacobs. For more information

<https://www.hact.org.uk/calculating-your-social-value>

Social Value Measurement

SGN are working with leading social impact research consultancy Simetrica where 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.

Carrying out a high-level assessment using this methodology against a subset of the predicted outcomes and recognising that the project has outcomes we don't currently social values mapped for, we still forecast a positive social return.

*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.

1st April 2021- 1st April 2023

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.

The service will support customers in coastal Kent, with a key focus on Thanet, Medway and Folkstone.

Approved by

Rob Gray

Director of Stakeholder Relations and Communications