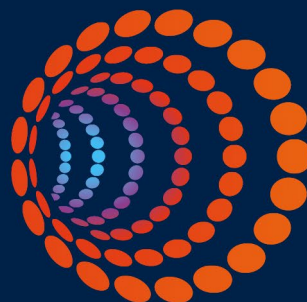


Safe and Warm Fife

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance

21 March 2022

SGN



SGN

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Description

Funding GDN(s)	SGN
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	N/A
Date of PEA submission:	21 March 2022
Project contact name:	Linda Spence
Project contact number/email:	Linda.spence@sgn.co.uk
Total cost (£k)	*provided separately
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	*provided separately

Problem statement

Fuel poverty

Fuel poverty is a real and persistent problem in Fife: 26 neighbourhoods in Fife have high levels of income deprivation, falling within the bottom 10% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (Scottish Government, 2020). The 2021 Scottish Housing Condition Survey (SHCS) showed that 41,000 (24%) households in Fife are in fuel poverty, and 19,000 (11%) are in extreme fuel poverty. Fife currently has the third-highest local authority share of deprivation with 98 data zones in the 20% most deprived in 2020 compared to 95 in 2016. Areas in mid-Fife have the highest levels of inequality and unemployment, and average household incomes in these areas are significantly below the Scottish average¹.

Research by the Fife's Healthy Heating Partnership (of which Greener Kirkcaldy is a key partner) found that due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is anticipated that the 2023 SHCS figures will show an increase in both fuel poverty and extreme fuel poverty in Fife given that the number of Fife households in extreme fuel poverty is increasing and that figures reported on are 2-4 years behind the date of publication. The current energy price crisis has exacerbated the impact on households further. Low-income households and people living with health conditions, already likely to be in fuel poverty, will be disproportionately negatively affected by the current and predicted changes in the energy market.

CO safety

Carbon Monoxide (CO) can pose a serious threat to health - in the UK 4,000 people are treated in hospital annually as a result of CO poisoning and around 40 deaths are caused by CO poisoning each year. Many people in the UK who use carbon fuelled appliances are not aware of the dangers of CO and do not have a working audible CO alarm.

There is a direct correlation between fuel poverty and carbon monoxide poisoning. Lower income householders are often reliant on older boilers, older heaters or gas cookers to heat their homes. National Energy Action and Gas Safety Trust research found 35% of low income and vulnerable households surveyed exceeded the 10ppm threshold for carbon monoxide levels. Older people, pregnant women, and young children have also been found to be particularly vulnerable to CO poisoning, spending more time at home and with a need to stay warm, resulting using the heating more regularly². People living in deprived areas are also less likely to own an audible CO alarm than homes in non-deprived areas, further increasing the risk of CO poisoning³.

Whilst social tenants are less at risk due to RSL requirements for annual gas safety checks and higher energy efficiency standards, low-income homeowners and private tenants in unregulated, non-SRL tenancies remain at high risk of CO. There are currently over 135,000 privately owned homes in Fife and there is an expectation

¹ Fife Housing Partnership, 20202, *Local Housing Strategy Interim 2020-2022*.

² Safelincs, 2020, *Carbon monoxide poisoning: Who is most at risk?*

³ Kokkarinen et al, 2014, *Investigation of audible carbon monoxide alarm ownership*.

that the recent amendment to the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (Tolerable Standard) (Extension of Criterion) Order 2019 to include new elements covering smoke and heat alarms and CO alarms is likely to significantly increase the number of BTS failures due to non-compliance. This standard is also linked to the Water Intended for Human Consumption (Private Supplies) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, ensuring private water supplies are wholesome, relevant persons are meeting their responsibilities and tackling lead in drinking water. This evidences the need in Fife for support to improve these areas in Fife's private housing sector⁴.

Collaborative and preventative approach

People in Fife are often experiencing crisis energy issues by the time they are referred to Greener Kirkcaldy's energy advice service. To mitigate the most preventable problems linked to fuel poverty early intervention is required. However, it is known, some of the people most in need are the hardest to reach, and the least able to protect their interests in the energy market. Older people, and those with disabilities, are often unaware of how to access information and advice. In Fife, 31.6% of adults have a limiting long-term condition. 6,661 people are living with dementia, and this figure is expected to rise⁵. In 2021, 54% of the people supported through Greener Kirkcaldy's energy advice service were living with a long-term health condition or disability.

The demand for Fife-based energy advice provision is growing (71% increase in 2020 from 2018): Greener Kirkcaldy's energy advice is over-subscribed and has a waiting list. Working in partnership with SGN and other agencies to provide holistic energy advice is the key to alleviating both the immediate effects and root causes of fuel poverty and to creating safe and warm homes.

Scope and objectives

This project will engage with up to 20,000 people in the Fife community over the two-year period raising awareness of energy issues and providing support to improve the wellbeing, safety and financial outcomes for households in vulnerable circumstances. It will provide a referral pathway to provide these households with access to support services under this project.

Greener Kirkcaldy will provide further in-depth support to vulnerable households at risk of, or living with, fuel poverty, providing advice on energy efficiency and financial support, plus referrals to other sources of well-being support, from income maximisation to befriending services and registration to the priority services register. Where appropriate, people will be referred on to statutory and local schemes to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, including Home Energy Scotland's Warmer Homes Scotland programme and Greener Kirkcaldy's 'handy' service.

The project will also raise awareness of the risks of CO in the home and fuel poor households who do not have a CO monitor will receive one free. Vulnerable households that require additional support will be referred through SGN for CO monitors and locking cooker valves and to fire safety visits through their partner support.

Low-income households who are at risk of self-disconnection and under-heating will be supported through the provision of fuel vouchers to stay connected and slow cookers will be provided to households in food or fuel poverty to support them to reduce energy costs associated with cooking.

The project will build on the success of Greener Kirkcaldy's existing energy advice service, extending support to the most vulnerable and hard to reach households and will address the increase in demand for support from Fife households that are struggling to heat their homes affordably. It will focus on households who are most vulnerable to the impacts of fuel poverty, especially older people, people on low incomes, and people with disabilities or long-term health issues. The project will work very closely with SGN throughout, making best use of its available services. Greener Kirkcaldy will draw on their existing network of other agencies, expanding this network over the course of the project, to provide a holistic package of assistance to vulnerable households

⁴ Fife Housing Partnership, 20202, *Local Housing Strategy Interim 2020-2022*.

⁵ *ibid*

that empowers participants to manage their energy usage going forward, and the confidence and knowledge to seek further support should they require further help in the future.

The project will achieve sustainable, measurable outcomes for the people it works with, supporting them to achieve a warm and safe home affordably and making them more resilient to future risks of fuel poverty.

The project will:

- Deliver free and impartial energy advice and support to vulnerable households in Fife.
- Identify and tackle under-heating, and those at risk of self-disconnection, thereby reducing the risks of cold-related ill-health.
- Raise awareness of CO risks and identify ways to make the participant's homes safer to live in.
- Ensure vulnerable participants are on the priority services register for energy and water and they can access broader relevant support services.
- Tackle fuel poverty holistically, increasing participants' ability to manage their energy use and costs going forward.
- Increase the level of knowledge of our services amongst other local support agencies.
- Reach 20,000 Fife households through various contact channels, community events, community placements, workshops and direct marketing social media, newsletter and other partnership communication channels.

Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

This project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria as it will address the specific needs of Fife households and deliver energy safeguarding services and a tailored package of support where extreme vulnerability exists, including those living in fuel poverty. It will work holistically to empower people to use energy safely, affordably and efficiently and will work collaboratively with a network of expert agencies to go beyond the provision of energy advice and meet the increased demand for support in Fife, maximising the positive impacts of the project and delivering a positive Social Return on Investment.

Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

1.1 Experienced delivery partners with skills and access to target group

Greener Kirkcaldy has been providing in depth energy advice to fuel poor Fife households since 2012, and works closely with Home Energy Scotland, Fife Council's Housing Services, and many of the 200 other partners. To date, they have provided in-depth energy advice to over 10,000 households, helping them save energy and money, maximise their income, tackle fuel debt and access other support services.

Experience gained during the course of their work has shown:

- Many people locally, especially older people, people with disabilities and health conditions and low-income households, under-heat their homes and are at risk of cold-related ill-health.
- It only takes a small, unexpected expense to trigger a crisis for households in 'in-work' poverty or people with insecure work.
- People in under-heated homes are more at risk of CO as they are more likely to reduce ventilation in order to retain heat and less likely to be aware of the causes and dangers of a poorly ventilated home.
- Other local support agencies often do not have the knowledge to identify fuel poverty or the skills to provide in-depth energy support.

The approach, including training referral partners, means that the service reaches households that are most vulnerable to the impacts of fuel poverty, ensuring sustainable outcomes for the people they work with and build capacity within the local community. In-depth advice is provided in the participant's home along with by

telephone, which increases the take up of advice on offer and helps identify under-heating, safety concerns and the risks of disconnection and ensures they meet the needs of the individual households. The service tackles fuel poverty holistically, addressing energy efficiency, behaviour change, income maximisation, fuel debt, tariffs and switching.

Greener Kirkcaldy's 2020 participant survey evidences the impact of their support: 93% of respondents feel more confident managing their home energy use, 88% feel warmer or more comfortable at home, and 75% saved energy and had an improved financial situation as a result of the advice. The case studies supplied in the Appendix evidence the need and effectiveness of the project support.

1.2 SGN Business Plan– Stakeholder workshops

Sharing SGN's top 5 categories with their stakeholders during 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.

1.3 SGN Vulnerability Steering Group

During 2020-21 SGN's Vulnerable Steering Group helped shape the Vulnerability Strategy and priorities for GD2. Key priorities are initiatives to support the gas networks most vulnerable customers in their target areas, where customers are most impacted by key vulnerabilities; fuel poverty, communities most impacted by Covid-19, and those hard to reach who require tailored advice and support services aligned to personal wellbeing and safety. SGN's Vulnerability Strategy identified customer groups who were most in need of the funding: Fife was identified as being in the Top 10 on SGN's vulnerability index developed by the Energy Savings Trust in the categories of financial vulnerability and health.

Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

1.4 Outcomes

The planned and measurable outcomes for the partnership are:

- People supported through the one-to-one sessions will be empowered to manage their energy usage and costs to reduce the risk of further fuel poverty.
- People supported will be less at risk of utility disconnection helping them manage affordable warmth within their home.
- People will feel safer in their homes as they will have access to CO awareness and carbon monoxide detectors, helping them become more aware of the risks of Carbon Monoxide and how to mitigate these.
- People living in fuel poor households will have greater access to emergency funding and support through fuel vouchers and food workshops.
- People supported will have access to measurable immediate and ongoing financial savings improving their household income and health and wellbeing.
- People within the community will have an increased awareness of priority service register with an expected increase in registrations.
- Increased knowledge of support services including non-energy support by vulnerable households amongst Fife residents and other local support agencies.
- Produce community specific energy safeguarding materials to fuel poor households helping them access support services required specific to their needs.

1.5 Associated actions

6.2.1 Energy Advice and support

Greener Kirkcaldy's team of energy advisors, who are all qualified in City & Guilds Energy Awareness, will deliver home energy advice. This will be via either a telephone advice service or face-to-face engagement at a home visit, for those needing more in-depth advice or support.

When delivering energy advice, the advisors make an initial assessment, asking a series of questions about the home and the household's needs, concerns, and motivations, then give tailored advice, which includes:

- Helping participants to improve their understanding of energy bills, meters and tariffs, heating and hot water systems and heating controls.
- Supporting participants to achieve a suitable heating regime.
- Options for physical improvements to the home: insulation, draught-proofing, new heating systems under FPNES or controls and home renewable technologies.
- Assisting with accessing statutory schemes and other relevant grant schemes.
- Ensuring participants' homes are safe and healthy spaces through ventilation, condensation, and damp advice, along with CO safety.
- Encouraging the best use of heating, lighting, and appliances.
- Giving simple, low-cost tips to save energy.
- Providing impartial energy switching advice.
- Referring vulnerable participants to the Priority Service Register.
- Giving advice on fuel debt and entitlements, such as the Warm Home Discount.
- Alleviating immediate energy crisis and disconnection through fuel top ups.
- Energy monitor loans to help households understand their electricity usage and smart meter advice.
- Providing a range of advice materials and leaflets relevant to each participant's home and circumstances.
- Thermal imaging surveys to verify building performance to specifications - to determine whether the building has insulation, locate air leaks, verify structure, design, and locate moisture intrusion.

In addition to this Greener Kirkcaldy will:

- Act as an advocate if participants need support to deal with energy suppliers or landlords.
- Refer participants to funded appliance repair or replacement services, if needed.
- Refer participants to other support services: e.g. Citizens Advice Scotland for benefit checks to maximise income, to carer or befriending services, and SGNs additional services.

6.2.2 Additional Support

CO monitors, provided by SGN, will be gifted to households that do not have a monitor, identified through the energy advice project. Slow cookers will also be provided to help people on low incomes to reduce energy costs and maintain a healthy balanced diet.

The energy advisors will also make referrals for additional support provided by the project partners including:

- SGN to provide locking cooker valves and CO alarms to vulnerable households.
- Greener Kirkcaldy's 'handy' service, a means-tested service which installs simple energy efficiency measures and provides saving items to improve thermal comfort and safety and reduce energy usage. The service also provides 'cosy packs', comprising of a thermal blanket, warm clothes, and advice leaflets, to help participants in emergency situations.
- Home Energy Scotland's Warmer Homes Scotland programme and water saving measures.

6.2.3 Workshops

Energy advisors will create one off energy advice workshops to the most at risk communities. The workshops will increase energy literacy and resilience, and reduce fuel poverty, amongst the most vulnerable households. To ensure maximum reach with the target audience a blended approach will be used to deliver these, delivering them to the participants of local support agencies and as online workshops. The workshops will include:

- Energy budgeting workshops – understanding and taking control of household energy costs.
- Healthy heating workshops – understanding how to achieve a suitable heating regime affordably and avoid disconnection.
- Energy efficient cooking workshops – making the most of your kitchen appliances and ensure good safety.
- Emergency Energy Safeguarding – to help households become more resilient during power outages and access to energy and water Priority Service Register.

6.2.4 Community Engagement Approach

The project will benefit households in Fife that are most vulnerable to the impacts of fuel poverty, especially older people, people with disabilities or long-term health issues, and households on low incomes. It will focus support in areas where it most needed, in particular in the neighbourhoods that fall within the bottom 10% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, especially post-industrial towns in Central Fife and Levenmouth and former mining villages.

This project will actively raise awareness of the support available through local marketing and community engagement campaigns in target neighbourhoods to reach the project priority groups. It will work with an established network of over 200 local support agencies to cascade training to frontline workers, encouraging them to refer vulnerable people they support into the project. That will increase the scale, scope and resilience of the support network in Fife, and the corresponding benefits to project participants, as the project progresses.

To achieve the outcomes a varied and targeted marketing strategy will be carried out to engage participants. There will also be a leaflet dropping exercise to households in target areas. The project, and the support on offer, will be promoted through local shops and community buildings, as well as through social media to reach local groups and organisations. The energy advisors will also host in person and online events with various groups and organisations in the local area, helping to spread the word through close partnership working, and taking referrals from partners, including broader support organisations and local landlords.

By taking a holistic approach to tackling the causes of fuel poverty, other crucial services can be delivered as a package of support at the same time and through a central trusted agency. For example, alongside the delivery of energy advice the project will provide wider support, including referrals to Citizens Advice & Rights Fife for income maximization and benefit checks and supporting households experiencing food poverty through providing local access to food (such as food bank vouchers, signposting to local community food and fridge projects and on to cooking and budgeting skills courses, including Greener Kirkcaldy's "Smart Cooking" course).

Success Criteria

A minimum of 1,200 people will be supported one to one with in-depth support, 240 people supported through energy workshops and up to 20,000 households supported through various partnership networks and marketing channels, helping all use energy safely, affordably and efficiently.

Our project will provide access to

- Energy Efficiency advice, including energy usage, tariffs etc
- Priority Service Register registration
- CO Safety conversation and access to a working CO alarm where required
- Income Maximisation and benefit entitlement reviews
- Energy workshop sessions which include energy budgeting, healthy heating, and energy efficient cooking).

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- Community in person and online events held around energy safeguarding and CO to vulnerable/fuel poor households and partner organisations in the area.
- Energy advisors and partnerships in Fife trained on gas safety.
- Creation and distribution of a “safe and warm” energy saving guide to households.

To monitor the impact we will:

- Monitor outcomes against services provided ensuring that those trained on the support services are confident in their ability to identify and support eligible customers to relevant help including confidently promote the benefits of the Priority Services Register, SGN additional services and CO safety.
- Monitor outcomes of energy workshops and the identification of households most in need, gathering insight around energy usage, food poverty and CO safety.
- Generate learning reports from insights generated from the engagement of the 10,000 households, through various community engagement and local partnerships.
- Work closely with our partners to ensure that we all understand the issues faced to continue to develop our services in the community based on need.

Project partners and third parties involved

Greener Kirkcaldy

Greener Kirkcaldy, the lead delivery partner, is a community-led charity and development trust working locally to combat the climate emergency, tackle fuel poverty and food insecurity, delivering a range of projects, activities and training skills to meet the needs and goals of local people.

It has an established energy advice service, experienced in by providing holistic, bespoke and in-depth energy advice to tackle fuel poverty and empowering vulnerable people in Fife to gain the confidence and skills to manage their energy. Staff have the skills and experience to deliver robust outcomes.

SGN

Greener Kirkcaldy and SGN will work closely in partnership to support to the project, providing 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.

Scottish Power Energy Network

Regional electricity distribution network operators providing programme funding and support to the delivery team including, but not limited to, access to the energy PSR.

Fuel Bank Foundation

The project will work with the Fuel Bank Foundation to provide fuel vouchers to fuel poor households. The Fuel Bank Foundation issue vouchers in a timely manner, have robust monitoring systems, and have a proven track record in providing support where it is most needed, having supported over 275,000 people by 2019.

Home Energy Scotland

Home Energy Scotland will act as a referral partner for the project, providing additional energy efficiency and water saving measures. SGN and Greener Kirkcaldy have a good working relationship with Home Energy Scotland and partnership agreements in place.

FORT partner network

A Fife-based network of over 200 partners providing additional support services that can be accessed directly through the Fife Online Referral Tracker system.

Potential for new learning

Monitoring and evaluation

As a partnership we will work closely to ensure that we all understand the issues faced by hard-to-reach households and the Fife community and adapt the support provided to address barriers to a safe and warm home.

We will produce data and insight from the project activities and create each year an annual report with findings and recommendations which show the real difference our project has made.

Through ongoing monitoring we will:

- Keep comprehensive records of all activities undertaken and the number of households taking part in each.
- Use a client relationship management system to record the people receiving in-depth advice, including a summary of the advice given, any referrals made, and measures installed.
- Record activities and social return on investment through case studies.
- Monitor money saved/gained for each household using the 'financial gain' methodology of Citizens Advice Scotland, which includes increases in income, savings made by switching energy supplier, and other ways in which households benefit financially due to our advice and support.
- Use customer satisfaction surveys to evaluate the impact project activities have on the households taking part.
- Collate feedback captured through other communications, including in person and through online platforms.

Our annual report will be published on Greener Kirkcaldy's portal, such as the charity website, and disseminated to project partners and relevant members and stakeholders in the sector through the VCMA showcase and the Annual Report.

Learning

During this two-year partnership we are keen to learn from this project and for the successes to be incorporated into future delivery initiatives for fuel poor households in Fife and promoted to others. Below are opportunities we see for replication, learning and sharing:

- We can use the data and feedback required to create best practices for supporting hard to reach households understand how to use energy safely and affordably.
- We will assess the variety of feedback tools used to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the project advice and activities, documenting project learning and sharing best practice among organisations seeking similar outcomes for communities and groups who are hard to reach with existing services.
- We will use an Action Learning approach to reflect on progress and identify good practice, especially around how to reach and engage with people who might not normally ask for help, or to add new activities.
- This project will trial innovative approaches to delivering CO safety alongside energy advice, including the provision of CO alarms, and assesses the success of the delivery methods throughout the project to create the most effective model for ensuring a safe and warm home.
- This project will trial innovative approaches to embedding energy saving cooking and heating behaviour changes, including in-depth advice in the home and practical workshops, assessing the impact on households in food and fuel poverty.
- Partnership working will generate new joined up working practices and lessons learned to be replicated in future projects and assessed year on year to understand if there is a gap in providing support to fuel poor households.
- We will disseminate project learning at a local level, to partner organisations through steering groups, and share best practice with other grass-root organisations.

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- Evaluating delivery will support learnings and successes which will be shared with the Fife Fuel Poverty Strategy Steering Group and Fife Healthy Heating Group, working with them throughout the project to identify and support further fuel poor households in Fife.

Greener Kirkcaldy will use the project experience to inform local policy, such as Fife's Fuel Poverty Strategy, and will share learning nationally through events such as Energy Action Scotland's advice forums, and Scottish Communities Climate Action Network's gatherings. Greener Kirkcaldy's CEO is a member of the Energy Consumers Commission; the learning from this project will inform her contributions to the Commission's advocacy and research work.

Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations

Working with SIA Partners we've developed a number of social proxy values aligned to the work and outcomes we and our partners are delivering. Using these along with the DNO SROI assessment tool and methodology we have carried out an assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes associated with this project, and we forecast a positive net SROI.

*SROI provided separately

VCMA Project start and end date

The project will run from 1st May 2022 to 31st March 2024

Geographic area

Fife, Scotland – Top 10 area in our vulnerability index

Approval

Rob Gray - Director of Stakeholder Relations and Communications