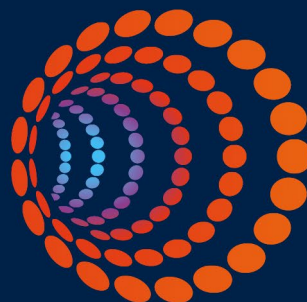


Warmworks Aftercare Service

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance

16 March 2022

SGN



SGN

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1 Description

Funding GDN(s)	SGN
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	N/A
Date of PEA submission:	16/03/2022
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

2 Problem statement

The serious problems faced by people living in or at risk of fuel poverty have been well documented, the consequences for mental and physical health and the realities of having to make impossible choices daily between heating and eating. It is evident that given the disruption and difficulties that we have collectively experienced over the last 24 months with Covid, the importance of people being able to spend time in their own home safely without having to live in cold, damp conditions and without having the continual worry of what it might cost them to be warm is even more significant.

Scotland has over 680,000 homes in Fuel Poverty and Warmworks through their Warmer Homes Scotland Scheme(Scottish Government’s national fuel poverty scheme) has supported more than 22,000 vulnerable households since 2015, who have struggled to heat their homes and pay their energy bills.

Improving the fabric and heating of fuel poor homes for some vulnerable households isn’t enough to lift them out of fuel poverty. Warmworks Insights team have carried out research from vulnerable households in Scotland and found most are seeking additional support within the first 12-24 weeks of new heating installations. Fuel Poor households are finding it difficult to navigate energy usage, stay warm affordably, understand new billing/tariffs and when transitioning to gas are unsure of the risks of CO and what to do in a gas emergency. Many of these households are already in financial crisis by the time they seek support and are resorting back to old energy behaviours of self-isolation or rationing of supplies. Energy Efficiency Advice, Income Maximisation, debt provision, and access to food and fuel banks are highly sought.

It’s also been identified that these vulnerable households are unaware/unsure of support services through utility providers such as Priority Service Register, free Gas Safety Checks, Warm Home Discount and for existing households on the gas network, there is a lack of awareness around gas appliance servicing and CO awareness due to the financial challenges they face or the way the household is living, particularly with hoarders and older people.

With the impacts of the energy crisis and the increase in demand from fuel poor households to have affordable heat, Warmworks have identified a gap in the provision of a wraparound service for fuel poor households and is assessing the need for a permanent Aftercare service. The service will focus on taking a proactive approach contacting those households identified as most at risk, providing energy safeguarding, Co awareness and access to other support services to help prevent future debt issues in the one of the top areas in SGN’s Vulnerability Index.

3 Scope and objectives

Warmworks will provide support to over 6000 fuel poor households this year under Warmer Homes Scotland and in partnership with SGN will pilot over a 15-month period a new dedicated Aftercare service for the **Central Belt Area of Scotland** (Greater Glasgow, Ayrshire, Falkirk, Edinburgh, Lothian, and Fife) to support 300

vulnerable households with post energy safeguarding and CO awareness. This service will be mainly telephony based with referrals coming from Warmworks enquiry service and vulnerable households identified from home visits where they are struggling to afford to heat their homes.

The service will support vulnerable customers over a period of 15 months predominately focusing on in-depth energy usage and advice combined with CO awareness as well as support to help them understand the following

- their energy usage patterns and how to use their energy efficiently/affordably - improving their energy behaviours
- their heating type/ best tariff and understand their bills, advising on suitable payment methods and where required refer to HES to support with energy supplier concerns
- a good understanding of the operation of heating controls and system advice to ensure they get the best out of their new heating system
- water efficiency advice and access to water saving packs from HES
- benefits of joining Priority Service Register (energy and water), ensuring they know about emergency energy provisions specific to needs of the household
- how to identify CO, report a gas emergency and where required installation of a CO detector
- fire safety and referrals for Fire and CO safety checks through G-Heat Glasgow, Scottish Fire and Rescue to help keep them safe in the home

Customers will also have access to the following support services helping them access funding schemes, energy debt and income maximisation

- referrals to emergency food bank/fuel bank
- referrals to Warm Home Discount scheme
- Social Service referrals to support with welfare
- Locking Cooker Valve referrals where required
- Access to energy redress hardship fund to support with energy debt
- HES referrals for other support services not covered in role : eg income maximisation, home visits, and access to local schemes

The Aftercare specialist will also be responsible for contacting customers for additional anecdotal feedback on the service provision and the impact of energy efficiency advice and measures on their energy bills and general thermal comfort.

4 Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

This Aftercare Service Pilot is not funded under any external funding sources and we are partnering with Warmworks under VCMA as this project provides energy safeguarding to consumers in vulnerable situations, providing awareness of CO and has a positive Social Return on Investment.

We believe that such a service is crucial to prevent future debt situations for even greater volumes of vulnerable households and will add considerable value to the lives of many vulnerable people.

5 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

Feedback and Insight Team – Warmworks

Warmworks have an established Feedback & Insight team that support customer feedback & complaints. Through the team's trend analysis, it was recognised that customers with new fuel types were

returning to Warmworks looking for additional support around 12-24 weeks after the installation had been completed.

To understand further the requirements 116 customers were contacted who'd contacted us and gathered feedback on areas that they required more support in.

The sample of data highlighted the main points:

- Customers receiving their first bills for a new fuel didn't fully understand the detail involved or how to check that they were on the best tariff advising of concerns around affordability on low incomes
- Customers had been shown how to use their heating system at inspection, but due to other factors; seasonal change; change of household makeup, they needed more support to use controls and understand how to get maximise the new systems potential, as they were finding their energy bills increasing
- Customers required access to further energy efficiency advice and billing services
- Very little understanding of CO alarms and the importance of them when switching to gas
- Very little understanding of additional support services from utility providers

From the analysis it was recognised that customers would benefit from an aftercare service, which Warmworks couldn't offer as this service was not funded.

5.1 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 to 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 vulnerable customers with access to affordable energy.

5.2 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 we work with established organisations 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.

6 Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria

6.1 Outcomes

A minimum of 300 vulnerable customers supported through Aftercare service in partnership with Warmworks who will foster trust and accountability through robust, transparent reporting that outlines the successes against expected outcomes.

Warmworks will commit to one case study every six months highlighting the positive impact on the lives of customers who been supported in addition to detailed monthly reporting using SGN template and quarterly reporting outlining:

- Number of households receiving assistance
- Support provided to households broken down into categories as per SGN reporting template monthly
 - installation of CO detectors and CO awareness advice
 - energy efficiency advice – behavioural
 - best tariff advice for their heating installation
 - water efficiency and allocation of packs through Home Energy Scotland
 - Priority Service Register (energy and water)
 - Warm Home Discount
 - access to emergency food bank

- access to fuel bank
- Social Service referrals to support with welfare
- Locking Cooker Valve referrals where required
- Access to hardship fund to support with energy debt
- HES referrals for other support services not covered in role

Other outcomes provided

- Average annual fuel savings of measures installed as a result of fund intervention
- Outcome of Aftercare Service and impact on households

6.2 Success Criteria

Customers supported through this project will be more confident in managing their energy usage within their home, preventing future fuel debt situations and improved thermal comfort in their homes,

Key outcomes we expect to deliver through the project

- >95% of customers reporting they are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the service provided by Aftercare and are more confident in managing their energy usage.
- 100% of customers increased understanding of gas safety awareness and the risks of carbon monoxide with customer satisfaction scores above 9.0 aiming for 9.5
- 100% of customers aware of the PSR and how to manage in an energy emergency and increased registration helping improve PSR database developed through existing relationships with District Network Operators i.e. SPEN, SSEN and with Scottish Water (60% take up rate as advised via SGN)
- 100% of customers made aware of WHD, with all households eligible for this additional support on their fuel bills, we assume around 50% will be referred as most FP households will qualify
- Considerable carbon savings and energy bill reductions facilitated by energy saving improvements combined with post-installation energy advice and aftercare support provided by our dedicated aftercare function (where energy prices are increasing energy reduction may not be achievable for all customers)
- 100% of customers aware of water efficiency and have access to water efficiency packs referred through to Home Energy Scotland
- 50% of fuel poor households have access to emergency food bank/fuel bank vouchers providing short term support from these essential services
- Helping dementia or autistic children stay safe in their homes for longer by referring customers for Locking Cooker Valve referrals where required
- 50% of customers helped to clear their energy debts accessing energy redress fund
- Referring customers for home visits and income maximisation through partnerships with HES
- Access to Social Service referrals to support with welfare

7 Project partners and third parties involved

Providing affordable warmth to those who need it most requires the input of many different partners and agencies and as such, stakeholder engagement is also a key element of our delivery model.

Some of the new and existing partners we've been proud to work with in the past year include:

- Home Energy Scotland
- Language Line
- Care & Repair
- Life pod
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Scottish Water
- The Wise Group
- Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN)

- Trussell Trust, local food banks
- The Fuel bank Foundation

8 Potential for new learning

Through ongoing monitoring of the impact of this Aftercare project we will produce insights and an annual evaluation report that will provide insights into; barriers faced, effective engagement, and the impact of monitoring consumer behaviours to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably.

The proposed Aftercare function will be dedicated to collating feedback from customers on a wide range of areas, including

- Typical energy usage
- Water usage
- Gas safety/carbon monoxide awareness
- Impact on energy bills
- Debt management
- Income Maximisation
- Welfare Impact – improved health, PSR registrations etc

Workshops will be held with SGN and other key partners that may benefit from the learnings gathered, to discuss findings and drive improved sharing and flows of information.

The data and information collected from the project activities will be collated and analysed to create a post-project report with findings and recommendations, and to show the real difference that has been made.

This project report will be published and disseminated to project partners, and relevant members and stakeholders in the sector through the VCMA showcase and the Annual Report.

9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations

Social Value Measurement

Working with leading social impact research consultancy Simetrica we 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 net SROI.

*SROI provided separately

10 VCMA Project start and end date

March 2022 to June 2023

11 Geographic area

Central belt area of Scotland

12 Approval

Rob Gray - Director of Stakeholder Relations and Communications