



Supporting vulnerable customers to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably



**Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance**  
Annual Report 2022



Contents

This is the first year of the new Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) funding mechanism for Britain’s four gas networks.

How to use this report

Over the following pages, you’ll gain a deeper insight into some of the programmes we’ve established at SGN to deliver our ambition of supporting at least 50,000 vulnerable customers to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably this year, and the tremendous outcomes we’ve achieved with our partners during the first 12 months of this regulatory period.

This report is one of two VCMA reports we publish on our website each year. For information about the VCMA governance, please [visit Ofgem’s website](#).

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# Our story

**Customers at the heart of everything**  
Thanks to our colleagues' unwavering dedication to putting our customers first and delivering a 10/10 service, we've been named Britain's number one gas network for customer satisfaction for the sixth year running.





# Our customer commitment

At SGN, we manage the network that distributes natural and green gas to 5.9 million homes and businesses across Scotland and the south of England. We serve our communities by keeping everyone safe and warm.

Between 2021 and 2026, we've committed to supporting 250,000 vulnerable customers to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably.

With input from our stakeholders and expert steering group, we've developed a comprehensive strategy and delivery plan to enable us to effectively implement the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) to provide tailored and targeted help to households who would struggle to maintain a safe and warm home.

We've been allocated £16.3 million to spend on projects which can support vulnerable customers or raise awareness of carbon monoxide (CO) over the next five years. We can spend 75% of the funding on initiatives in our network areas and the other 25% on collaborative projects with Britain's other gas networks.

Through partnership and the steadfast dedication of our people, we will make a lasting difference in the communities we serve.

This report details the progress we've made so far, in the first year of Ofgem's RIIO-GD2 price control period 2021-26.



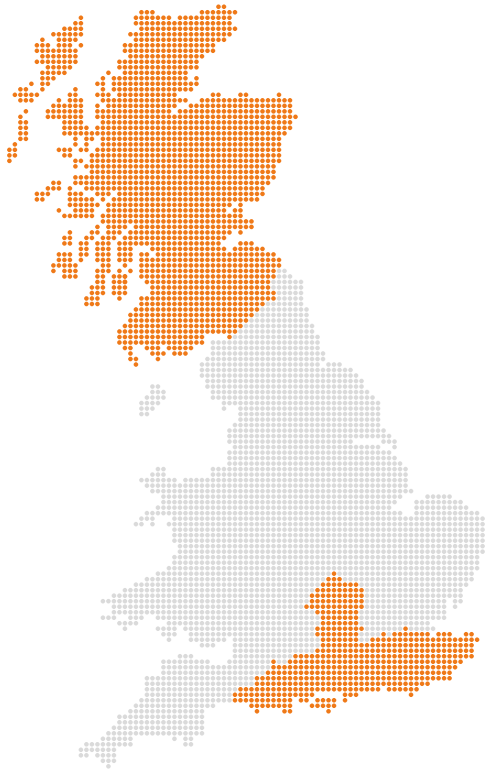
## Where we operate

### Scotland

Our Scotland network distributes gas to 75% of households in Scotland, serving around 1.8 million homes and businesses across the country.

### Southern England

Our Southern network stretches from Milton Keynes in the north to Dover in the east and Lyme Regis in the west, including London boroughs to the south of the River Thames. We distribute gas to 4.1 million customers, which is around 90% of households in the region.



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## First year highlights

Marking six years as Britain's <b>number one</b> gas network	Establishing our <b>industry-first</b> specialist steering group	Celebrating <b>award-winning</b> collaboration	Delivering a minimum of <b>£3.6 million</b> of social value
↓ We've gone above and beyond to be the number one gas network for customer satisfaction for the sixth year running	↓ Our Vulnerability and CO Steering Group ensures we're best supporting those who need a helping hand to stay safe and warm at home	↓ We won the Customer Vulnerability Award at the Utility Week Awards 2021 for our collaborative Home and Well project	↓ We've provided 86,017 unique support services, either directly or through 28 VCMA-funded community partnerships
Providing <b>inclusive and accessible</b> services	Identifying <b>11,730</b> customers in need of help	Supporting <b>52,139</b> vulnerable households	Educating <b>10,276,157</b> households on CO safety
↓ We've retained our BSI certification for inclusive and accessible support services (BS 18477) for the third year	↓ Our Careline team supported 11,730 vulnerable households, including 4,098 referred by frontline engineers – a 585% increase on last year	↓ We've exceeded our year one target of helping 50,000 households to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably	↓ Working with our strategic partners, we've raised awareness of carbon monoxide (CO) through our extensive range of VCMA projects



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# Strategy into delivery

**Raising CO awareness**

We've initiated a nationwide programme with The Scout Association, on behalf of all the gas networks, to co-develop CO awareness activities for young people.





Our strategy

Our customers are at the heart of all we do and delivering award-winning customer service is in our DNA. We're passionate about supporting the most vulnerable members of our communities to maintain a safe and warm home.

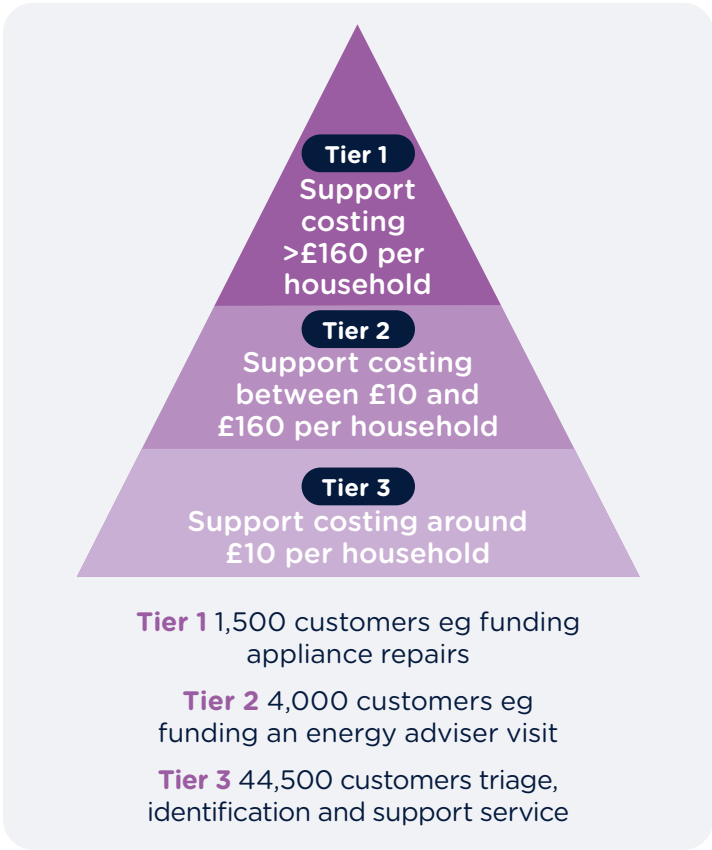
Our people believe in taking the very best care of all our customers and this is reflected in our industry-leading customer satisfaction scores. This year, for the sixth year running, we've been named **Britain's number one gas network for customer satisfaction**. It's thanks to the unwavering dedication of our colleagues to go above and beyond to deliver a 10/10 service that we've retained this position during the first year of the new Ofgem price control.

When it comes to supporting households in vulnerable circumstances, we have a bold ambition for RIIO-GD2. **We promise to help 250,000 vulnerable customers to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably** over the course of the five-year price control period. This vision stems from our overarching RIIO-GD2 business plan, which is built on three priorities and brought to life through three customer commitments:

- We will make a positive impact on society, by supporting vulnerable communities and providing excellent service
- We will deliver a safe and efficient service by acting safely, keeping the gas flowing and keeping costs down
- We will build a shared net-zero future by accelerating decarbonised energy solutions and minimising our environmental impact.

To make a positive impact on society, we'll target our support for vulnerable communities using our pyramid framework, which we co-created with stakeholders. The three-tier framework sets out the different levels of help and how many customers we'll aim to help each

year within each tier. By adopting this pyramid framework, we're able to concentrate our activity to provide deeper levels of support to those who need it most.



Our pyramid framework enables a tiered cost-to-serve approach to support.

Through the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) funding, we have an incredible opportunity to make lasting, positive

change to the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Our support can go far beyond just keeping people safe and warm at home. We can be part of a holistic solution in collaboration with expert partners, as it's through collaboration and partnership that we can share learning and deliver greater outcomes to help more people.

We bring expertise in energy safeguarding and our ever-growing network allows other gaps in care to be addressed, such as wellbeing services and long-term financial resilience. Together, we can help in transforming how vulnerable households live now and into the future. We can be an active contributor to healthier and safer communities, and help break long-embedded cycles of fuel poverty.

With the potential to help so many people during RIIO-GD2, we have a huge responsibility to get our approach right. That's why, in a first for the energy industry, **we created our specialist Vulnerability and CO Steering Group** to guide how we use the VCMA funding and ensure the support we provide is delivering genuine and valuable impact to those most in need of help to stay safe and warm at home.

Our Vulnerability and CO Steering Group consists of 10 experts in consumer vulnerability and gas safety representing organisations.

Since August 2020, we have worked together to develop our understanding of the evolving needs of vulnerable communities and to determine and prioritise which groups could most benefit from energy industry initiatives.

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The group provides governance of the allowance, raises awareness of other funding mechanisms and gaps, challenges our programme design processes, and, crucially, shares direct, real-time customer insight that enables us to adapt quickly to ever-evolving customer need. They help us stay close to what's really happening in the communities we serve, so our help reaches those who need it most, when they need it most. The group shares our ambition and is fully invested in supporting us to help at least 50,000 vulnerable customers to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably each year.

Our strategic principles

Our vulnerability strategy is centred around five principles, which are regularly reviewed by our Vulnerability and CO Steering Group and have received approval from our Executive committee and Customer Engagement Group:

- We will understand and target harder-to-reach or underrepresented individuals
- We will prioritise according to need, with a higher focus on provision during the winter – taking into consideration the relative levels of need across our Scotland and Southern networks
- We will focus on our first interaction with customers to identify those in vulnerable circumstances
- We will provide a flexible service according to need, working with partners to provide access to appropriate support to maintain a safe and warm home
- We will research best practice and update our approach regularly.



Our strategy (cont)

Adapting to the unexpected

Our agile strategy and embedded stakeholder steering group provide us with a framework to guide our vulnerability and carbon monoxide awareness activity, while still allowing us to adapt to ensure we’re best supporting vulnerable households as time progresses. Our systematic approach to listening to customers and stakeholders is critical to enabling us to react to the ever-changing needs of our customers, as well as the evolving world we live in.

In the first year of RIIO-GD2, our customers faced ongoing hardship from the Covid-19 pandemic in addition to the rapidly escalating energy and cost of living crisis. Our partner Citizens Advice Scotland completed early research this year and found that 8 in 10 people in Scotland are worried about the impact of rising bills. In addition, 1 in 3 people are already finding bills unaffordable and 500,000 households are dealing with this by cutting back on food to manage.

Through engagement with key stakeholders, including through our Supporting Vulnerable Customers Digital workshop, our internal ‘Adapting to Covid-19’ survey of our frontline engineers and our Vulnerability and CO Steering Group, we have reassessed our delivery programme to ensure our support is most appropriate for customer need at this time.



“The SGN team has committed to ensuring their decisions are made transparently. They’ve demonstrated a collaborative approach, openly working alongside our experts and their partners to share learning and build a common foundation of value measurement for stakeholders and potential partners.”

Omar Clarke  
Sia Partners

Expert insight from our Vulnerability and CO Steering Group has identified the groups in greatest need and we’ve shared this learning with the other gas distribution networks (GDNs) to underpin new collaborative projects. We’ve been in the position to forge and lead strategic national partnerships with Citizens Advice and Fuel Bank Foundation, uniting our fellow gas networks, to build the capacity and capability of these key organisations to respond to unprecedented demand from communities in economic hardship.

For example, we’ve led the creation of a new collaborative energy safeguarding programme with Citizens Advice to ensure the organisation can continue to meet the unprecedented demand for specialist one-to-one energy advice from people up and down the country.

In addition, we initiated a £500,000 collective contribution from Britain’s four gas networks to the Fuel Bank Foundation over two years to support households in a fuel crisis. The money is being used to provide same or next-day emergency financial support to people struggling to top up their prepayment gas and/or electricity meters. We also invited regional electricity networks (DNOs) to join our initiative, allowing them to provide much-needed support to the Fuel Bank Foundation while minimising the administrative impact on the charitable organisation. Three DNOs are participating in our project, contributing an additional £75,000.

Full information about these partnerships, as well as in-depth case studies, can be found in the collaborative report – Gas Distribution Networks Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Annual Collaborative Report (2021-22) – available on our website.

Measuring impact

We understand our trusted position to use the VCMA funding responsibly and effectively to support customers in vulnerable situations and address CO safety issues. Robust and resilient measurement is fundamental to our strategy. It’s our ambition to make data-driven decisions when co-designing partnerships to ensure we provide enduring benefits to those in our communities who face the greatest barriers to maintaining a safe and warm home.

By considering programme measurement from the outset, we can make informed decisions about how to have the greatest impact on the households we aim to help. It means the actions we’re taking provide the greatest financial and societal benefits relative to cost – which is vitally important in the current climate.

In recent years, we’ve built our in-house expertise around measurement with support from the expert consultancy Sia Partners. This has guided us in our decision-making with programme partners, helping us achieve more effective pre-assessment and co-design. Our enhanced in-house expertise now enables us to carry out non-complex, small-scale Social Return on Investment (SROI) assessments ourselves without needing to secure additional advisers for this activity.

We’ve also worked with GDNs and DNOs to share best practice and, in particular, better understand social return on investment (SROI) across the industry. We’ve built on the DNO SROI tool to add SGN-specific proxy values, which we’ve shared openly with GDNs and DNOs. This has enabled a common way of working for our regional partnerships, where we work in partnership with the relevant local DNOs and water companies and complete the measurement of SROI together. Through sharing best practice, we’ve been able to bring consistency while enabling regional variations to ensure relevant measurement.

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In addition, we’re looking at the measurement of activity once our partners start reporting on delivery. We also use the Simetrica Social Value Bank tool to assess the financial benefits of key outcomes, such as the monetary savings from supporting vulnerable customers, but also health and wellbeing benefits, such as customers feeling part of a community following them receiving in-depth support. This assessment allows us to monitor real-time and ongoing programme progress against outcomes across all partners.

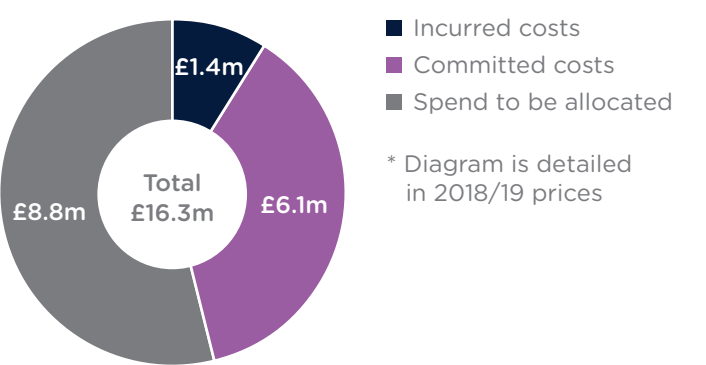
Look out for Simetrica Social Value Bank measurements in each of our partner case studies on page 18 onwards.

Funding update

Ofgem has allocated us £16.3 million to spend on VCMA initiatives with at least 25% on collaborative projects with the other GDNs. The allowance is set in 2018/19 prices, so when annual inflation is applied using CPIH that equates to around £18 million. CPIH is the CPI inflation index that has been agreed by Ofgem as the point of reference for the RIIO-GD2 price control period.

The funding is available for us to use over the five-year period ending on 31 March 2026.

Details of this year’s expenditure on projects specific to our network areas as well as our collaborative projects can be found in the Project summary section on pages 15 and 16.





Strategy shaped by experts

Our independent Vulnerability and CO Steering Group is chaired by Christine Tate, who has over 30 years’ experience in the energy industry.

Christine is the Director of Partnerships for Good, supporting commercial, public sector and not-for-profit organisations cultivate effective strategies and partnerships to engage vulnerable customers across the UK.

I was extremely pleased to be invited to be Chair of SGN’s Vulnerability and CO Steering Group (VSG) in 2020, as we approached the RIIO-GD2 network price control period.

SGN continued to be strongly committed to providing additional services for customers in vulnerable circumstances, building on the provisions and learnings from RIIO-GD1. In developing its RIIO-GD2 business plan and subsequent vulnerability strategy, the aim was to ensure services are readily accessible and delivering the best outcomes for these customers.

I worked with the SGN senior team to recruit the VSG. These experts all have specialist knowledge and experience and represent a range of vulnerable groups needing support to stay safe and warm in their home. You’ll hear more from four VSG members on the next page of the report.

The VSG provide oversight, guidance and governance on the analysis, options and decisions taken by SGN, ensuring best value and SROI on the VCMA allowance.

We quickly bonded together as an advisory group, working with the SGN team to agree the strategic building blocks for our group sessions, from mapping vulnerability and regional needs, establishing key priorities to tackle and identifying GD2 partners and programmes.

When the VSG came together, we never imagined what was in store, the pandemic and its aftermath, the energy and cost of living crisis and the impacts that they are having. There has been an unprecedented increase in the medically vulnerable, disability, financial vulnerability, stress-related and mental health illnesses. There has never been a more critical

time for the VSG to bring their expertise throughout these rapid changes to support the work of SGN.

Throughout, we have followed a robust method of working. SGN presents options and the challenges on each agreed area of focus, as pre-read to the next session. The group then work together, providing relevant insights. Collectively we provide steer for the best approach and the go-ahead for delivery.

One of our guiding principles has been determining the ‘best fit’ partners to work with us to support the customer groups who we have identified as at the greatest risk to using energy safely, efficiently and affordably.

Once determined, SGN reach out to the partner aligned to the customer group and invite them to co-design and deliver a strategy and programme that effectively targets and supports.

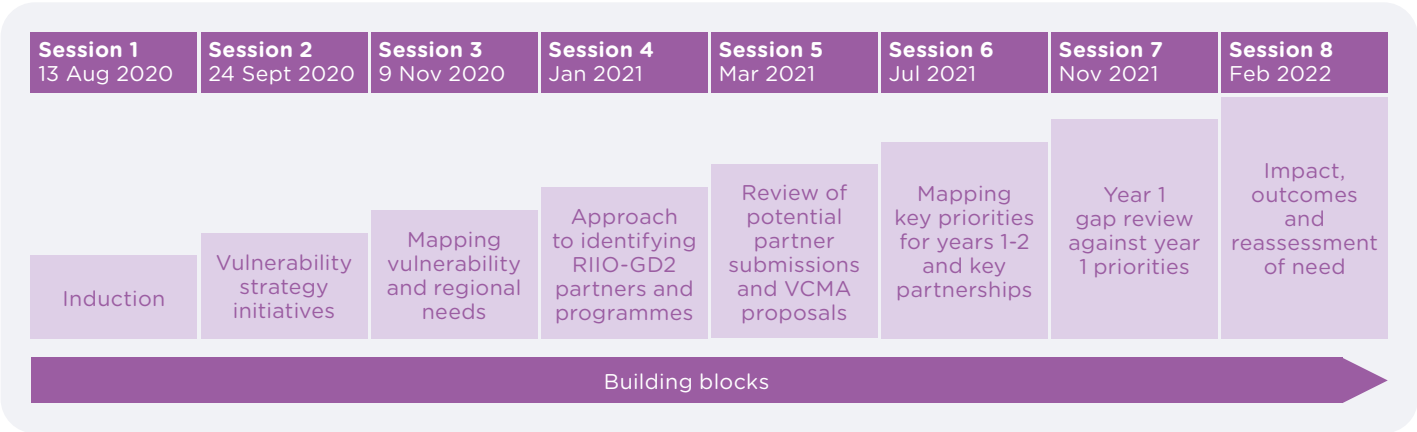
Our philosophy has always been bringing together the right partners, programmes and resources for the biggest impacts and sharing of best practice.

Taking a measured approach to expenditure in year one, as projects begin to get off the ground, is helping ensure the full VCMA allowance will be spent in a manner that maximises benefit and reach across the five years of RIIO-GD2.

Christine

**Christine Tate**  
Vulnerability and CO Steering Group Chair

Strategic building blocks - from business plan to delivery



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## Meet our Vulnerability and CO Steering Group

- Christine Tate**  
Vulnerability and CO Steering Group Chair
- Fiona Small**  
Founder and CEO  
Young Mums Support Network
- John Downie**  
Consultant  
National Deaf Children’s Society
- Joel Lewis**  
Consumer Policy Manager  
Age UK
- Lee Healy**  
Managing Director  
Income Max
- Dr Lucy McTernan**  
Former Acting CEO  
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
- Matt Copeland**  
Head of Policy and Public Affairs  
National Energy Action (NEA)
- Sam Mills**  
Head of Energy  
Changeworks
- Scott Darroch**  
Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement  
Gas Safe Register
- Rose Ann O’Shea**  
Independent Consultant  
NHS

The Vulnerability and CO Steering Group works alongside the SGN Customer Experience leadership team: Maureen McIntosh, Kerry Potter and Linda Spence.



From top:  
Fiona, Lee, Lucy, Scott.



**Fiona Small**

“I founded the Young Mums Support Network back in 2011 to help marginalised young mothers with issues such as personal barriers to returning to work, blended families and being a single parent.

Being part of the VSG, and using my knowledge and insight to highlight the needs of young families, to offer practical ways on how best to engage, what works, and who we should work with to make the most impact has been an absolute pleasure.

The initiatives SGN has developed to reduce financial stress can make a huge difference to mums’ lives and has a positive impact on physical and mental health and wellbeing. It not only helps mums but also helps children, schools and the wider community.”



**Lee Healy**

“My focus is always on helping organisations to explore what customers are ‘vulnerable to’ and I was delighted at how SGN really took that concept and ran with it.

Working alongside my fellow VSG members and the SGN team was a real privilege and I always felt like together, there was a tremendous shared passion to help as many people as possible, in the best ways possible.

The VSG as developed by SGN is a model of good practice for any organisation looking to support vulnerable customers in the right, and most impactful ways.”

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**Lucy McTernan**

“Years working with grant-givers and charities has shown me how important it is to maximise the impact of every pound. The best way to do this is, right from the start, to collaborate with organisations already on the ground working with communities and families to benefit from their experience of what works. The partnership and co-design approach adopted by SGN to address vulnerability builds on this.

Similarly, it is important to target resources where they are most needed, and the VSG advised an evidence-driven approach, applying a combination of operational and social data to direct funds where they’ll really make a difference.”



**Scott Darroch**

“I have been delighted to support the work of SGN in reaching and supporting vulnerable customers, as my input is genuinely valued and acted on. The insight I’ve shared around reducing CO harm has shaped the delivery programme across SGN’s entire portfolio of VCMA projects, not just its CO-specific activity.

While it has been gratifying to hear that the experiences of Gas Safe Register in campaigning, communicating, and influencing have been valuable to SGN, it is important to note that the learning has been two-way – we have also learned a great deal about how we track impact and focus resources.

The end result has been closer to a partnership, a coalition of like-minded people and organisations all working towards related goals.”



Delivery driven by our people

The whole team at SGN has an exceptionally strong commitment to caring for all our customers, especially those in vulnerable circumstances.

Our frontline engineers never want to walk away from a customer in need and this was a driving force behind the development of our additional services initiative back in 2019.

Previously, colleagues could refer customers in vulnerable situations for one of three support services to help them stay safe and warm at home. Through our annual frontline survey, operational roadshows and team briefings, it quickly became clear there was a strong desire to do more. Our colleagues wanted access to more services to respond to the different types of need they saw customers facing.

Using the first-hand experience of our professional teams and the expertise of our stakeholder partners, we've continuously invested in expanding our service offering over the past three years. We make sure that the referral networks we have and the services we provide are fit for the

changing needs of our customers. For example, our Mental Health UK pilot and our befriending scheme partnership was driven by colleagues reporting an increased need to support customers experiencing poor mental health, isolation and loneliness during the pandemic.

Our colleagues are now able to refer customers for more than 14 core support services, including energy efficiency advice, PSR registration and crisis funds for emergency appliance repairs.

As our range of services and partnerships has increased, so too has our people's drive to refer customers for support.

This past year has been exceptionally difficult for many of our most vulnerable customers. Just as we began to emerge from the burden of the pandemic, households were faced by new hardship – the rapidly escalating cost of living crisis.

In the first year of RIIO-GD2, we've supported 11,730 vulnerable households, including 4,098 customers who were referred by frontline engineers. That's a 585% increase in referrals from the previous year.

When our engineers identify a customer in need of support, they refer their customer to our Careline team within the Customer Experience department. As well as looking after customers identified by our teams on the ground, the dedicated Careline team also proactively identify customers who may need extra help to stay safe and warm during planned and emergency work on our network.

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Between our teams and our community partners, we've helped 52,139 households access 86,017 unique support services designed to keep customers safe, warm and independent in their homes.

Here at SGN, it's our great people who support customers to use energy efficiently, safely and affordably. On the next page of this report, I'm proud to introduce some of our team who have a leading role in supporting our colleagues to offer a much-valued helping hand to customers in need.



**Rob Gray**  
Director of Stakeholder Relations  
and Communications

Our teams take pride in looking after our customers, reflected in our PSR customer satisfaction score of 9.3/10





# Meet the people driving our delivery



**Polly Heyburn**  
Customer Experience Officer – Social Impact

Heading up a group of vulnerability champions across our business, Polly works to ensure our colleagues never walk away from a customer in need of extra help or in a time of crisis.

In spring 2021, Polly launched our internal ‘How you made the difference’ campaign, which celebrates colleagues who’ve referred customers for our additional services and the impact they’ve had on customers’ lives. This monthly campaign has resulted in a huge increase in the number of referrals from frontline teams, jumping 585% from 598 in 2020/21 to 4,098 referrals in 2021/22.

I hear the emotional and overwhelming situations our engineers are seeing when they’re in customers’ homes each and every day. But with our additional services, we’re able to make an incredible difference to customers’ lives. I’m proud to have inspired and empowered our teams to make that difference.



**Sarah Ogg**  
Careline Adviser

As part of our small Careline team within our Customer Experience department, Sarah is one of our specialist advisers with additional skills and training to provide extra help to customers who’ve been identified as vulnerable by our frontline teams.

This year, our Careline advisers have handled more than 11,000 vulnerable customer referrals from colleagues across our business. Sarah takes a lead role in training and coaching Customer Experience colleagues on ways in which we can tailor and support customers in vulnerable situations.

I love the satisfaction of dealing with a very complex case, where we’ve been able to access support from different partners and other organisations to help a customer with the challenges they’re facing.

Knowing we’ve made a genuine difference to that customer, whether it’s helping them with financial concerns or providing emotional support, that’s what matters to me.



**David Methley**  
First Call Operative

David is an emergency engineer, who responds to gas and carbon monoxide emergencies across South London. In the last 12 months, David has volunteered to become a vulnerability champion, piloting our new support services and sharing his experiences with colleagues to help build their confidence in helping customers in vulnerable situations.

To date, David has identified and referred 98 customers over to our Careline team for extra help, such as joining the Priority Services Register and essential appliance repairs via our Care and Repair scheme.

In years gone by, I wasn’t able to offer any extra support to customers I met who were in real need of help. I was uncomfortable and disappointed when I had to walk away.

With all these additional services now at our fingertips, it makes me feel proud to know I have the tools to do a great job for our customers.

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**Dan Edwards**  
Social Impact Programme Lead

Dan takes a lead role in the delivery of customer safety initiatives, bringing together our people to transform how they raise awareness and protect our customers against the dangers of carbon monoxide, as well as setting up new community initiatives and partnerships to ensure those most at risk of CO harm have access to solutions and services that work for them.

Dan is passionate about raising awareness of carbon monoxide and protecting not only our own customers and future customers, but people nationwide through his role as chair of the GDN CO Collaboration Group. This year, Dan was honoured for his dedication to CO awareness at Invest in Surrey’s ‘40 under 40 Business Awards’.

I’m proud to have pioneered insight-driven partnerships with Scouts, Citizens Advice and Bonanza Creative, as well as working with many regional fire and rescue services and community partners to reach high-risk groups and engage them on CO safety.

# Our approach to VCMA delivery

## Our approach

We know from our extensive stakeholder and customer engagement during RIIO-GD1 that some of the communities we serve need more help than others to use energy affordably, safely and efficiently.

Together with our Vulnerability and CO Steering Group, we co-developed our strategic priorities and first year’s delivery plan around three key areas:

1. Supporting priority vulnerability groups

National and regional support for seven priority groups, who are most likely in need of trusted help to maintain a safe and warm home.

[Click here for case studies on key area 1.](#)

2. Targeting regional communities most at risk

Targeted support for the most vulnerable geographical areas within our networks, identified by our Vulnerability Index data.

[Click here for case studies on key area 2.](#)

3. Reducing carbon monoxide (CO) harm

A data-driven approach to increase awareness and reduce the risk of carbon monoxide harm among those groups most at risk.

[Click here for case studies on key area 3.](#)

## Our three priority areas

These three areas were shaped by the group’s expertise combined with our vulnerability mapping tools, which consider industry insights and community-level data.

We have a rigorous assessment process to ensure the programmes and partnerships we develop will genuinely impact those who need it most. For us, it’s not about providing financial aid or grants to large numbers of organisations. Driven by our strategy, we’ve proactively targeted a select group of organisations to become our strategic partners for each area. By partnering with a leading support organisation for each area, we have an up-to-date understanding of the need of this community, as well as the prevalence of existing services and any funding gaps.

Before we started designing our programme, we fully assessed where we needed to target our activity. Working with potential partners, we then co-designed the predicted project outputs using the framework we created with stakeholders to determine whether the project will help us achieve our ambition and makes best use of the VCMA funding. This includes reviewing the predicted Social Return on Investment (SROI).

Completing a project assessment for all new initiatives ensures we co-design and co-develop tailored programmes that best meet the needs of the particular customer group. We build inclusion principles into our programmes ensuring that we have inclusive channel options, based on the partner’s knowledge of the most appropriate channels for the community, and remove barriers to accessing support from the outset.

→ In determining our programme partners, we’ve identified organisations who share our strategic ambition to support our key vulnerability groups and co-design programmes to enable us to collectively do so.

1. Supporting priority vulnerability groups

With guidance from our Vulnerability and CO Steering Group, **we identified seven groups with priority needs** who could benefit most from energy industry initiatives as they were most likely to need trusted support to access help and would be most impacted by living in a cold and unsafe home:

- Critically ill people
- Disabled people
- Financially vulnerable people
- Digitally and culturally excluded groups
- People with mental health conditions
- Older people
- Young people

Given the nature of need, these partnerships better lend themselves to national schemes, so we’ve developed collaborative partnerships with national charitable organisations, for example, Age Scotland and Scope.

As our strategic partners operate across multiple GDN footprints, **we openly invite the other gas networks to be involved in our partnerships**. Whether our fellow GDNs take

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part from the outset with the programme co-design or intend to get involved after our pilot, we share project design and learnings through our monthly joint-GDN vulnerability and CO working groups. We also share this information, where relevant, with other utility networks.

By working with strategic partners, we ensure **our priority vulnerability groups can access the support they need in the way that best works for them**. Our partners deliver tailored and practical help to reduce energy costs, as well as support to access benefits and initiatives designed to help vulnerable households maintain a safe and warm home.

National Charity Turn2us estimates there’s over £15 billion in unclaimed benefits and the most vulnerable members of our communities find it most difficult to access these funds. Our partners link these vulnerable households to unclaimed benefits, as well as helping them access local and national energy efficiency initiatives, and energy industry schemes such as the Priority Services Register and Warm Home Discount.

Partnership project	Critical illness	Disability	Financial vulnerability	Excluded groups	Mental health	Older people	Young people
Age Scotland/Age UK			✓	✓	✓	✓	
ALLIANCE Scotland	✓	✓	✓				
Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland			✓	✓	✓		
Fire and rescue services	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Fuel Bank Foundation			✓				
Mental Health UK			✓	✓		✓	
MyBnk			✓	✓			✓
NEA and Wise Group			✓	✓			
Scope	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Scouts				✓			✓



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2. Targeting regional communities most at risk

Using our Vulnerability and CO Steering Group’s experience and our vulnerability mapping tools created **in partnership with Energy Savings Trust (EST) we’ve developed our Vulnerability Index.** This data-driven approach allows us to identify communities in greatest need and most likely to need the support of their utility companies to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably.

The Vulnerability Index data is current and takes into consideration the impact Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis is having in the community, as well as longer-term social indicators such as age, deprivation and disability.

We also take into account regional differences within our Scotland and Southern networks that influence our approach to the assessment of need. For example, it was widely understood that **over 26% of households in Scotland were in fuel poverty (613,000) before the energy crisis.**

Scotland’s rate of fuel poverty is significantly higher than in the south-east of England, our other network area, where 8.6% of households were in fuel poverty – below the England national average of 13.2%. Yet within our Southern network, Hastings, Thanet and Rother are the most fuel poor districts in the South-East. In Hastings, over 20% of households are income deprived – the 14th most income-deprived area in England – and 26% of children are living in poverty.

**We always invite and partner with the regional utility networks on these projects to maximise the impact on customers** struggling to afford and benefit from the support linked to their essential services. This approach enables us to increase the outcomes for customers and, in most cases, increase funding too, which means we can deliver more help to those who need it.

We’ve mobilised projects in the top 10 most vulnerable areas in both our Scotland and Southern networks, delivering support to those in need.

Scotland areas of greatest need

1

**Glasgow City**  
Citizens Advice Scotland – Safe and Warm

2

**Inverclyde**  
The Wise Group – Warm and Safe Homes

3

**North, South and East Ayrshire**  
Citizens Advice Scotland – Safe and Warm

4

**West Dunbartonshire**  
ALLIANCE – Health and Social Care Alliance

5

**Dundee City**  
Citizens Advice Scotland – North-East Advisory Services

6

**North Lanarkshire**  
Citizens Advice Scotland – Safe and Warm

7

**Clackmannanshire**  
Citizens Advice Scotland – Safe and Warm

8

**Highlands (Inverness, Caithness, Wick and Thurso)**  
Changeworks – Highland Affordable Warmth

9

**Dumfries and Galloway**  
Citizens Advice Scotland – Safe and Warm

10

**West Lothian/East Lothian/Edinburgh/Borders/Midlothian/Fife**  
Changeworks – Affordable Warmth South-East



Southern areas of greatest need

1

**Thanet**  
Groundwork Kent

2

**Hastings**  
Citizens Advice – Tackling Fuel Poverty Together

3

**Isle of Wight**  
Citizens Advice – Home and Well

4

**Eastbourne**  
Citizens Advice – Tackling Fuel Poverty Together

5

**Southampton**  
Citizens Advice – Home and Well

6

**Rother**  
Citizens Advice – Tackling Fuel Poverty Together

7

**Folkstone, Hythe & Dover**  
Groundwork Kent

8

**Portsmouth**  
Citizens Advice – Home and Well

9

**Swale**  
Groundwork Kent

10

**Havant**  
Citizens Advice – Tackling Fuel Poverty Together





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3. Reducing carbon monoxide (CO) harm

In our business-wide carbon monoxide strategy for RIIO-GD2, we aim to reduce CO harm in our communities by:

- Responding quickly to those at risk of CO exposure to make sure that they are safe and supported with what to do next
- Providing appropriate safety solutions to those in a domestic setting least likely to access support without assistance
- Delivering tailored education and engagement programmes that empower, and increase understanding of the dangers and ways in which people can prevent harm to themselves and others.

We have developed a comprehensive delivery plan to help achieve this, which is built on the three pillars of our strategy.

It begins with ensuring we’re providing additional support to households who don’t have the funds to arrange for a Gas Safe registered engineer to restore their supply following a gas or CO emergency. **Our Care and Repair scheme ensures vulnerable households are not left without a gas supply** if we’ve had to disconnect their supply for their safety. If a customer is unable to afford a Gas Safe registered engineer visit or is unable to arrange the visit, we can help. We’ll fund the cost of the initial survey of the work required to restore their supply, as well as any testing, repairs or servicing, and where appropriate any replacement appliances or pipework.

Beyond enhancing our emergency response to reduce CO harm, we’ve also developed several core partnerships and campaigns, both national and regional, which are targeted at communities most at risk of harm from carbon monoxide.



Our British Sign Language videos help deaf and hard of hearing customers protect themselves from CO harm.



Our engineers reduce CO harm in our communities by quickly responding to emergencies and educating customers on appropriate safety solutions.

These proactive partnerships and campaigns aim to raise awareness and educate people about the dangers of CO, as well as provide CO safety devices tailored to customer need.

It’s important we make vulnerable groups aware of the appropriate CO safety solutions that are available for their specific need. We provide free accessible alarms for people who are deaf, blind or living with a cognitive disability, and we supply these alarms to our partners to distribute and install too. We’ve committed 16,586 audible CO alarms, 950 wireless interlinked hearing-impaired CO alarms and 600 verbal combined CO and smoke alarms to our partners and our Careline team in our first year’s delivery plan.

While we have these CO-specific campaigns and partnerships, **carbon monoxide awareness is embedded in all our programmes**. We know through research there is a link between financial vulnerability and the risk of CO exposure, so when we co-design any programme to support vulnerable households, we look to ensure our partners have the training to identify the signs of carbon monoxide and know how to protect against the silent killer.

For this reason, where relevant, we’ll report key CO-related outcomes for all our VCMA projects, not just our CO-specific programmes.

Measuring our CO activity

Through our own efforts, combined with our partner and collaborative GDN projects, we estimate that **we’ve reached 10,276,157 customers in our network area with our CO awareness raising activities** this year. However, this figure includes an assumed retention rate of 24% when measuring customers taking action from print campaigns.

We have chosen to report solely on the number of households we can robustly evidence as being reached by our CO awareness raising activity. Where quantifiable data is not available, eg in billboard and poster campaigns where reach is calculated by footfall, we’ve applied a more conservative retention rate of 1%.

Applying this approach, **we’re proud to report we’ve effectively engaged at least 844,081 customers within our network area with our CO awareness raising activity** this year.

This year we’ve facilitated 16,535 CO awareness sessions to educate households on how to keep safe from CO harm. In Scotland, our customers’ baseline awareness is higher due to recent legislation changes around CO alarms. The overall impact of our sessions is still significant as we’ve seen the self assessment scores move from 8.26 to 9.34, well above the industry mean.

Customers in our Southern region are less aware of the risks linked to carbon monoxide. However, with partner and direct conversations we’ve increased CO awareness by 38%.

By tracking the quality of our CO awareness sessions through the GDN common survey, we can evidence the valuable impact taking time with people can have in keeping our customers safe.

CO safety awareness sessions	Scotland	Southern
Number of CO awareness surveys	714	2,877
Average score before awareness visit	8.26/10	6.41/10
Average score after CO awareness visit	9.34/10	8.86/10
Average % increase	13%	38%



Project summary

We’re proud to have nine collaborative projects up and running in this first year of RIIO-GD2, in addition to our 19 regional VCMA projects.

You’ll find all the collaborative projects listed here, followed by a list of all our own projects and key programme details. There’s a link from each project through to the Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA) on our website.

We’ve included full details of all our year one project outcomes, challenges, learnings and achievements in our report appendix at the end of this document.

All £ values within the following tables and report appendix are expressed in 2021-22 values.

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Part 1 – Collaborative GDN projects

Lead partner organisation	Lead GDN	Project	Priority need group	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI**	Total SGN committed cost	Status
Bonanza Creative*	SGN	CO awareness in schools	Young people	National	2022	£1.56	£21,261	On track
Citizens Advice (England and Wales)	SGN	Energy and CO Advice	Financially vulnerable	England and Wales	2022-23	£1.81	£365,604	Exceeding target
Fuel Bank Foundation	SGN	Fuel crisis support	Financially vulnerable	National	2022-24	£5.95	£135,355	On track
IPIP	Cadent	CO in pregnancy research study	Pregnant women	National	2021-23	TBC	£67,670	Delayed
JSSeven	Cadent	Winter CO and PSR campaign	Vulnerable customers	National	2021-22	£39.30	£104,531	Complete
MyBnk	SGN	Financial inclusion and energy programme	Financially vulnerable	National	2022-25	£15.53	£102,058	Mobilising
Scope	SGN	Disability Energy Support (DES)	Disabled people	National	2022-24	£12.48	£64,970	Mobilising
Scouts	SGN	CO awareness programme	Young people	National	2021-24	£1.86	£124,713	On track
SP Energy Networks	SGN	PSR carbon monoxide pilot	Priority Services Register	Regional (England, Scotland and Wales)	2022	£13.18	£895	On track
						Average: £11.46	Total: £987,057	

\* See [Partner case studies](#) section for more information.

\*\* Forecast SROI (Social Return on Investment) indicates the anticipated amount of social value delivered for every £1 spent.

Ofgem has allowed the GDNs to spend £60m in total on VCMA projects with at least 25% (£15m) being spent on collaborative projects. The allowance is set in 2018/19 prices, so when annual inflation is applied using CPIH that equates to around £18m for collaborative projects. CPIH is the CPI inflation index that has been agreed by Ofgem as the point of reference for the RIIO-GD2 price control period.



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Project summary (cont)

Part 2 – SGN projects

Lead partner organisation	Project	Priority need group	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI	Total SGN committed cost	Status
Age Scotland*	<a href="#">Safe and warm homes</a>	Older people	Scotland	2021-24	£5.39	£300,782	Exceeding target
AgilityEco	<a href="#">Care and Repair</a>	Financially vulnerable	Scotland and Southern	2021	n/a	£50,000	Complete
ALLIANCE Scotland	<a href="#">Health and Social Care Alliance</a>	Critically ill people	Scotland	2022-23	£8.06	£108,011	Mobilising
Changeworks	<a href="#">Affordable Warmth Advocacy South-East</a>	At-risk regional community	Scotland	2022-24	£2.85	£126,806	On track
Changeworks*	<a href="#">Highland Affordable Warmth</a>	At-risk regional community	Scotland	2021-24	£1.88	£294,008	On track
Citizens Advice Hampshire*	<a href="#">Home and Well</a>	At-risk regional community	Hampshire and Isle of Wight	2021-24	£22.15	£100,000	On track
Citizens Advice – Sussex	<a href="#">Tackling fuel poverty together</a>	At-risk regional community	Sussex	2022-23	£1.81	£75,000	Exceeding target
Citizens Advice Scotland*	<a href="#">North-East Energy Advisory Services pilot</a>	At-risk regional community	Scotland	2021-22	£3.57	£89,886	On track
Citizens Advice Scotland	<a href="#">Safe and Warm Scotland</a>	At-risk regional community	Scotland	2022-24	£35.19	£1,082,554	Mobilising
Greener Kirkcaldy	<a href="#">Safe and Warm Fife</a>	At-risk regional community	Fife	2022-24	£10.04	£261,646	Mobilising
Groundwork London and Groundwork South of England*	<a href="#">Groundwork Kent</a>	At-risk regional community	Kent	2021-23	£1.90	£55,000	On track
Mental Health UK*	<a href="#">Mental Health UK adviser pilot</a>	People with mental health conditions	Scotland	2022	£1.62	£24,200	On track
MyBnk*	<a href="#">Young people financial education programme</a>	Young people	Scotland and Southern	2021-24	£16.45	£210,000	On track
National Energy Action (NEA)*	<a href="#">Empowered by Energy</a>	Refugees and asylum seekers	Scotland and Southern	2021-23	£5.50	£19,198	On track
National Energy Action (NEA) and Wise Group*	<a href="#">Warm and Safe Homes Advice service</a>	Financially vulnerable	Scotland and Southern	2021-22	£4.64	£92,741	Complete
Regional fire and rescue services and community partnerships*	<a href="#">Carbon monoxide community safety projects</a>	Vulnerable customers	Scotland and Southern	2021-26	£7.64	£991,110	Mobilising
Scope*	<a href="#">Disability Energy Support (DES)</a>	Disabled people	Scotland and Southern	2021-22	£13.21	£25,000	Complete
SGN and service partners	<a href="#">Extra care services</a>	Vulnerable customers	Scotland and Southern	2022-26	£4.53	£2,205,429	On track
SGN and Sia Partners	<a href="#">VCMA administration</a>	Vulnerable customers	Scotland and Southern	2021-26	n/a	£1,246,570	On track
Warmworks	<a href="#">Aftercare service</a>	Financially vulnerable	Scotland	2022-23	£5.53	£40,625	On track
					Average: £8.43	Total: £7,398,566	

\* See [Partner case studies](#) section for more information.

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# Partner case studies

**Keeping customers safe and warm through collaboration**  
The cost of living crisis is making it even more challenging for some of our most vulnerable customers to maintain a safe and warm home. Together with our partners, we're providing much-needed advice and support.

We'll use the following icons in each of our partner case studies to highlight key project markers and outcomes:



Strategy tier

The programme's tier within our cost-to-serve pyramid framework of support



Total households

How many households we've supported to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably



CO safety conversations

How many carbon monoxide safety conversations we've facilitated



SVB measurement

The programme's Simetrica Social Value Bank measure

You can find more information about our pyramid framework on [page 6](#) and the Simetrica Social Value Bank tool on [page 7](#).



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1.

Supporting priority vulnerability groups

Project: Safe and warm homes

ageScotland

Why we're working together

Many older people face unique challenges in managing a safe and warm home. Often older people need to consume more energy to keep warm and although they are eligible for several energy schemes, such as the Priority Services Register and Warm Home Discount, they're often not aware of these. Additionally, 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 exposed to carbon monoxide.

Our frontline engineers see first-hand the challenges faced by older members of our communities. These engineers told us they would value the skills to identify and engage older people, so they could provide a safe and trusted referral to partners with expertise in supporting this vulnerable group.

How we're working together

In partnership with Age Scotland, we've equipped 50 of our frontline colleagues so far with training and resources to refer individuals to the charity for direct, efficient help to the person in need. Age Scotland provides wrap-around support tailored to each household's personal circumstances through our funded specialist energy telephone and community advisory team within Age Scotland's broader helpline service. After a referral from us, customers can also receive general advice and friendship – benefitting them beyond their energy needs alone.

Partnership outcomes

The Age Scotland helpline has received record calls from older people seeking energy advice in the past year, prompted by the energy crisis.

Our partnership has enabled Age Scotland to employ two qualified energy rights employees who provide specialist energy advice to support people who call their helpline, as well as enabling seven generalist helpline advisers to provide more in-depth energy advice.

Together, we're providing free online energy workshops to enable older people to get a better understanding of their household energy use, helping them to stay warm and save money on their bills. Our workshops have been in demand since the challenging conditions in early 2022 and the partnership has encouraged additional funding from regional electricity network SSEN to expand these workshops further into specific parts of Scotland where digitally excluded people can now access this service.

Learnings

Inclusive channels options are key to engaging older people. The team at Age Scotland is experienced at connecting with older people and uses a variety of ways to provide much-needed advice on keeping a safe and warm home at this time. The team has also reported

Our joint letter to Age Scotland supporters helped thousands of households prepare for winter.

back to us that the community energy workshops are highlighting a knowledge gap on gas and CO safety.

This has reinforced that community-based awareness-raising sessions are a required and relevant method of engaging older people and we'll continue to hold more in-person community sessions in year two of our partnership.

In January 2022, Age Scotland analysed the insight captured through our energy advice helpline and community workshops to determine the impact of the energy and cost of living crisis on older people in Scotland. At the time of the research, 94% of people were already worried about their energy bills and that was before the energy price cap increased in April.

Strategy tier

3

Total households

19,561

CO safety conversations

1,471

SVB measurement

£497,763

Why we're working together

Part of our support includes increasing the householder's awareness of carbon monoxide and providing access to a CO alarm to be installed through an existing partnership we have with Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Keeping well in your home

Keeping well in your home is an important part of staying warm and safe. Age Scotland, the national charity for older people and their families, has teamed up with Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to help you stay safe in your home.

We have teamed up with Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to help you stay safe in your home. We have teamed up with Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to help you stay safe in your home.

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Our joint letter to Age Scotland supporters helped thousands of households prepare for winter.


This insight has been instrumental to our decisions around community and energy advisory support services into year two, as this affordability is driving the biggest gap in maintaining a safe and warm home.

With our Age Scotland partnership now well-established, we're in discussions with Age UK to expand our programme nationally in collaboration with the other gas networks. Age Scotland is also keen to learn from our partner organisations and they're trialling a referral service into Mental Health UK for older people who would benefit from mental health support.

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1.

Supporting priority vulnerability groups



Action for Warm Homes

Why we're working together

For people coming to Britain as refugees or asylum seekers, life is exceptionally challenging. Across the UK, refugees are disproportionately represented in unemployment statistics and they live in much of the poorest housing stock. These two factors alone result in a high risk of fuel poverty.

Our Empowered by Energy project aims to support refugee and asylum seeker communities in achieving warm and safe homes for their families by building energy skills and resilience via effective engagement and a network of support.

How we're working together

We are empowering refugees to understand the UK's energy system and save money, through a programme of interactive energy awareness sessions delivered by National Energy Action (NEA). We've teamed up with regional electricity network companies SSEN and SP Energy Networks to deliver this project across Scotland and the south of England, as through collaboration we're able to fund more workshops in areas with a greater representation of refugee groups.

By engaging key refugee and asylum support networks including Tamil Women's Group, Migrant Help UK and Scottish Refugee Council, we can identify communities to offer our workshops.

We've provided participants with an energy efficiency pack to supplement their learning, demonstrating immediate changes that can be made at home. These packs include energy-efficient products such as radiator foil, LED light bulbs, slow cookers and language appropriate supporting resources.

Partnership outcomes

So far, we've engaged 24 people within the refugee community through five face-to-face and online workshops, covering topics such as managing energy bills, carbon monoxide awareness and extra help schemes such as the Priority Services Register.

As a result, refugees and asylum seekers have increased confidence to take control and manage their home energy independently with 100% of participants who completed the feedback form stating they were "very satisfied" with the content of the workshops.

Although the number of people directly impacted through the project delivery may seem small, the complex needs of refugees and asylum seekers mean more in-depth support is required and shorter/lighter touch advice is not appropriate.

As participants are recruited to become energy champions within their community, NEA estimates – based upon previous outcomes from the pilot delivery – for every individual trained, this will indirectly impact a further 10 people to whom they can pass on advice and knowledge. Therefore, we estimate the number of indirect beneficiaries of the project to be approximately 240 people.

Learnings


Driven by the pandemic, the project has enabled NEA to trial an innovative online delivery approach, using Zoom as a mechanism for sharing information. Based on feedback from both attendees and project partners this approach has been received extremely positively, and NEA plans to incorporate digital delivery into other service delivery where appropriate.

However, we've identified a need to ensure we build in a familiarisation section in the first digital workshop as many participants are not familiar with digital platforms such as Zoom and Teams.


In addition, online workshops delivered with an interpreter for participants who speak limited or no English are most effective with 10 participants or less. We've found limiting the numbers ensures the workshops maintain the appropriate level of engagement and interaction.

When we were able to begin delivering our first face-to-face sessions after the pandemic, we merged the sessions into a full-day workshop. Running the session across a single day provided us with the opportunity to use a slow cooker – the type provided in our energy efficiency packs – to make a healthy lunch for participants. This real-time activity highlighted how participants can eat well and save money on energy, with each portion costing 87p.


Project: Empowered by Energy




Strategy tier



Total households




CO safety conversations



SVB measurement

1	24	24	TBC
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“Through Empowered by Energy, we have made a difference to people who have little or no experience of the energy markets in England and Scotland. They have gained knowledge which they are eager to share with their friends, families and the broader community. Without our support, they were unaware of how to help themselves and how to reach out for support.”

**Jo Boswell**  
Project Development Manager  
National Energy Action



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1. Supporting priority vulnerability groups

Mental Health UK

Mental Health & Money Advice

Why we're working together

There are approximately 7.5 million people in the UK living with a diagnosed mental illness. Pre-pandemic, it was estimated that one in four of us experience a mental health issue every year.

Research from the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute shows that people with poor mental health struggle to communicate effectively with their energy provider and most worryingly, 44% of adults with mental health problems who fell behind on a bill had considered taking their own life.

How we're working together

Our bespoke partnership with Mental Health UK is trialling the effectiveness of establishing a dedicated referral pathway for us and our partner organisations to a dedicated utility specialist within the Mental Health & Money Advice Service.

This service provides holistic advice and advocacy to customers living with poor mental health. Support is tailored to the needs of each customer to enable improved health, energy safeguarding, increased carbon monoxide awareness and financial resilience through debt management and income maximisation.

This partnership is also enabling us to upskill and expand the capabilities of our in-house Customer Experience team to support customers with mental health issues, through tailored training packages delivered by Mental Health UK.

The pilot programme is running for six months from March 2022 in our Scotland network.



“This partnership means we can expand our vital work and reach some of the most vulnerable individuals and families through a bespoke advisory service that understands the challenges faced by people with poor mental health.

We support customers to address energy costs, maximise income and resolve housing needs, making sure they have safe and warm homes in the difficult times that lie ahead.”

**Mandy Burrell**  
Service Manager for the Mental Health & Money Advice Service  
Mental Health UK

Project: Mental Health UK adviser pilot



Strategy tier	Total households	CO safety conversations	SVB measurement
1	Mobilisation in progress		



The Mental Health & Money Advice Service provides holistic advice to customers living with poor mental health.



Mental Health UK has trained 51 of our Customer Experience colleagues so far.

Partnership outcomes

So far, 51 of our Customer Experience colleagues have received mental health training and we've referred eight customers to the Mental Health & Money Advice Service.

From these referrals, our dedicated Mental Health & Money Advice Service adviser has supported six individuals through free online or telephone appointments.

Learnings

We've been openly sharing the development of our programme with Mental Health UK with our other strategic partners. Where these partners have a gap in skills and resources to support their own clients with mental health issues, we're able to link these organisations with Mental Health UK to provide that missing support, for example, Age Scotland.

We're also sharing the learnings from our trial project with the other GDNs to explore a further collaborative project to provide this support network throughout the UK.

## 1. Supporting priority vulnerability groups

## Project: Young people financial education programme



## Why we're working together

Many young people do not have the essential information, sources, or support networks in place to avoid poverty, including fuel poverty. According to Child Poverty Action Group, 4.2 million children were living in poverty in the UK in 2018-19. That's 30% of children. The relationship between poverty and fuel poverty is clear, with a lack of education surrounding these issues, the opportunity for change in the future seems distant.

Our partnership with financial education expert MyBnk delivers direct financial education to vulnerable young adults aged 16 to 25 to build financial resilience and avoid families becoming fuel poor in future. This includes supporting care leavers going into independent living for the first time.



“SGN is the perfect partner. You trust us to be experts where we are the experts, but still support us in the great way you can. It’s been a strong and refreshing partnership so far and above all, seeing the enthusiasm you have for the work we do at MyBnk and in The Money House has been really invigorating for us as well.”

**Guy Ridgen**  
Chief Executive  
MyBnk

## How we're working together

We're educating young people on how to manage their money to ensure they can maintain their homes and use energy efficiently when they live independently. The training takes place in a real-life flat - not a classroom setting - known as The Money House, where young people gain practical financial and digital skills to pay their rent, bills and living costs while making informed choices about their future.

Our partnership has enabled the expansion of The Money House from London to Glasgow, which is now home to the first Money House in Scotland.

We've also widened the scope of MyBnk's MoneyCast – an interactive stream of MyBnk experts and special guests discussing key areas of finance for young people. The episodes centre on money management related to energy, bills and fuel poverty, and provide the opportunity for young people to ask questions in real-time and receive a response from a MyBnk expert. Our SGN colleagues and our partner Citizens Advice have helped develop and featured on two episodes so far to share our expertise about gas and CO safety, as well as support schemes designed to help vulnerable households with utility costs.

## Partnership outcomes

We've delivered the five-day Money House course to 37 young people in Greenwich with 36 of them completing the course, well above the targeted average completion rate of 75%.

After successfully completing The Money House course, these 36 young people are now eligible for a Level 1 qualification in Personal Money Management and have received a further entry-level qualification around skills for employability.

Our two MoneyCast episodes received 171 views on YouTube by the end of March 2022 and will be further promoted by MyBnk in the months to come.

## Learnings

Young people, particularly those coming out of care and moving into independent living, are a typically hard-to-reach group and are more likely to find themselves financially vulnerable. The MyBnk programme has proved an effective way of engaging this demographic, by linking partners including local authorities and financial services organisations to provide a person-centred approach to equipping young people with skills for life.

We're sharing our experience of establishing the first Money House outside of London with Cadent, as they looking to extend the Money House service into Birmingham. This is another region where care leavers are in need of support and MyBnk could fulfil that requirement.



Strategy tier	Total households	CO safety conversations	SVB measurement
1 & 3	37 & 148	37	TBC



Thanks to The Money House,  
Emily has improved her financial  
confidence and resilience.



“I’m 18 and live in supported housing, I have disabilities and mental health issues. I’m doing this course so I can learn how to manage my money and prepare for when I get my flat. The Money House is kind of easing me into it, making me confident.

**“All young people should be taught about it as I think it would help all of them as not many of them are good with their money.”**

**Emily, 18**



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1.

Supporting priority vulnerability groups



Action for Warm Homes



wise group

Why we're working together

As we started RIIO-GD2, we understood just over four million UK households were living in fuel poverty. Due to unprecedented rises in the cost of energy into 2022, we forecast this number will more than double by the end of this year. This means people living in cold, often energy-inefficient, homes that they can't afford to heat. Access to crisis support, as well as accurate and accessible advice and information to help people remain warm in their homes is vital, particularly for people in vulnerable circumstances or struggling on a low income.

Our project partners, National Energy Action (NEA) launched their Warm and Safe Homes Advice Service (WASH) in September 2019 to provide a single point of contact for people on low incomes or living in vulnerable circumstances to address their energy issues and ensure a client is provided with holistic advice.

In RIIO-GD1, we supported the service and piloted a crisis fund for our customers. Our new initiative extends this existing pilot model, adding crisis funding and broadening the geographic areas covered by joining together with additional project partner Wise Group. The scope of services has increased to include gas safety information and, where needed, access to a free and potentially life-saving CO alarm.

How we're working together

Our teams can refer any customer who requires extra help to maintain a safe and warm home to the WASH service, where accredited fuel poverty energy advisers offer in-depth, personalised advice. This has included supporting 782 applications for Warm Homes Discount and registering 811 households for energy and water supplier PSRs. Those customers with more complex needs are triaged to dedicated caseworkers who've provided specialist support with resolving energy debt issues to 163 households.

The WASH team also connects households in utility debt with emergency funds – helping 888 households so far – and administers our customer crisis fund, which provides gap funding for customers who aren't eligible for other funding.

In addition to addressing current challenges, the ambition of the partnership is to build customers' confidence and skills, empowering customers to manage and take ownership of household utility consumption and costs – with the knowledge that a safety net is available to them should they need assistance in the future.

Partnership outcomes

We have supported 1,542 SGN customers in year one through referrals from our frontline engineers, direct promotion and community events in target areas. As Covid-19 restrictions lifted, we were able to deliver community workshops, 14 since January 2022, reaching 141 people who were worried about their energy costs.

Project: Warm and Safe Homes Advice Service



Strategy tier



Total households



CO safety conversations



SVB measurement

2	1,542	31	£542,410
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“SGN has shown a genuine empathy towards the clients they seek to support and actively seek out feedback and evidence on how to continuously improve on services, showing a willingness to evolve to suit the needs of clients and the economic climate.”

**Adam Scorer**  
CEO  
National Energy Action (NEA)







Accredited fuel poverty energy advisors offer in-depth advice to households struggling to maintain a safe and warm home.

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1. Supporting priority vulnerability groups

Project: Disability Energy Support (DES)

			
Strategy tier	Total households	CO safety conversations	SVB measurement
2	543	131	£123,531

SCOPE = Equality for disabled people

Why we’re working together

Disabled people are more likely to face financial vulnerability, fuel poverty, increased energy costs and also find it more challenging to access information and support.

Recognising this, we began working with the national disability equality charity Scope in 2019 to better understand the impact our work has on disabled people and produce training resources to help utility companies like us better support our disabled customers.

As a result of increasing living costs, a quarter of disabled people are already unable to heat their homes. Many are already living in fuel poverty, and those who are not are now in danger of being pushed into hardship.



As the parent of three disabled children, Garry faces many extra costs including high energy bills.

How we’re working together

Building on the partnership we established in RIIO-GD1, we’ve now helped build a dedicated energy advice team. This bespoke and dedicated utility advocacy service is designed for and marketed to disabled people, and provides free advice to help manage energy and water needs.

Customers can pre-book up to three 45-minute appointments with an expert adviser for support with issues, such as:

- accessing gas and CO safety information
- applying for the Warm Home Discount
- applying for the Priority Services Register
- managing utility debt and engaging with suppliers

Following their appointment, clients receive an action plan of steps to take to address their concerns and empower them as engaged and confident energy consumers. Where there is a need for the Scope team to step in and help, they do.

Partnership outcomes

In year one, we’ve supported more than 543 disabled people in our network area to help access 1,163 support services, enabling them to live in a safe and warm home by reducing energy costs and increasing energy efficiency.

In addition, we’ve positively engaged a further 12,000 disabled people on safely, efficiently and affordably using energy through Scope’s Disability Energy Support (DES) service and engagement channels including their online community.

Scope estimate we’ve saved disabled people £787,307 through the energy helpdesk since April 2021, with an average household saving of £658. We’ve also helped 46,467 customers access energy and water affordability information through Scope’s tailored webpages.

Starting in RIIO-GD1 and extending now into GD2, our collaborative programme is helping disabled people to become more confident energy customers. With this, and an increase in customer need stemming from the energy crisis, we’re expanding our programme of support further to include all other GDNs from April 2022 as they too recognise the value of this project. With our collective support, we can build the capacity to support more disabled people through the energy helpdesk service.

Learnings

In partnership with Scope, we commissioned additional research on the impact of Covid-19 and the energy crisis on disabled people. Over 6,600 disabled people shared their current experiences around utility companies and how this has impacted their ability to maintain a safe and warm home.

Key insights included that 76% of disabled people have already needed to make cuts on household spending, and over half of those surveyed have seen their mental health worsen due to the rise in energy costs. We also learned 57% of disabled people had not heard of the Priority Services Register before, with 74% of those surveyed saying that promotion of the PSR needed to improve as eligible customers were not aware of it or the benefits of

registration. Through the energy helpdesk, we’ve been able to help 82 disabled people join the PSR.

We shared the insights from the partnership at several industry events, including the Utility Week Consumer Vulnerability and Debt Conference in 2021. We also hosted an open webinar with Energy UK to share our learning with energy and water utilities. This activity has encouraged other gas and water networks to join the partnership in 2022.



“Due to the energy crisis, the Disability Energy Service has become more critical to support disabled people. SGN has been fundamental in engaging and supporting disabled people in their region and promoting our service.

“Our partnership is truly collaborative. It’s a partnership built on trust with clear shared values and objectives. We’ve welcomed how they’ve shared learning and brought on other funders to help build the capacity of DES at this critical time.”

Mark Hodgkinson  
Chief Executive  
Scope



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2. Targeting regional communities most at risk

Project: Home and Well



Why we’re working together

Before Covid-19, our stakeholders had identified an endless cycle of hospital readmissions among vulnerable patients and found readmissions accounting for one in five of all admissions. With health and social care systems under significant stress during the pandemic, we joined an existing regional networks partnership scheme – Home and Well – to help break the cycle of readmission by supporting patients in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight back into safe and warm homes.

We’re keen to direct support towards customers living in this particular region as, working with our data and insight partner Energy Savings Trust, we understand the Isle of Wight, Southampton and Portsmouth are all areas with significantly higher indicators of financial vulnerability than the national average. This results in poor health, longer hospitalisation and greater numbers of hospital readmissions.

**How we’re working together**

The Home and Well initiative supports patients in hospitals across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight by addressing the financial and practical issues that might otherwise cause them to be readmitted to hospital or unable to be discharged. The initiative is a collaboration between us, Citizens Advice Hampshire, NHS Hampshire, Southampton and Isle of Wight Clinical Commissioning Group, Portsmouth Water, South East Water, Southern Water and SSEN.

The programme aims to ensure patients can return to a safe and warm home after their immediate health needs are addressed. It tackles issues that would prevent that, such as if a patient had amassed energy debts or didn’t have heating at home.

When leaving hospital or by referral from a GP, Citizens Advice advisers review patients’ utility bills to ensure they are on the best tariffs and help them to maximise the benefits energy suppliers offer customers. The advisers also help patients apply to the Priority Services Register and provide fuel poverty and water cost guidance.

Following our trial participation during the pandemic, we’ve extended our support for a further two years thanks to VCMA funding.



“As a key programme partner, SGN helps us provide a vital service to our vulnerable clients. For example, we referred a client who could not afford to use their old-style electric heaters to SGN’s Help to Heat scheme for a free gas connection. In their own words, the client said gas central heating would “make all the difference to us and our young child, we cannot thank you enough”.

Another client was worried about safety in their home and we were able to reduce their anxiety by providing carbon monoxide awareness information and installing a free detector.”

**Denize Smith**  
Home and Well Adviser  
Citizens Advice East Hampshire

**Partnership outcomes**

The Home and Well partnership has helped 946 vulnerable people across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight return to a safe and warm home this year, providing an average increase in household income of £448 per client.

With our funding and partner training to upskill the project team, Home and Well project patients have received additional energy-related help and safeguarding from Citizens Advice. This includes direct services we provide such as locking cooker valves, CO alarms and access to our Help to Heat scheme, as well as access to our referral partners who can provide broader support.

In joining the programme, our funding has driven the expansion of the project into new areas, including Gosport.

Strategy tier	Total households	CO safety conversations	SVB measurement
2	874	54	£180,498



Home and Well Adviser Tracy Mann reviewing a patient’s utility bills on a one-to-one call.

**Learnings**

The collaborative framework and interlinked partnerships with the NHS have informed the co-design of other regional partnerships including Tackling Fuel Poverty in Sussex, a collaborative partnership with Citizens Advice Arun & Chichester and 1066 Hastings, SSEN, UKPN and Southern Water, as well as the targeted regional partnership in Dundee with Citizens Advice Scotland, SSEN and Scottish Water.

Our Home and Well programme success has also been nationally lauded, winning the Customer Vulnerability Awards at the Utility Week Awards 2021.

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2. Targeting regional communities most at risk

Project: Citizens Advice Scotland projects



Why we’re working together

Even before the pandemic and fuel crisis, data and insights showed fuel poverty was a real problem for many households across Scotland. Now, we understand one in three people in Scotland is finding their energy bills unaffordable.

For those vulnerable households in fuel poverty and hard-to-reach groups who have been unable to access local support services due to Covid-19 restrictions, there’s an increased risk of using unsafe appliances or fuels to heat their homes, rationing of supplies or self-isolation leading to cold damp homes which impacts their household health, safety and wellbeing.

In recent years, regional electricity network SSEN and Citizens Advice Scotland embedded energy advisers in four bureaux in the north-east of Scotland to help address energy matters and poverty. We joined the partnership to build greater capacity and expand the programme area to Dundee, as well as identifying an opportunity to add gas-specific services including CO safety advice to the existing service.

Developing a partnership with Citizens Advice Scotland enables us to help households in crisis in the remotest parts of our network gain access to the support they need for a safe and warm home. It’s the largest independent advice service in Scotland and the go-to agency for households in difficulty.



Advisers educate and advise householders tackling fuel poverty, heating their homes and staying safe from CO.



“This project has been a terrific boost to our work providing year-round energy-related advice. The specific aims of this project are to reduce fuel poverty and provide support to vulnerable households, and that’s a hugely important objective. The emphasis on both the Priority Services Register to support people during planned and unexpected utility outages and raising awareness of CO poisoning is also extremely important, and will hopefully save lives.”

Derek Mitchell  
CEO  
Citizens Advice Scotland

How we’re working together

We have two VCMA-funded projects, the first is the energy advisory project in the north-east of Scotland and the second is a larger programme built on the learnings of the initial project, that takes us into delivery across nine of the 10 most vulnerable communities in Scotland as identified by our data and insight partner Energy Savings Trust.

For both initiatives, we’re funding dedicated energy advisers based in Citizen Advice bureaux in key areas of Scotland, who can provide community-based face-to-face, telephone, virtual or group energy advice.

As well as providing training through the Gas Safe Charity and advice on carbon monoxide safety, we’ve created a referral pathway for Citizens Advice Scotland advisers to direct vulnerable households to us for services such as locking cooker valves, CO alarms and funded gas connections.

The programme is specifically targeting under-represented and hard-to-reach groups, including asylum seekers, minority ethnic groups, traveller and park home communities and people who are digitally excluded, as we know these groups are most at risk of fuel poverty and have been most adversely impacted by the economic effects of the pandemic.

Partnership outcomes

Citizens Advice Scotland energy advisers in the north-east of Scotland project have supported 703 customers in the first seven months of the project.

Strategy tier	Total households	CO safety conversations	SVB measurement
2	703	55	£46,461

We’ve trained five energy advisers on carbon monoxide awareness, empowering advisers to educate and advise people on how to protect themselves from the poisonous gas.

From this project, we’ve taken the learning and built a wide-reaching partnership that reaches the most vulnerable communities across Scotland.

Learnings

Building regional partnerships aligned with health organisations is an effective way to identify vulnerable households in need of help. Following face-to-face engagement sessions with health workers, we’ve received 42 referrals into the programme from NHS teams. The shared outcome is improving living conditions with the aim of reducing hospital readmissions.

Our reporting in year two will include more in-depth understanding of what further support is being provided though the programme, beyond the initial advice session. We understand households we’ve supported have gained more than £270,000 in financial benefits so far, as well as increased confidence to manage their ongoing energy and household costs. However, these are metrics we don’t currently measure under our SROI.

In year two, we’ll work with our SROI consultants Sia Partners to ensure we capture the complete social impact of all the support provided through the Citizens Advice Scotland programme.



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2. Targeting regional communities most at risk

Project: Groundwork Kent



Why we’re working together

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, and instances of fuel poverty resulting in poor health and digital exclusion rates.

By partnering with local charities Groundwork London and Groundwork South of England, we can help vulnerable households in coastal Kent to keep a safe and warm home for less with bespoke energy advice and support.

How we’re working together

We’ve upskilled eight of Groundwork’s energy advisers to provide vulnerable households with CO and gas safety advice. The dedicated team of experienced Groundwork Green Doctors can now provide information about the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning and how to protect their home, alongside other utility services.

We’re co-funding this programme with regional electricity and water network companies UK Power Networks and Southern Water as well as Smart GB to provide a holistic approach, which encompasses gas safety and promoting access to the Priority Services Register, as well as providing critical help to those struggling to afford energy and water bills.

Partnership outcomes

We’ve reached 1,559 fuel poor and low-income households in Kent with utility advice and support on gas safety, managing their energy bills and how to access additional support to maximise their household income.

This support includes 274 in-depth advice sessions delivered by Green Doctors, with 246 households receiving gas safety advice and 63 provided with a potentially life-saving audible CO alarm.

The advice and support we’ve given has saved households an estimated total of £42,216 off their energy bills through a combination of behaviour change advice, tariff switching, debt support, warm homes discount and small energy-saving measures. This equals an average saving per household of £154.



“Through our partnership, we have been able to learn and develop a holistic advice approach which encompasses gas safety, energy saving and water bill advice. In addition to this, we also refer into other services providing support to access food, wellbeing and mental health support. This holistic approach has allowed us to reach and help more people and cross-refer to other services to make a greater impact.”

**Daniel Brittle**  
Green Doctor Development Manager  
Groundwork London and South of England

Strategy tier	Total households	CO safety conversations	SVB measurement
2	1,559	246	£92,499



Green Doctors support vulnerable households with energy saving and gas safety advice, as part of a holistic support programme.

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2. Targeting regional communities most at risk

Project: Highland Affordable Warmth



Why we’re working together

The Highlands has some of the highest fuel poverty rates in the UK – 32% of people are affected. Our project with Scotland’s leading environmental charity Changeworks and New Start Highland, an organisation tackling poverty, homelessness and long-term unemployment in the Highlands, targets groups most vulnerable to fuel and food poverty in a timely way to maximise energy safeguarding impact.

How we’re working together

The project builds on the two organisations’ existing support and success in the Highland area. Early intervention support is dovetailed into New Start Highland’s existing services for those transitioning from homelessness into permanent accommodation to help maintain their tenancy. After support, tenants can affordably heat their homes, cook nutritious meals and address carbon monoxide safety issues.

The project works collaboratively with New Start Highland housing officers, Changeworks, Citizens Advice Scotland and Highland Council Housing Support Service to identify individuals to benefit from the service, and brings together the regional utility networks SSEN and Scottish Water to maximise positive impacts and deliver defined outcomes for individuals.



“Our strong partnership with SGN has allowed us to provide early intervention energy advice and advocacy to vulnerable people living in the Scottish Highlands. This early intervention approach has been welcomed by both clients and the housing support officers.

We now have a renewed and increased focus on Priority Service Registrations and CO awareness. This has subsequently fed through to other projects we deliver. We are now looking to actively embed the promotion of both of these services and advice across our work area going forward – something that wouldn’t have happened without the support of SGN.”

**Lisa Bygate**  
Affordable Warmth Services Team Manager  
Changeworks

Strategy tier	Total households	CO safety conversations	SVB measurement
1	487	274	£138,308

Partnership outcomes

We have empowered 487 vulnerable people to build skills to tackle the root causes of fuel and food poverty, helping them to maintain a safe and warm home.

We’ve undertaken income maximisation and benefit checks for 408 Highlands households.

Along supporting people with their mental health and building confidence through 452 wellbeing chats, we’ve equipped clients with skills to better manage their energy usage, implementing behavioural change in people who otherwise would have no concept of how to manage energy.

Through our training partner Gas Safe Charity, we’ve trained 31 Highland Affordable Warmth advisers to educate 271 clients on carbon monoxide awareness.

We’ve supported 32 people to tackle food poverty by teaching households how to use slow cookers as an affordable, efficient and nutritious way of preparing a hot meal. Before having a slow cooker, these householders were choosing to eat cold meals rather than use energy to heat their food. By providing a recipe book with the slow cooker, so people have meal ideas at their fingertips, we’re ensuring the best possible chance of households putting the slow cookers to good use.



**Our Highland Affordable Warmth project helps tackle the root causes of fuel and food poverty.**

**Learnings**

Living in poverty impacts daily life and affording essentials such as energy and food. By delivering a programme that tackles these two issues together, we’re able to effectively connect to the community by offering holistic support.

In remote communities, we’ve found people are particularly keen and willing to share advice and information they perceive as valuable with friends and family. This approach is underpinning our co-design principles with Highland Affordable Warmth. We’re making sure our practical and relatable advice can be distributed beyond our one-to-one and group sessions and into the community.



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3. Reducing carbon  
monoxide (CO) harm

Project: CO awareness in schools



Why we’re working together

Young people are one of the groups most at risk from carbon monoxide poisoning. The NHS explains this is because the smaller a person is, the faster they’ll be affected by carbon monoxide.

Schools provide an opportunity to reach this at-risk group in an environment where they are focused on learning and likely to be receptive to CO safety advice. Although the programme takes place in school, our awareness raising will extend beyond the classroom, as the children will take their learning home to their families and act as advocates for CO safety in the wider community.

We understand effective engagement within the education sector is achieved by having and building strong relationships, and by being recognised as a trusted delivery partner. Cadent is already partnering with creative learning specialists Bonanza Creative to deliver its Safety Seymour and CO Crew primary school education programmes. Taking the learnings from its established partnership with Cadent, we’re excited to lead a collaboration with Northern Gas Networks and Wales & West Utilities to reach primary and secondary school age children.

How we’re working together

The GDN CO Collaboration Group share a strategic ambition to develop a consistent programme to support schools nationwide in educating young people about the dangers of CO.

Using our existing joint GDN-designed primary school CO educational programmes, Safety Seymour for key stage 1 and CO Crew for key stage 2, we’ve expanded its delivery to provide in-classroom sessions in primary schools nationwide.

This project is also trialling our Silent Killer ‘Whodunnit’ educational resource materials in secondary schools to assess the viability of a national CO education programme for older pupils aged 12 to 16 in key stage 3.



“The activities were fun and entertaining, and children learnt whilst doing. Very engaging.”

“The explanation was easy to understand. The activities helped children understand the dangers of carbon monoxide and how to keep safe from it.”

“The session was good and nothing to be improved as information given was contextual and relevant.”

Teachers  
St Peter’s Primary School  
South London



Pupils at St Chad’s Primary School in Croydon enjoying their Safety Seymour session.

Partnership outcomes

We have trained seven arts facilitators to deliver 25 tailored CO safety sessions in eight schools nationwide.

These sessions have reached a total of 750 primary and secondary school pupils across SGN’s, Northern Gas Networks’ and Wales & West Utilities’ network areas – 540 of these pupils were at schools in our network area.

Strategy tier	Total households	CO safety conversations	SVB measurement
3	540	540	£7,168

Learnings

We’re gaining feedback from the young people involved in the programmes to determine the effectiveness of our materials and delivering this type of safety messaging in school settings. We will be using this feedback, as well as learnings from the delivery of this programme in year one, to inform our future school education programmes through VCMA and beyond.

For example, our pilot of the Whodunnit materials in secondary schools will inform our planned national rollout of these materials to schools across England, Scotland and Wales. While the pilot CO education sessions within SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) schools will shape the future delivery of our CO education programme for these students, as we may need to tailor these sessions or the associated engagement to maximise impact for SEND schools and pupils.



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3. Reducing carbon  
monoxide (CO) harm

Project: Carbon monoxide community safety projects



Why we’re working together

Regional fire and rescue services are key organisations working to help communities use energy safely and efficiently, as are local authorities, food banks, local charities, care and repair services, and handy van services.

All fire and rescue services operating within our network area have established home safety or Safe and Well visit programmes. These programmes are particularly effective at engaging hard-to-reach and high-risk households, such as older people, people with disabilities and people with chronic health conditions, who we know are at greater risk of harm from carbon monoxide.

While fire service home safety programmes typically include some degree of gas safety and CO advice, the guidance differs between regions and funding for CO alarms varies across the UK. This is especially the case

in Scotland where legislation has driven an increase in funding for audible CO alarms, yet provision for inclusive alarms was lacking.

By working with these local community organisations, we’re able to raise CO awareness and provide CO alarms to more of the people most at risk and in need of support who we normally don’t have access to.

How we’re working together

Each partnership covered in this programme is different, co-designed around the regional need and how potential partners can embed this service into their existing community programmes.

We’ve engaged all 11 fire and rescue services in our network area on partnerships around CO and broader energy vulnerability. By doing so, we’re 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 household health and wellbeing.

In addition, we’re partnering with local community organisations, such as food banks and local charities, to provide CO safety training and alarms to help them reduce the risk of harm to the households they support.

Partnership outcomes

We’ve built bespoke partnerships with regional organisations, collaboratively design tailored safety information packs and promotional materials to increase CO awareness.

We’ve provided funding for 17,055 audible CO alarms, plus 1,125 interlinked accessible CO and fire alarms for people who are deaf and 500 verbal alarms for people who have a visual or cognitive disability, which fire and rescue service teams and our community partners have been installing in customers’ homes this year.

Through home safety visits and in-home support, we’ve created a referral pathway for partners to direct vulnerable households to us for services such as CO alarms, our locking cooker valve, PSR registration and funded gas connections.

Learnings

We’re finding that regional fire and rescue services all operate slightly differently. While our broad aim with each service is the same, the individual approach needs to be slightly different. We’re using the learnings from our successful partnerships to inform our approach with the remaining services in our network areas.

Strategy tier	Total households	CO safety conversations	SVB measurement
3	875	875	£18,372



Our blueprint partnership with Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service and Wales & West Utilities.

For example, we’ve taken learnings from our partnership with Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue service around data sharing to inform our partnership with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service who had some challenges with data sharing agreements.

Establishing an SGN-led collaboration with Wales & West Utilities and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue service has enabled the fire service to not only provide a consistent offering for CO safety across their footprint, but also refer households to either us or Wales & West Utilities for our support services.

We’re aiming to replicate the success of this partnership with other fire and rescue services whose operating areas stretch across multiple GDNs.



“Our SGN and Wales & West Utilities partnership will provide funding for 5,000 standard carbon monoxide alarms and 500 wireless interlinked carbon monoxide alarms every year. As well as being a substantial saving for the Service, it also means we can offer the additional support of the wireless interlinked devices that link up to a hearing-impaired alarm system. This is something we haven’t been able to do before.”

Andy Woods  
Safe & Well Team Leader  
Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service



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# Our future plans

**Stopping the cycle of fuel poverty**  
By educating young people on how to manage their money and use energy efficiently through our partnership with MyBnk, we're helping the next generation become more financially resilient.





Looking ahead

We’re delighted to not only have mobilised 28 SGN and collaborative GDN projects in our first year, but to have exceeded our first year’s target for supporting vulnerable households.

Establishing strong foundations

We made a promise to help 250,000 vulnerable people use energy safely, efficiently and affordably over five years from 2021.

That promise will see us provide targeted help for at least 50,000 people each year, which will generate direct financial savings of more than £3 million per year for vulnerable households.

Our strategy ensures we’ll meet our commitment, and that we’re targeted and strategic in our approach to energy safeguarding and decreasing CO harm. Through co-designed programmes with trusted community partners, we’re able to direct our support to those most likely to be at risk of living in a cold and unhealthy home.

At the end of the first year of RIIO-GD2, it’s clear our colleagues are fully engaged in identifying and offering support to our customers who need it most, and we’ve established the strategic partnerships to deliver that support. So much so, we’ve exceeded our year one target by helping 52,139 vulnerable households this year.

We’ve seen an astounding 585% year-on-year increase in the number of households our engineers have referred for extra help this year. While this demonstrates our referral processes are well-embedded across our organisation and we have robust procedures in place to safeguard vulnerable members of our communities, it also reflects the increasing need our frontline and Careline teams are witnessing in the wake of the fuel and energy crisis.

Building on our year one progress

With an expectation from our strategic partner National Energy Action that the number of households in fuel poverty could soar from 6.5 million in April 2022 to more than 8.5 million by the end of this year, we know the coming months will be increasingly challenging for many of our most vulnerable customers.

We’re confident our agile strategy and systemic approach to listening and adapting to feedback from our Vulnerability and CO Steering Group, strategic partners and customers will ensure we’re able to best serve our communities’ needs in year two and beyond.

Sharing the learnings from our successful programmes is enabling us to build on our success so far and expand those partnerships to support new communities in new areas. Following the early success of our Age Scotland project, we’re now exploring a national partnership with Age UK and all GDNs for year two. We’ve already confirmed our Scope programme will be extended to include all gas networks from June 2022 onwards.

We’ll also focus on establishing new partnerships, both within our own region and nationally with our fellow gas networks, to further support a key customer group that we’ve identified as being particularly in need of help to maintain a safe and warm home – people with critical illnesses. We’ll shortly be launching a new programme with the health and social care intermediary ALLIANCE in Scotland and we’re also in the co-design phase with national charity Marie Curie to provide much-needed support to people receiving end-of-life care.



We’re working in partnership with the team at Marie Curie to co-design an energy support service to help people with a terminal illness.

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Supporting customers when they need it most

Collaboration will remain key to our strategy and approach as we continue into year two of RIIO-GD2. We’re thrilled by the success we’ve found with our strategic partners to date, as well as the partnerships we’ve mobilised on behalf of all four gas networks.

We’re extremely proud of the programmes we’ve established and embedded in this first year. We’re confident we have the right projects and the right partners to deliver on our commitment to help another 50,000 vulnerable households use energy safely, efficiently and affordably next year.

But we will not rest on our laurels. In the months to come, we will continue to work closely with our partners to adapt to the changing needs of the communities we serve, as we endeavour to ensure those most in need are supported to live in a safe and warm home.



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# Appendix

**Helping older people stay safe and warm at home**  
Our partnership with Age Scotland is making a real difference to older people who are struggling to afford heating their homes and facing other hardships like loneliness and isolation.

## Full project data

For each of our projects, we've reported full details of our year one outcomes, challenges and learnings, as well as all related financial information.

We want this information to be as easily accessible as possible, so we've collated this into a document that's held on our website.

[View our full project data](#)

## SGN

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RH6 9HJ



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customer@sgn.co.uk



sgn.co.uk

If you smell gas or are worried about gas safety you can call the National Gas Emergency Number on **0800 111 999**

If you share our strategic ambitions to support communities most at risk and would like to suggest a partnership project, we'd love to hear from you at **positive.impact@sgn.co.uk**

### Maureen McIntosh

Head of Customer Experience

### Kerry Potter

Group Social Impact and Vulnerability Manager

### Linda Spence

Vulnerability Manager

### Dan Edwards

Social Impact Programme Lead

Thank you to all of our programme partners for your support in delivering the first year of our programme and collating our report.

