

Welcoming Warm Spaces Sussex

January 2023
SGN



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1 Description

Funding GDN(s)	SGN
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	N/A
Date of PEA submission:	3 February 2023
Project contact name:	Kerry Potter
Project contact number/email:	Kerry.potter@sgn.co.uk 07427 031 200
Total cost (£k)	£364,000
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£83,000

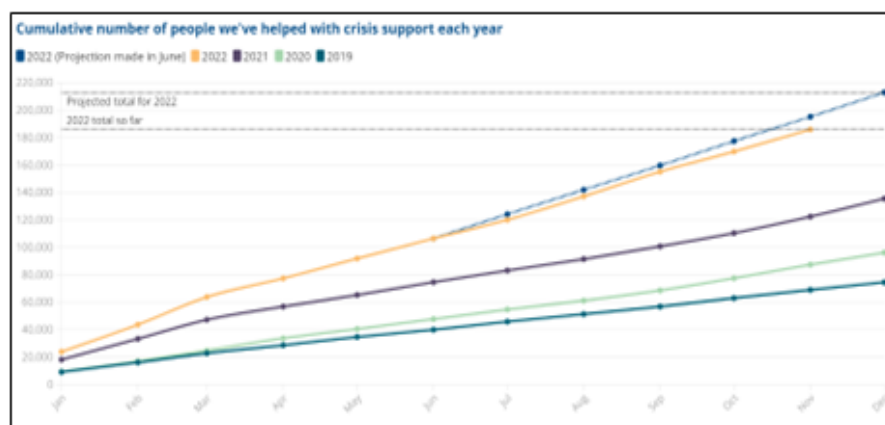
2 Problem statement

The price cap on standard and default tariffs rose on 1 October from £1,971 per year for a typical user paying by direct debit to £3,549. For households on prepay tariffs Ofgem announced a £1,591 per year increase to the cap for more than four million – to £3,608 for a typical household.

Also, on this date, the government implemented an energy price guarantee, which limits the amount you can be charged per unit of gas or electricity. The energy price guarantee has been amended many times throughout its introduction in October 2022, however it has recently been announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement that the energy price guarantee will last until April 2024¹. It is worth noting, the energy price guarantee stays as it is until end of March 2023, after which it will rise by about 20% (so an 'average' household will pay £3,000 instead of £2,500).

However, pay increases for many people aren't keeping up with the rising prices being faced. This means people's money doesn't go as far, so buying essentials and paying bills is getting harder. Average wages, not including bonuses, rose by 5.4% in the three months to August 2022. However, once inflation is considered, average pay fell by 2.9%. This fall in wages has led many people to rely on hardship schemes and other crisis support to make ends meet. Data from Trussell Trust support this and identified 1 in 7 people using their local food banks were employed².

Below is a graph of the cumulative number of people Citizens Advice have helped with crisis support and localised social welfare nationally:

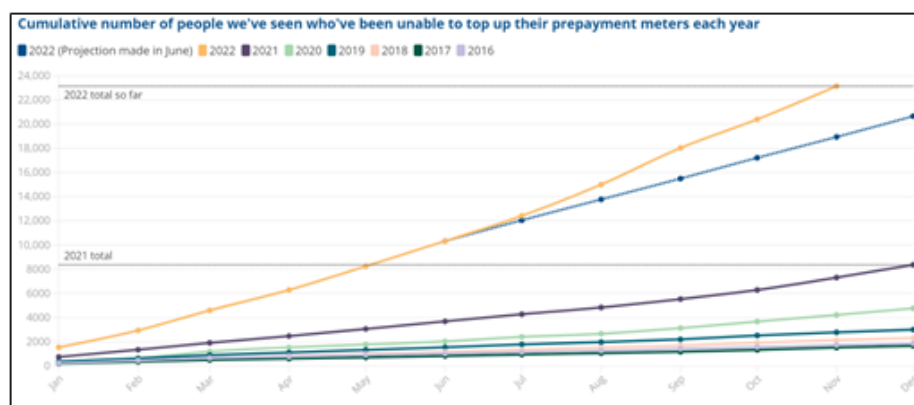


¹ [Energy bills support factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/factsheets/energy-bills-support-factsheet)

² [Do working people need food banks? - The Trussell Trust](https://www.trusselltrust.org/news/2022/08/10/do-working-people-need-food-banks/)

Welcoming Warm Spaces Sussex

This coupled with the below graph, which illustrates the concerning rapid increase in the number of people we've seen nationally who have been unable to top up their prepayment meter:



We expect the winter and cost-of-living pressures to be worse felt in these more deprived areas and by people within certain vulnerable groups, which we have highlighted below, as they are more likely to be socially and/or digitally excluded and unable to resolve issues by themselves.

Local Area	IoD	Fuel Poverty	Excess Winter Deaths	Cardiovascular Conditions*	Respiratory Conditions*	MH Conditions*	Children living in a low-income family*	People with long standing health conditions*	People aged over 65*
Adur	164	2,704 (9.2%)	40	13,382	3,972	27,162	1,815	1,261	15,186
Worthing	174	4,813 (9.4%)	80	2,635	784	5,562	2,630	407	25,145
Horsham	290	4,085 (6.9%)	90	4,667	1,217	6,617	1,915	870	33,270
Mid Sussex	311	4,149 (6.7%)	80	8,295	1,881	13,804	2,070	934	31,279
Crawley	136	3,805 (8.2%)	40	6,674	2,170	8,615	3,940	1,115	15,499
Arun	149	6,337 (8.7%)	150	5,197	1,486	6,816	3,690	521	43,320
Chichester	213	4,842 (9.0%)	120	8,648	2,371	11,568	2,270	953	31,039
Eastbourne	106	5,040 (10.3%)	80	5,483	1,690	10,758	3,422	3,685	26,162
Lewes	194	3,935 (8.6%)	50	1,678	451	3,113	1,077	2,550	26,881
Wealden	254	5,701 (8.5%)	70	3,425	872	6,220	2,459	2,910	42,680
Hastings	13	5,051 (11.5%)	100	4,529	2,902	16,067	5,574	4,455	26,845
Rother	139	4,650 (10.6%)	70	4,372	2,541	1,687	2,920	4,168	30,842
Totals	-	55,112	1,020	68,985	22,337	117,989	33,782	23,829	348,148

*This data is from fingertips and is taken from GP's, the totals should be considered indicative, rather than a full and true reflection

Based on the 2020 fuel poverty statistics the whole of Sussex has 55,112 households in fuel poverty. This means thousands of residents who live in these areas will experience fuel poverty this winter, many of whom will already be vulnerable, and at risk of exacerbated ill health or death, due to the inability to keep their homes properly heated because of rising energy costs.

In April 2021, the CEO of Arun and Chichester Citizens Advice set up a Financial Impact Group to bring together statutory organisations and the voluntary sector to form a collaborative network. The purpose of this group was to aid in mitigating the economic financial impact on residents in the local community. The members of the group are representatives of West Sussex County Council, the local District and Borough Councils, the Department of Work & Pension, the local Trussell Trust Food Banks and other Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) representatives. The group meets monthly and monitors data such as benefit sanction rates, Universal Credit work condition rates, level of people accessing food banks, local authority homelessness enquiries and specific advice enquiry areas. This monitoring enables them to create targeted responses to pressures which are affecting residents locally. As a response to the cost-of-living crisis, the group wrote and sent a briefing to the CEO of the County Councils (East and West Sussex share the same CEO) outlining the current crisis, vulnerable groups who would be most affected and making recommendations to ease the pressure. One of the many recommendations suggested was to “Set up Warm Hubs: Utilising libraries, community centres, leisure centres etc., which would allow an opportunity to socialise and reduce isolation and involvement of organisations such as Citizens Advice, etc.”

Local authorities followed by setting up cost of living responses including grants made available for the creation of warm spaces and the opportunity to follow new support pathways to support the many in energy crisis this winter.

Through the Tackling Fuel Poverty Together partnership in Arun, Chichester, Hasting and Rother, we (SGN, SSEN, UKPN and Southern Water) deliver a wrap-around advice and casework service through multiple channels, especially home visits, to the most vulnerable within households most at risk of winter deaths. As a result, we have learnt this group of households have very complex needs, often caused by the inability to access advice services or not knowing what is available to them. Early intervention through outreach locations, such as warm hubs, will allow more of these households to be reached, preventing matters becoming more complex, or unmanageable and to avoid deterioration of health and wellbeing.

3 Scope and objectives

Citizens Advice will create a support framework in Warm Hubs that proactively offers information to all Sussex residents on how to stay safe and warm this winter. They will do this by working in partnership with County, District and Borough Councils, West and East Sussex Fire and Rescue, UK Harvest and the local Food Banks.

Many Warm Hubs have already been established around Sussex and others will be set up across the counties using the grant support provided by District and Borough Councils. The partnership will provide services from these locations. Warm Hubs across Sussex are in a variety of locations, these include:

- Churches
- Community Hubs
- Village Halls
- Libraries³ and many more

These spaces provide vulnerable residents living in hard-to-heat homes, and those experiencing fuel poverty, with a welcoming location where they can take part in activities, warm up and have a hot drink or a hot meal.

With the addition of Citizens Advice, West and East Sussex Fire and Rescue, UK Harvest, local Food Banks and the District and Borough wellbeing teams, the local community will be able to access energy and financial

³ These are warm welcome spaces however they will not provide food and drinks

support advice, fire safety advice, CO monitors, sanitary and warm packs, easy energy efficiency measures, cooking equipment (e.g., slow cookers) and low cost, healthy recipes.

Through the Warm Hubs we aim to support a minimum of 2,142 vulnerable households finding it difficult to keep warm this winter, by providing tailored advice and support provisions to improve the health, wellbeing, and financial outcomes for those households.

The work will be delivered through a mix of volunteers and trained employed advisers. The Warm Hub sessions will take place in a mix of venues as outlined above, and some will offer as standard:

- A place for a hot drink, hot meal, social interaction and/or wellbeing activities
- Energy and debt intervention, which will include dealing with emergencies and referrals into existing local specialist services
- Winter “grab bags” (provided by West Sussex local authorities only) including items to help vulnerable residents stay warm such as hot water bottles, socks, gloves, and a flask which can be refilled at the hub and taken home
- Sanitary “grab bags” (provided by West Sussex local authorities only) including items such as tampons, sanitary pads and/or liners to tackle period poverty⁴.
- Carbon monoxide alarms and advice on carbon monoxide safety
- Leaflets which will summarise; financial support, free food provisions, how to install small energy efficiency measures, making the most out of cooking equipment, cooking on a budget and more, which will be available for each local area
- A voucher exchange scheme for a free energy efficient cooking appliance, such as a slow cooker (which are less than half the cost to run than a conventional cooker⁵)
- Emergency support for those in food and fuel crisis e.g., with a supermarket voucher, food voucher and/or fuel voucher
- Easy energy efficiency measures with instructions such as draught excluders that clients can fit themselves
- Access into local hardship funds

4 Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

This project will provide support to residents in energy crisis, providing access to key services including the PSR, interventions that address fuel and water poverty and broader safeguarding and wellbeing services, whilst delivering a positive Social Return on Investment. The project will provide holistic utility efficiency advice, fire safety knowledge and CO safety interventions, empowering each householder to use energy/appliances safely, efficiently, and affordably. The project will work collaboratively with expert agencies to maximise positive impacts beyond energy, increasing the health and wellbeing of the individuals supported and delivering defined outcomes.

5 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

5.1 Citizens Advice – Impact

Tackling cold homes is now more important than ever with the winter and cost of living crisis, 1 in 5 households are expected to fall into poverty. We expect this to be worse felt in these more deprived areas and by people within the described vulnerable groups, as they are more likely to be socially and/or digitally excluded and unable to resolve issues by themselves.

More and more households now rely on financial hardship schemes to make ends meet, Arun and Chichester Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice 1066 distributed over £1 million worth of fuel vouchers, boiler repairs, emergency heaters, blankets and other products and services to households in Sussex to keep vulnerable

⁴ Sanitary grab bags will only be available in West Sussex

⁵ [Slow cooker vs oven operating costs and budget recipes | Express.co.uk](#)

people warm as we approached this winter. This reflects the need within these deprived areas, and we expect this to worsen over the coming months and reliance on hardship schemes to increase.

The Tackling Fuel Poverty Together- NICE vulnerable group focus partnership with SGN, SSEN, UKPN and Southern Water allowed learning and identifying opportunity of a wider impact by providing early advice intervention and support through outreach locations, such as warm hubs, will allow more to be reached, prevent matters becoming complex and unmanageable and for health and wellbeing to deteriorate.

The County, District and Borough Council partners fully understand the impact this proposed service is going to achieve. They are fully supportive of such a partnership, understanding the value this service is going to deliver and would welcome collaborative funding to support greater customer outcomes.

5.2 Citizens Advice – Cost-of-Living Survey

Data from a survey undertaken to a selection of the West Sussex population has shown that 95% were worried about the cost-of-living price rises. With 93% of total respondents saying their biggest concern is energy prices. 59% said they have changed brands or supermarkets to save money whilst 54% have reduced expenditure by buying less food altogether. 35% of respondents did not think they could cut back on anything else to save money and 36% disclosed they currently have credit or store card debts. The cost-of-living price rises have begun affecting peoples physical and mental health, with 27% of respondents saying their physical health had been affected and 46% saying it had affected their mental health.

Although this survey was only carried out in the Arun and Chichester area, it's findings can be applied much wider, providing an insight into how people are coping with the cost of living rises and how it is affecting their physical and mental health.

5.3 Moving Forward Together – Stakeholder Workshops held during 2018 and 2020

Sharing our top 5 scenarios with our stakeholders during our engagement workshops, they agreed that providing essential emergency funding for customers in vulnerable circumstances should remain one of our top priorities, helping our most vulnerable customers in relation to affordability. In addition, our stakeholders wanted to see us approach affordability broader than 'gas', as customers who face financial hardship need support with all their utilities, and water, gas and electricity should be approached as essentials services.

5.4 Vulnerable Steering Group

Our Vulnerable Steering Group has helped us shape our vulnerability strategy and our priorities for GD2. With their guidance we intend to prioritise key initiatives to support our most vulnerable customers. It is with guidance and support from our dedicated Vulnerable Steering Group that SGN should use data to prioritise and target communities most likely to be living in a cold and unhealthy home whilst working alongside other go to support networks to ensure support is holistic and customer centric and is flexible to deliver the required support to those in need this winter. In 2021 our strategic steering group reiterated the vital impact we could have by co-ordinating our activities with others to support those most in need, those most impacted by the cost of living and energy cost crisis.

5.5 SGN RIIO-GD2 Business Plan

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

6 Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

6.1 Outcomes

The partnership will support community engagement for residents within Sussex at a time of increased need. The purpose of this engagement is to bring people together, to share information and resources that help keep customers safe and warm this winter as well as providing a community resource that supports those in energy crisis with access to skilled case workers who can provide tangible help.

The partnership will be embedded within the community, with organisations such as Citizens Advice, West and East Sussex Fire and Rescue, UK Harvest, local food banks, District and Borough Wellbeing Teams, with utility company representatives working collaboratively to address the barriers clients face to maintaining a safe and warm home.

The Warm Hubs project provides the following outcomes for Sussex residents.

- Be provided with current information on the help available in Sussex this winter and offered access to support should they need help to maintain a safe and warm home
- Be offered a safe and warm place with access to a hot drink or meal and access to advisory services designed to keep them safe and warm this winter
- Be supported to access help around critical primary needs, energy and food poverty, and debt support where needed
- Be provided with resources that help reduce the cost to cook warm and healthy food and keep warm
- Be supported to join the Priority Services Register where eligible - providing them with the security and support they would need in the event of an unplanned outage from all their regional utility companies
- Be provided with easy energy efficient resources to keep the home warm.
- Be more aware of the risks of Carbon Monoxide and how to mitigate these
- Have reduced stress, and improved health and wellbeing as a direct result of coming together in a community setting to access help and enjoy activities in a warm environment
- Be assessed for eligibility for free retrofit schemes to receive longer-term cost saving measures.

6.2 Success Criteria

We are working together to provide trusted information to all residents in Sussex and to provide in-community support to those most likely to be living in fuel poverty and energy crisis this winter. We are aiming to support the following customer outcomes, which has formed the basis of our social return on investment modelling.

To monitor the impact of our programme we will monitor outcomes including attendance to the Warm Hubs, the services valued by those who use the Warm Hubs as well as capturing data on who is using the service including demographics, vulnerabilities and needs.

- 500,000 households across Sussex provided with winter resilience, PSR, CO safety and energy advice information via a direct mailer
- 2,142 customers provided with energy advice at the Warm Hub
- 2,142 customers provided with a safe and warm place during winter
- 1,000 customers provided with warm packs/sanitary packs/hygiene packs in West Sussex
- 2,142 customers provided with CO safety discussions
- 134 customers provided with CO alarms
- 268 customers assisted to sign up to the Priority Services Register
- 537 customers provided with energy crisis support – fuel vouchers
- 537 customers provided with access to crisis food / meal support
- 537 customers supported with debt advice
- 537 customers provided with easy energy efficiency equipment and instructions on how to safely install
- 268 customers provided with a slow cooker or other energy efficient cooking appliance and advice on affordably healthy cooking on a budget

7 Project partners and third parties involved

SGN regional gas network providing programme funding for:

- The energy and benefits advisory services, and
- Fuel vouchers (34.32% of total amount); and
- Access to carbon monoxide alarms (provided by the Fire and Rescue Service through funding already being received from SGN) and locking cooker valves where need identified

SSEN - providing programme funding for:

- The energy and benefits advisory services
- Fuel vouchers; and
- Supporting access to the Priority Services Register.

UK Power Networks – providing programme funding for:

- Easy energy efficiency equipment; and
- Energy efficiency cooking appliances
- Supporting access to the Priority Services Register.

Southern Water - provided programme funding for:

- The energy and benefits advisory services, and
- Supporting access to the Priority Services Register.

Arun and Chichester Citizens Advice will lead and manage the project and deliver it in partnership with Citizens Advice 1066, Citizens Advice in West Sussex, Citizens Advice Eastbourne, Lewes District Citizens Advice and Wealden Citizens Advice – Warm Hub delivery partners providing a dedicated team to support customers who attend the Warm Hubs from crisis into a safe and warm home. Arun and Chichester Citizens Advice will be responsible for distributing funds and resources, such as providing funds to cover wages, as well as warm packs, fuel vouchers, energy efficiency measures and cooking equipment, etc. NB sanitary packs will only be available in West Sussex.

West Sussex County Council, and 7 Districts and Boroughs which are as follows:

- Adur District Council
- Arun District Council
- Chichester District Council
- Crawley Borough Council
- Horsham District Council
- Mid Sussex District Council
- Worthing Borough Council

Support will be provided in the form of a mailer and other communications from County, District and Borough councils, grants for the creation of the warm spaces and their wellbeing teams at the warm hubs. West Sussex County Council will also provide the funding for the warm and sanitary packs which will be distributed to eligible individuals.

East Sussex County Council and 5 Districts and Boroughs which are as follows:

- Wealden District Council
- Hastings Borough Council
- Eastbourne Borough Council
- Lewes Borough Council
- Rother District Council

Support will be provided in the form of a mailer and other communications from County, District and Borough councils and grants for the creation of the warm spaces.

District and Borough Wellbeing teams – Will provide health and wellbeing support by helping clients and their families to get more active, eat more healthily, or simply improve their general wellbeing. They will also have a physical presence at some of the hubs.

Local Foodbanks which are as follows:

- Littlehampton Foodbank
- Bognor Regis Foodbank
- Chichester Foodbank
- Hastings Foodbank
- Bexhill Foodbank
- Battle Foodbank
- Rye Foodbank
- Horsham Foodbank and others

Support will be provided from foodbanks to link clients into the Warm Hubs and identify households needing a voucher for an energy efficient cooking appliance.

UKHarvest – linking into warm spaces with their community food hubs and distributing healthy recipes

West and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service will be providing information on winter safety and how to stay safe this winter with the rising costs of living, both at the Warm Spaces and integrated into their community programme. West and East Sussex Fire and Rescue will also be leading on the installation of CO alarms and CO safety conversations at the Warm Spaces.

8 Potential for new learning

Monitoring and evaluation

- The following activities will be in place to monitor and evaluate project progress and impacts:
- Quantitative and qualitative service user outcomes and demographics/vulnerabilities recorded/monitored
- Service user before-and-after-support surveys
- In-bound and out-bound referrals from/to partners and other services recorded/monitored
- Feedback, indicators, outputs, and outcomes reported on quarterly
- Project progress management: these include monthly and quarterly partner meetings to share ideas and challenges through individual and organisational partnership case studies.

9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations

SIA assessment to be completed

Social Value Measurement

We worked with leading social impact research consultancy SIA Partners to carry out an assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to services for vulnerable customers incorporated in this partnership. Carrying out an in-depth assessment of the predicted outcomes we forecast a positive net social return of £5.25.

5-year reporting figures		
Economic	Total cost (all partners)	£364,000.00
	Total gross present value	£2,275,664.33
	NPV	£1,911,664.33
	SROI	£5.25

10 VCMA Project start and end date

The project will run from 23 January 2023 to 21 April 2023

11 Geographic area

West and East Sussex including Arun, Chichester, Adur, Crawley, Horsham, Mid Sussex and Worthing, Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother, and Wealden

12 Approval

Rob Gray - Director of Stakeholder Relations and Communications