



SGN

Your gas. Our network.



Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance Annual Report 2023

Supporting vulnerable customers to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably

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

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

Contents

Welcome	3	→
How we're making the difference for vulnerable customers	4	→
Strategy into delivery	5	→
Delivering our programmes	12	→
Providing direct support services to vulnerable customers	14	→
Supporting priority vulnerability groups to access tailored support services	16	→
Targeting geographic communities most at risk of fuel poverty	19	→
Reducing carbon monoxide harm	24	→
Our projects	28	→
Our future plans	31	→
Appendix: Full project data	33	→

How to use this report

Clicking on a link highlighted in **underlined bold** will take you through to another section in this report or our website for more information.

From this page, you can navigate to a particular section in the report by using the quick links in our contents list.

You can navigate back to this page from anywhere in the report by clicking the 'Home' icon in the bottom right-hand corner.



Welcome to our 2023 VCMA Annual Report

We manage the network that distributes natural and green gas to 6 million homes and businesses across Scotland and the south of England. We serve our communities by keeping everyone safe and warm.

This is a responsibility that all of us at SGN take extremely seriously. We never want to walk away from a customer in need and delivering excellent customer service is part of everyone's DNA.

Through the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA), we've been allocated £16.3 million by the energy regulator Ofgem to spend on projects which can support vulnerable customers or raise awareness of carbon monoxide (CO) between 2021 and 2026.

Our award-winning Customer Experience team has developed a robust and mature vulnerability support strategy which is enabling us to deliver meaningful help to thousands of vulnerable households. At the heart of this strategy are the strong collaborative and innovative relationships we build with communities and strategic partners.

We emerged from the pandemic last year having built an extensive portfolio of new partnerships. The foundations were firmly in place for us to deliver tailored and targeted help to communities in need in year two.

Our partnerships proved crucial during the second year of our five-year strategy as customers faced unprecedented levels of hardship. The health, wellbeing and financial challenges many experienced during the pandemic were being exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis.

From the outset, we knew this winter was going to be exceptionally challenging for our communities.

We invited some of our partners to talk to our leaders about the impact they were already seeing within their organisations to help prepare our operational teams for the increased volumes of customers in energy crisis that they would encounter in the months to come.

As a result of the unwavering dedication of our people to never walk away from a customer in need, combined with our established portfolio of strategic partnerships and initiatives, we've helped more vulnerable households stay safe and warm at home this year than ever before.

So much so, we've already achieved our target for year three in year two, having supported 170,870 households to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably between April 2021 and March 2023.

As we look forward, we will continue to harness the power of collaboration with our expert programme partners to ensure we deliver the best outcomes for the most vulnerable members of our communities.

In this report, we'll share how we've used VCMA funding to deliver tailored and targeted support to vulnerable households across Scotland and the south of England in 2022/23.

Mark Wild OBE
Chief Executive Officer



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We've helped more vulnerable households stay safe and warm at home this year than ever before.

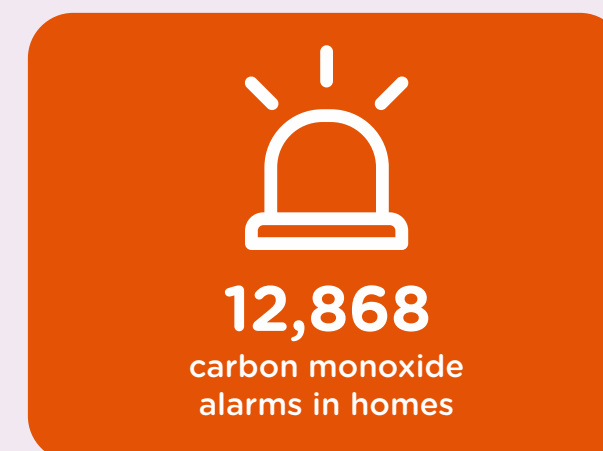
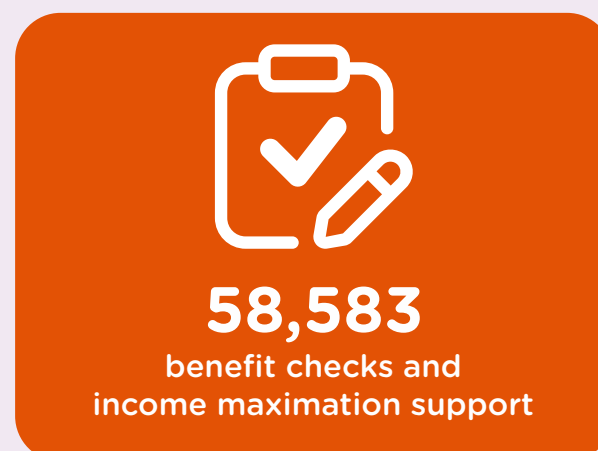
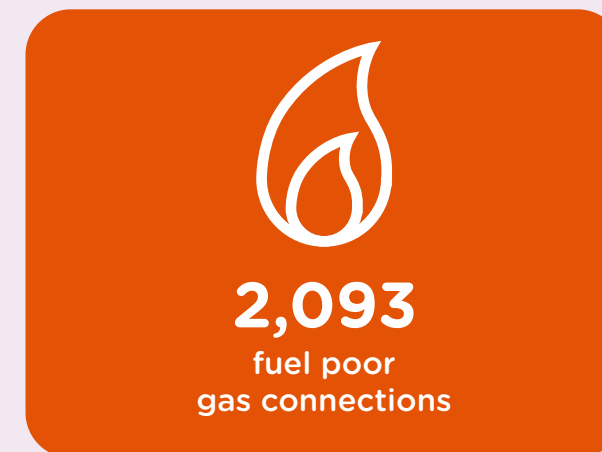
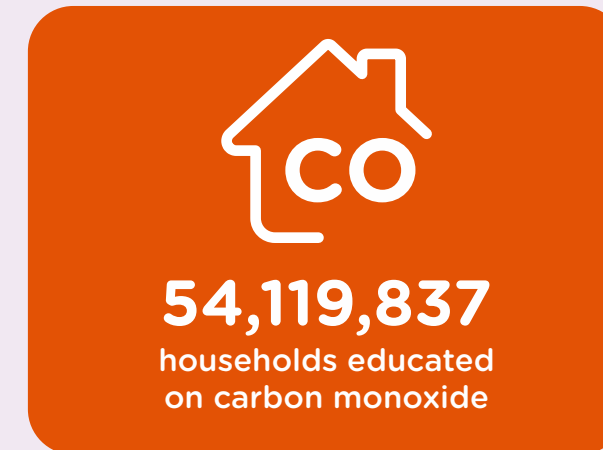
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How we're making the difference for vulnerable customers

Our vulnerability strategy spans the five years of the RIIO-GD2 price control, with this year being the second year of our programme delivery.

Building on our tremendous success last year, we've supported a further 118,731 vulnerable households to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably over the past 12 months - again exceeding our target for the number of customers we set out to support in our strategy for this year.

On this page, we celebrate the positive impact we've had on customers during the first two years of RIIO-GD2.





Strategy into delivery

Our strategy

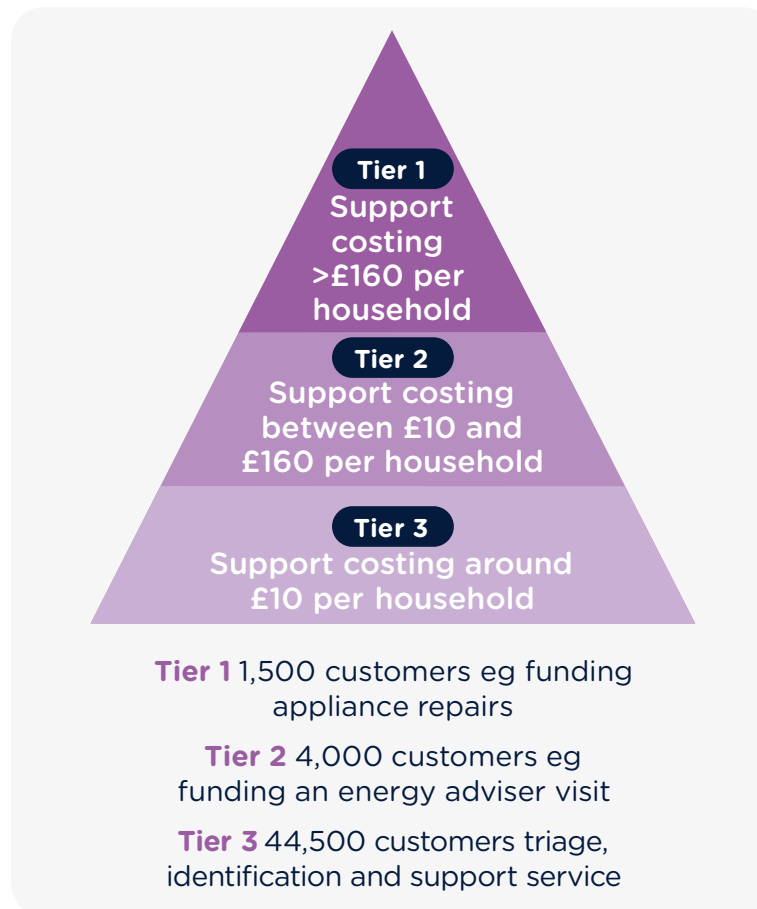
April 2022 marked the start of the second year of our five-year vulnerability support strategy. We were just a year into delivering our VCMA programme and the social landscape had changed dramatically. The pandemic had given way to the energy crisis, which was rapidly escalating into a nationwide cost-of-living crisis. More and more households were feeling the strain of rising energy bills on increasingly stretched household incomes.

What hasn't changed is our continuing commitment to offer tailored, tangible support to enable vulnerable households to maintain a safe and warm home. Seeing the hardship our customers are facing first-hand, our people are more driven than ever to never walk away from a customer in need. To ensure we have the holistic support available that our customers need, and our colleagues want to provide, we've co-designed even more programmes with expert community partners this year.

At the end of March 2023, we now have **51 unique VCMA energy safeguarding and financial resilience initiatives** in place both direct and in partnership with national, regional and grassroots community organisations across Scotland and the south of England.



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



Strategic certainty in uncertain times

In our RIIO-GD2 business plan, we promised to help 250,000 vulnerable customers use energy safely, affordably and efficiently during the five-year price control period.

This commitment was made back in 2019, in a pre-Covid world. While no one anticipated the arrival of the pandemic and the immense impact that would have on the lives of so many of our customers and stakeholders, our agile strategy was designed to withstand the unexpected and enable us to continue directing tailored and targeted support wherever the need.

We continue to adopt our three-tier cost-to-serve framework, co-created with stakeholders, which sets out the different levels of support and how many customers we aim to help each year within each tier. This tiered framework enables us to concentrate our activity to provide deeper levels of support to those who need it most.

As the energy crisis took hold, the nature of customer need became more complex. Our customers needed more individual support to stay safe and warm at home. There was more need for help with energy debt, benefit checks and emergency fuel vouchers, which all fall under our tier two level of support.

In this time of crisis, our focus had to be on increasing our tier two initiatives as this is where we could have the greatest impact on addressing fuel poverty and making a real difference for customers in crisis.

Through our business plan and stakeholder engagement, we had originally aimed to support 4,000 customers with tier-two interventions this year. By increasing our funding of tier two initiatives, we end the year having supported **49,042 customers** at tier two this year – over 12 times more than we planned.

Identifying households in need

Part of our responsibility as the local distribution network operator in Scotland and across the south of England is to ensure that we identify vulnerable customers and provide extra help to those that need it.

One of the mechanisms for us to identify vulnerable customers is through the gas suppliers' Priority Services Register (PSR). This free service helps us identify customers who need priority support in a gas emergency. It also allows us, and other energy companies, to tailor our communications and services to make sure we're keeping vulnerable households safe, warm and well-informed all year round.

As well as using the PSR to help us provide appropriate services and support for our customers, we also work to proactively identify and register vulnerable households for the PSR so even more eligible households can benefit. For this reason, supporting eligible households to join the PSR is a key component to many of the programmes in our VCMA portfolio.

We've registered 19,483 vulnerable households for the PSR this year, adding to a total of 26,822 households over the first two years of our VCMA programme. As members of the PSR, these customers can now benefit from tailored priority support as and when they need us.



Expert insight to guide our strategy

Our industry-first Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Steering Group (VSG) remains key to ensuring we're able to deliver a robust and considered vulnerability support programme in year two.

In the two years since its inception, this team of vulnerability and gas safety experts has guided us through the development of our initial RIIO-GD2 business plan and into the resulting VCMA strategy and delivery plan.

With delivery now in full swing, we've refreshed the membership of the steering group this year to create a smaller group that reflects the expertise we require at this stage of the programme. Through our enduring strategic programme partners, we now have the guidance of expert leaders across multiple areas of vulnerability and fuel poverty. By refreshing our membership, we're ensuring that our VSG most appropriately represents the communities we seek to support.

You can read more about our VSG in our [strategy shaped by experts section](#).

As we faced new challenges caused by the cost-of-living crisis, we sought counsel from our programme partners throughout the year to understand the real-time impact of the crisis on our communities. This invaluable insight has enabled us to continue to direct support to those who need it most, where and when they need it.

Bringing together our VSG members and VCMA programme partners at a strategic workshop to discuss the challenges of year two has helped us further strengthen this year's delivery programme, as well as refine our activity as we look ahead to year three.

Simplifying access to support

During the first year of our programme, it became clear that while many organisations are offering much-needed support to households in need, accessing that help can be complex.

Whether a customer needs help to improve their home's energy efficiency, increase their household income or understand the complexity of crisis help available to them, there's not always a clear pathway to get support and access any funds.

Knowing where to turn for help can be confusing and daunting, particularly for the most vulnerable members of our communities.

We've recognised that we can add real value to customers and partners by collaborating with other funders and other organisations to make it easier for vulnerable customers to access the help and support they need.

In year two, we've intentionally worked to create connections between partners to unlock funding and streamline processes to make it easier for people to access help. By working to connect multiple organisations, we're able to provide a holistic solution for vulnerable households.

By drawing on resources and funding from different partners alongside our own services, we're humanising help for vulnerable households with holistic and tailored packages of support.

External validation of our strategic approach

We look to our customers to validate that we're providing the service they need and want from us, and we're delivering that service to the standard they expect.

Our levels of customer satisfaction – and those of all the gas networks across Britain – are measured by Explain Market Research, through telephone, postal and online surveys with our customers.

We want our strategy to deliver the best possible outcomes for vulnerable communities, so it's important to us to look outside of our industry to ensure that our support is best practice beyond the energy sector.

We've welcomed external critique of our strategy, delivery plan and outcomes to ensure we're designing programmes that best meet the needs of vulnerable communities.

Our vulnerability strategy has also won **six accolades** at national awards this year:

UK Business Awards 2022


- Gold Award – Best Customer Experience in Utilities and Telecommunications
- Gold Award – Maggie Coleman Customer Service Award

UK Customer Experience Awards 2022

- Gold Award – Best Customer-Centric Culture
- Gold Award – Vulnerability in Customer Experience
- Bronze Award – Best Customer Service
- Bronze Award – Customers at the Heart of Everything

We've achieved the British Standard BSI 18744 for Inclusive service provision for the fourth year running, as well as CCA Global Standard 7 for our commitment to excellent customer service.



 This year, we've achieved a customer satisfaction score of **9.36 out of 10** from our vulnerable customers who are registered on the PSR. In comparison, the latest UKCSI UK Customer Satisfaction Score for January 2023 is **7.77 out of 10**.

Creating connections for holistic support

As well as identifying the power of connections between partners to best support vulnerable communities this year, we've also harnessed the benefits of creating connections within communities to enable us to keep households safe and warm.

As more people struggle to keep warm at home, they're turning to community centres as a place to go to stay warm. We've introduced our new mobile **Safe and Warm Community Hubs** this year, providing a warm space for customers struggling to stay warm at home. Our hubs also allow us to deliver face-to-face energy efficiency and financial wellbeing support right in the heart of the community, alongside our operational projects.

Establishing partnerships with existing community initiatives, like **Warm Hubs Surrey**, enables us to help build the capacity of these valuable community resources to respond to the ever-increasing need, while also expanding their support offering into energy safeguarding.

We're also fostering connections between our strategic partners to support them in addressing skills gaps within their organisations and facilitating cross referrals based on customer need. For example, we've linked Age Scotland with the Mental Health & Money Advice service to enable older people with mental health conditions to get support from both agencies in a way that works best for them.

Shaping collaborative projects

We genuinely believe in the power of collaboration to create connections that facilitate lasting change, which is why we've adopted this same strategic approach to the collaborative projects we're leading on behalf of the other gas networks.

The programmes we develop collaboratively with the other gas networks allow us to reach some of the priority vulnerability groups we've identified in our strategy more effectively and more inclusively than if we were to run the programme alone.

For example, we established the Disability Energy Support (DES) with water advice service with Scope in 2020 to provide independent energy advice and advocacy for people who are disabled. By now engaging all the gas networks in the programme, we're able to open up access to disabled people across England, Scotland and Wales.

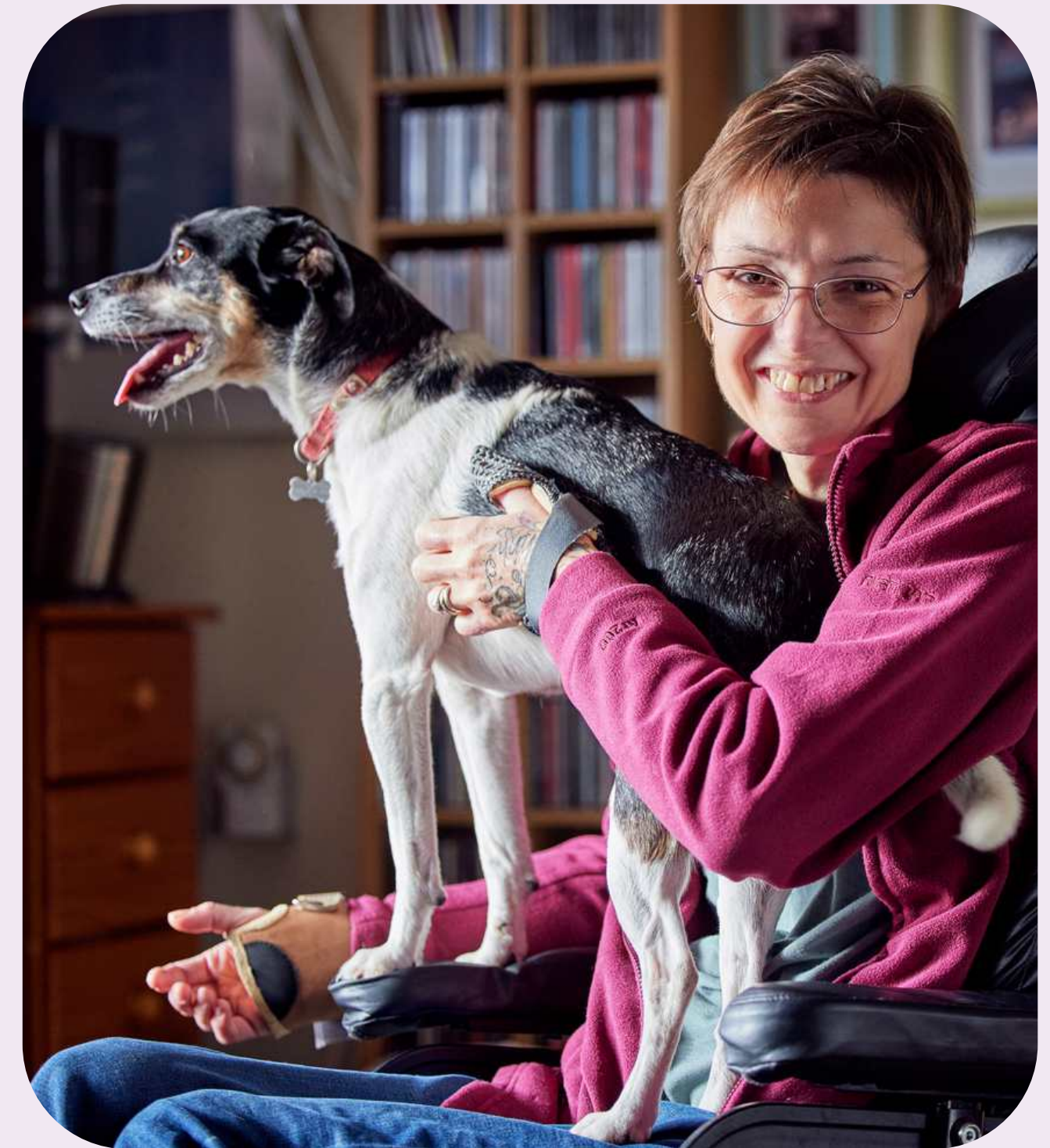
With other programmes, it's the success of our regional initiative that has led to the creation of a nationwide joint-GDN programme. Our partnership with Age Scotland had such a significant positive impact on helping older people stay safe and warm at home that we've expanded the programme to include Age UK and Age Cymru this year.

This year, we've led the creation of a brand-new partnership with Marie Curie to provide much-needed energy safeguarding to people receiving end-of-life care. By co-creating a programme with all four gas networks from the start, we're able to ensure that anyone with a terminal illness in Britain can access support from dedicated energy advice and benefits advisers embedded in the Marie Curie advice team, regardless of where they live.

When participating in all collaborative programme, we ensure it aligns to our strategy, stakeholder feedback on where we should target our support and our governance requirements. We also ensure it does not duplicate a service we're already providing to our vulnerable customers.



We're proud to be leading 63% of the collaborative GDN VCMA portfolio and participating in 88% of the 24 collaborative partnerships.



We're proudly leading national collaborative partnerships with organisations including:



Increasing support over winter

Over the past year, we've been involved in extensive consultation with Ofgem, the other gas networks (GDNs) and industry around the Fuel Poverty Network Extension Scheme (FPNES).

Significant UK Government policy shifts on how to address net zero ambitions have impacted our ability as gas networks to support fuel poor households through FPNES in recent years.

With increasing numbers of households being pushed into poverty because of the cost-of-living crisis and the FPNES less able to alleviate the issue at scale, we saw an opportunity to help tackle rising fuel poverty numbers through our already successful VCMA programmes.

With agreement from Ofgem in December 2022, we redirected £900,000 of unspent FPNES funding towards initiatives to combat fuel poverty and urgently help customers during the cost-of-living crisis this winter.

This included increasing capacity within selected existing VMCA partnerships to provide additional targeted help to fuel poor households, as well as mobilising six new initiatives in the past six months.

We engaged with our strategic partners to understand which groups were in crisis already, and who would need our help the most as the cost-of-living crisis took hold. Research from Citizens Advice identified the cost-of-living crisis was hitting disabled people, critically ill people and people on prepayment meters the hardest.

We have directed £600,000 of this funding towards programmes in Scotland, as the need is greater in this region. One in three Scottish households are in fuel poverty as per recent data from Energy Action Scotland, compared to one in ten in our Southern network as per Office of National Statistics 2023 data.

In our partnership case studies later in our report, we highlight programmes which have benefited from additional winter funding this year.

Refining how we measure impact

Robust and resilience measurement remains fundamental to our strategy. It's only by making data-driven decisions when co-designing partnerships that we're able to deliver enduring benefits to vulnerable communities.

We worked closely with the expert consultancy Sia Partners, who provide support with the forecast social return on investment (SROI) and net present value (NPV) of our portfolio.

We include both values on all our project eligibility assessments (PEA), calculated using Sia Partners methodology aligned to the DNO tool. These values are validated by experts and the supporting forecast documentation is a core part of our governance process to facilitate the approval of our projects.

Our current average SROI across our portfolio is £9.12 with individual programmes ranging from our newly-launched CSE Community Safe and Warm Fund at £0.38 through to our established Citizens Advice Scotland Safe and Warm programme at £35.19.

We also use our Social Value Bank tool, updated this year with revised measurements provided by Sia Partners, to assess the financial benefits of key outcomes. These include monetary savings from supporting vulnerable customers, but also health and wellbeing benefits, following them receiving in-depth support. This assessment allows us to monitor real-time progress against outcomes across our projects, and you'll see this measure documented in our case studies later in this report.

We've continued to work with the other gas, electricity and transmission networks to share best practice, develop consistency and build shared proxy values, enabling a foundation for a common way of working for our regional and national partners.

To enable true comparability on measurement, all the networks have been working with the Energy Networks Association (ENA) to deliver a single SROI framework tool. The common SROI tools, developed by SIRIO Strategies, are due to be built, tested and in use by September 2023.

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We've proudly continued to support SGN this year as their SROI assurance partner. We're actively involved in the assessment across its VCMA-funded programme, sharing best practice and insight for their partners and stakeholders.

Omar Clarke, Sia Partners

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Funding update

We have been allocated £16.3 million by Ofgem to spend on VCMA initiatives between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2026. At least 25% of this funding is to be used on collaborative projects with the other GDNs.

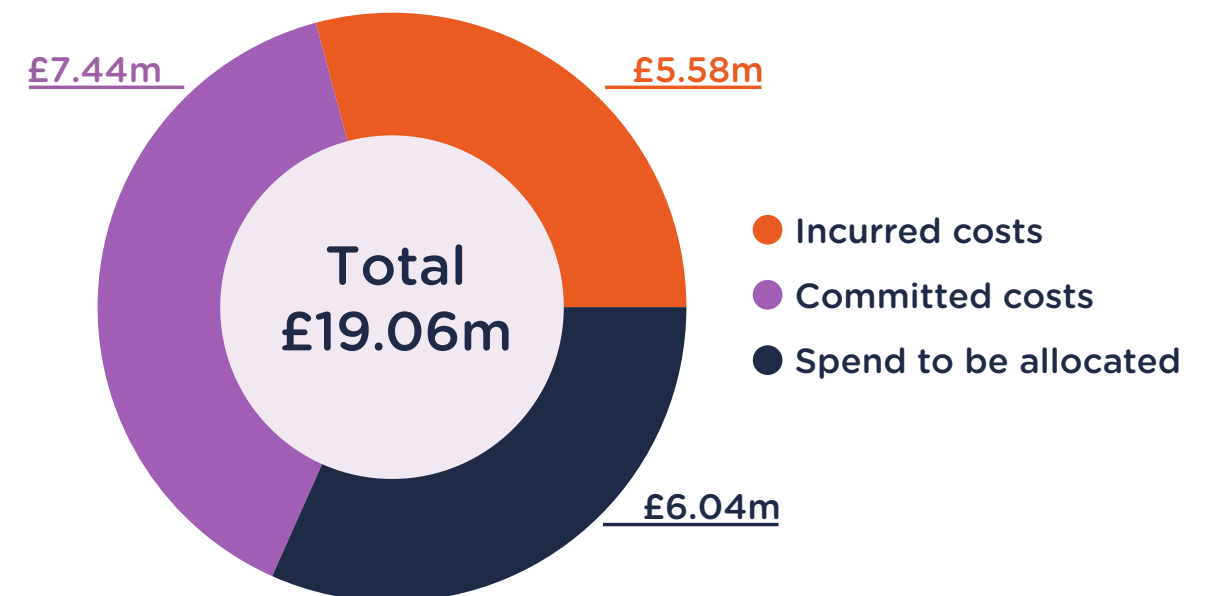
The allowance was set in 2018/19 prices so when annual inflation is applied using CPIH, it equates to around £19 million. CPIH is the CPI inflation index that has been agreed by Ofgem as the point of reference for the RII0-GD2 price control period.

With 2021/22 being the first year of the price control, it was our mobilisation year, centred around identifying and co-designing new partnerships. Year two has seen us up ramp up delivery of our activity as well as respond to the cost-of-living crisis.

We intend to spend the allowance sustainably over the five-year price control period. To do this, we'll continue to build programmes that effectively support those most in need in years three to five, allocating the available budget to deliver these services steadily across these years.

At the end of our second reporting year, we have incurred costs of £5.58 million (£4.84m in 2018/19 prices) and committed a further £7.44 million (£6.31m in 2018/19 prices) to approved project activity for future years. We have £6.04 million (£5.11m in 2018/19 prices) remaining to be allocated to programmes over next three years of the price control.

Full details of our project spend, both for projects specific to our network areas and our collaborative projects, can be found in [our projects section](#).



Strategy shaped by experts

Our independent Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Steering Group is chaired by Christine Tate, who has more than 30 years' experience in the energy industry.

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



I am extremely pleased to continue chairing the Vulnerability and CO Steering Group (VSG), which continues to play a critical and valuable role to SGN in the most challenging of times.

With the cost-of-living crisis on the back of the pandemic, many have fallen into debt for the first time and many more are suffering with a critical illness and mental health conditions.

The VSG has wide specialist knowledge and experience in vulnerability, fuel poverty, gas safety and supporting under-represented and harder-to-reach customer groups.

By bringing evidence and insights into the impacts of societal changes on vulnerable communities, the group has provided guidance and helped SGN to quickly adapt to rapidly changing customer needs and reach out to those most in need.

This year, the VSG has provided oversight and governance on data and insight analysis, choice of partnerships and programme design, to ensure SGN provides the best value and greatest social impact at this time.

The VSG has provided specific guidance on:

- the assessment of outcomes and the impacts of SGN's year 1 activity, leading to a review of SGN's customer target groups in light of the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. We challenged SGN on wider inclusion and to consider targeted projects with more hard-to-reach communities, including young families and those who are digitally excluded. Also, on prioritising support for those in fuel crisis with more financial support, unlocking unclaimed benefits and income maximisation
- SGN's 2022/23 winter programme, the regional approach to key messages, gas safety awareness and working with grass root charities to support those in greatest need
- the prioritisation of projects in years three to five to help households most likely to face hardship around energy affordability
- how SGN could maximise the impact of its programmes by bringing partners together to learn and share resources.

We welcome and applaud SGN's constructive engagement and collaboration on how it uses its sophisticated data analysis model to prioritise where it focuses the VCMA funds. For example, how it works with strategic national partners such as Age Scotland, Scope and Marie Curie and its approach co-developing programmes for specific target groups, such as older people, disabled people and people with critical illnesses.

We supported its increased commitment to working with grassroots community organisations, supporting them to build skills and capability to deliver help locally to those struggling to afford household essentials through SGN's Safe and Warm Community Scheme.

We recommended SGN should share more widely its great work and how it provides the support through the VCMA funding with its stakeholders and partner organisations. We are pleased that SGN went on to introduce a new stakeholder network mechanism, which brings the VSG together with SGN's network of VCMA-funded programme partners. This is enabling partners to work together to scale up services and collectively provide a much greater reach throughout Britain.

We are currently refreshing our VSG membership to ensure that we have thought leadership aligned to our understanding of customer segments, specifically climate change and hard-to-reach communities, with a focus on fuel poverty and those in financial crisis. We welcome Danni Barnes from National Energy Action and we are welcoming our Safe and Warm network of partners to help deliver greater outcomes in our communities, enabling them to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably.

Christine Tate

Christine Tate
Vulnerability and CO Steering Group Chair

We're extremely grateful to the VSG for generously sharing their expertise, insight and challenge, not only at our bi-monthly strategic workshops but on a day-to-day basis too.

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This year, SGN needed to deliver at scale to ensure its VCMA plans responded to the energy crisis that has led millions of households into fuel poverty. SGN has risen to this challenge. Having worked with SGN to scale up its strategy, I am confident it's resulting in positive outcomes for fuel poor households.

Matt Copeland,
Head of Policy and Public Affairs
National Energy Action

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SGN has adapted responsively to the changing healthcare environment post-Covid and actively recognises fuel poverty as a contributor to the poor health of vulnerable customers suffering from acute, complex and long-term health conditions. By supporting such customers amid the cost-of-living crisis and assisting those most in need at the point of need by helping to avert crises in times of hardship, SGN plays a valuable role in health prevention and management and helps to avoid unnecessary hospital attendances.

Rose Ann O'Shea
Independent health care consultant

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Creating new collaborative networks

As we've embedded our programmes this year, we've increasingly identified opportunities to bring together partners from different programmes to collectively support the communities they serve.

The more connections we've created between partners, the more we've realised the potential to create a wider economy of resources between our wealth of experienced, embedded and trusted community organisations.

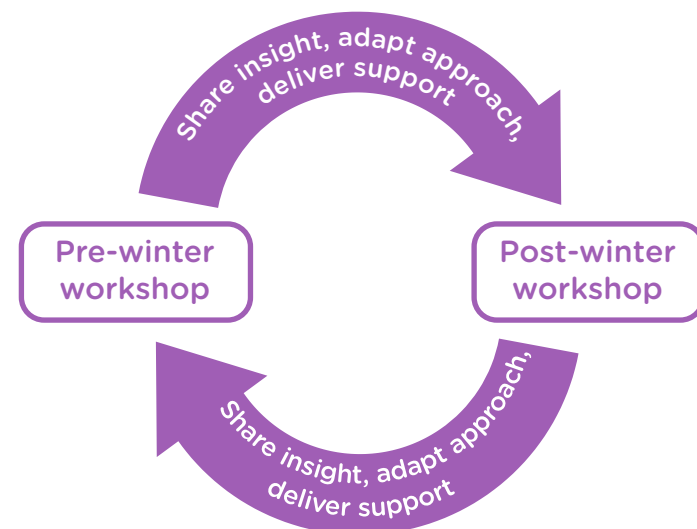
To explore this potential, we established a new platform to bring together our grassroots and larger third-sector organisation partners to help maximise outcomes for customers.

Starting with an initial Safe and Warm Stakeholder Workshop attended by 45 of our VSG members and programme partners, we brought the group together to reflect on how the changing landscape over the past two years had impacted the needs of vulnerable customers and share insight into where we should direct our help.

The message from our VSG and programme partners was clear - we can do more for our communities when we work together and there is a strong appetite for us to facilitate more collaboration between partners to make this a reality.

We now hold our Safe and Warm Stakeholder Workshops twice a year, before and after winter when we know our help is most needed.

Our pre-winter meetings provide us with the opportunity to share preparation and address any gaps in service provision, while our post-winter meetings allow us to share learning and progress new programmes and collaborations to address any issues faced during the previous winter.



Soundbites from our first Safe and Warm Stakeholder Workshop



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It's valuable to have a good understanding of all the potential partners and the area they cover to enable us to link with them and enable greater collaboration.

Luca Badioli

Arun and Chichester Citizens Advice

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It has been good to share all of our experiences and outcomes to see what we can all learn from each other and possibly fill the gaps for each other.

Suzanne Hainey

Age Scotland

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Opportunities like this are a great way to see what others are doing, as well as ask for support from others involved in the network.

Roseann Logan

Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland

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It's worth just getting everyone in the same room - do some sort of sprint work with clinical and direct care teams and see what we can come up with together.

Tom Heron

Marie Curie

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The beauty of SGN is that you have a defined geography, and so thinking about how you pull partners together who are working in a similar space to co-create a joint solution is transformative.

Matthew Cole

Fuel Bank Foundation

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Delivering our programmes

Our approach to delivery

We believe in a targeted and tailored approach to delivering our vulnerability support strategy, allowing us to provide meaningful and lasting support to households most in need.

We have a proud history of providing direct support to vulnerable customers as we go about our operational work. From training our engineers to confidentially identify and refer customers for extra help, to establishing a dedicated Careline team to triage calls from engineers and customers, through to our Care and Repair scheme to fund appliance and pipework repairs for vulnerable customers, we have established mechanisms to ensure our people never have to walk away from a customer in need.

Along with this provision of direct support services, we have three more strategic priority areas. All four areas have been shaped by the expertise of our Vulnerability and CO Steering Group combined with our vulnerability mapping tools, which consider industry insights and community-level data.

Over the coming pages, we'll introduce you to some of the partnerships we're delivering within each of these four priority areas through our partner case studies.



Our four priority areas



1. Providing direct support services to vulnerable customers

Direct 'beyond the meter' services for vulnerable households as we go about our day-to-day operational work



2. Supporting priority vulnerability groups to access tailored support services

Tailored support for eight priority customer groups, who are most likely to need trusted help to maintain a safe and warm home



3. Targeting geographic communities most at risk of fuel poverty

Targeted support for customers struggling to afford energy in the most vulnerable geographical areas within our networks, identified by our Vulnerability Index data



4. 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



Providing direct support services to vulnerable customers

All day, every day, our engineers visit customers homes to respond to gas emergencies, upgrade gas pipes and connect households to our network. In being invited into customers' homes, our engineers witness first-hand the struggles our communities are facing in keeping safe and warm at home.

Our Careline service

Our well-established Careline service enables engineers to refer vulnerable households to a dedicated team for extra help.

We've made it even easier for engineers to access the help they want for customers this year by developing a bespoke customer toolkit with an embedded referral app. The toolkit contains video guides to all our services and training from partners on topics including mental health and disability.

With the toolkit live, **our engineers referred 221% more vulnerable households for support in 2022 than in 2021.**

After a household has been referred to our Careline service, our Careline colleagues speak to the customer at length to understand their individual needs and explore ways in which we could help. Using our support matrix to identify the most appropriate services and partner organisations, our Careline team will create a package of support tailored to the household's unique needs and circumstances.

We have developed 14 core in-house services, such as our Care and Repair scheme to fund boiler repairs for customers in financial hardship, providing same-day fuel and food vouchers for households in urgent need, and issuing potentially lifesaving carbon monoxide alarms. These are all initiatives driven by our people, shaped by the need they've identified when looking after our customers.

With support from the Customer Experience leadership team, our Careline team is empowered to seek solutions outside of our core services for complex cases, such as working with care workers or local authority safeguarding teams to allow them to meet our organisational objective of supporting vulnerable households to use energy safely, affordably and efficiently.



This year, our Careline team has supported 17,463 vulnerable households, including 7,038 vulnerable customers identified by our frontline engineers, resulting in the provision of 12,270 unique support services.

Safe and Warm Mobile Community Hubs

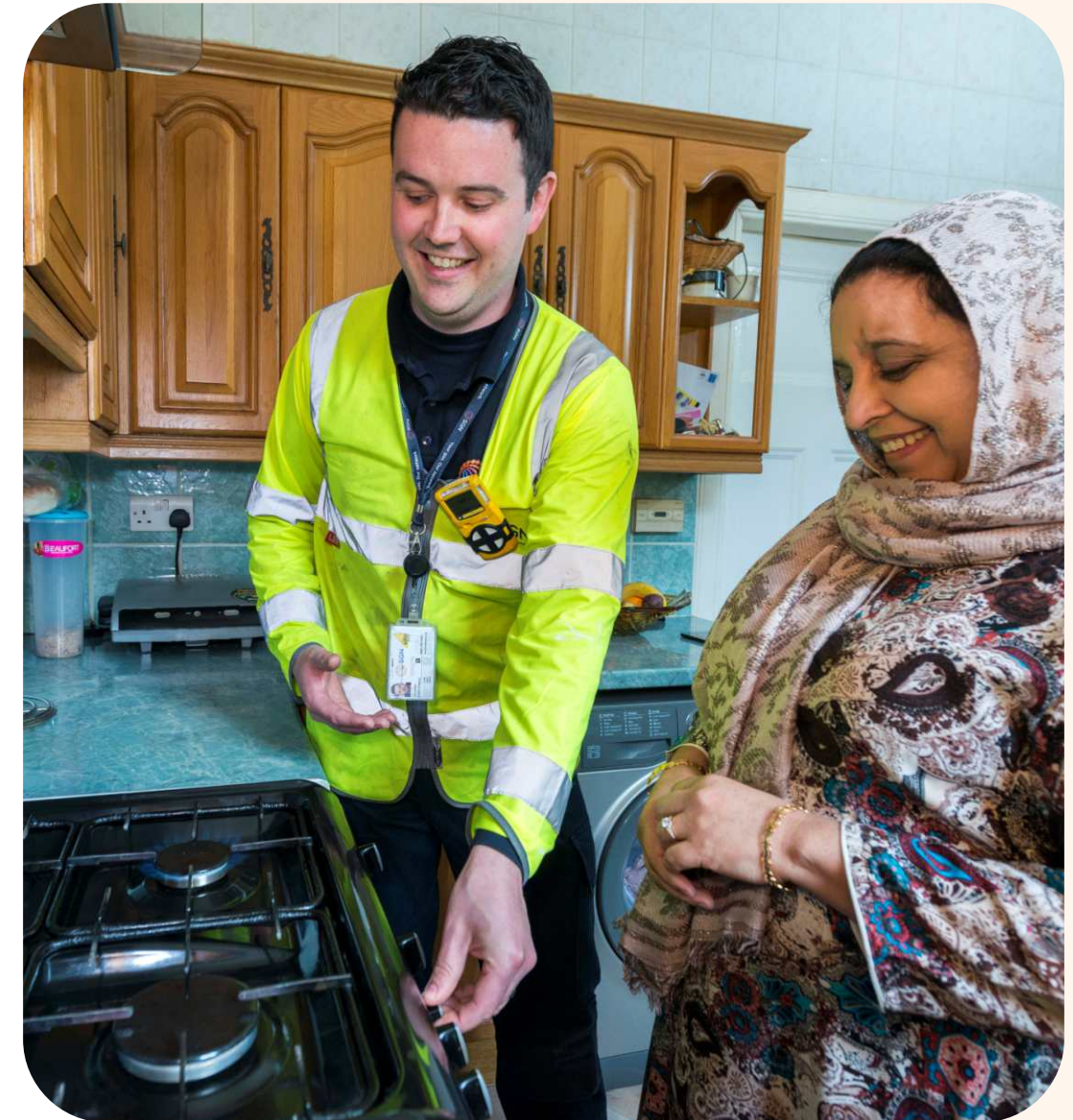
As the cost-of-living crisis began to escalate, we worked with our Careline and Operations teams to understand the impact it was having on customers and which services were in greatest demand. We identified an opportunity to evolve our in-house service to further support customers in financial hardship this winter.

We've introduced new Safe and Warm Mobile Community Hubs, which take our successful and effective Careline service out into communities most likely to be financially vulnerable at this time. At our SGN-branded Safe and Warm Mobile Community Hub vans, customers can meet our trained energy advisers for energy efficiency advice, charity partner referrals, PSR registrations and even help to fit a new CO alarm – all while enjoying a cup of tea and a biscuit in the warm.

We're using a data-driven approach to target geographical areas with high levels of fuel poverty and deprivation, who would most benefit from our help. Our teams also locate local resources, such as warm hubs and food banks, to provide onward support to other local support services based on their needs.



By bringing our Safe and Warm Mobile Community Hubs into communities where our operational teams are carrying out network upgrades or emergency repairs, we have an opportunity to build long-term trusted relationships with vulnerable households in these areas.





Care and Repair Universal Gas Solutions

Partnership at a glance

Strategy tier: 1

Duration: August 2022 to March 2023

Investment: £106,838



Key 2022/23 achievements



Households supported:
233



CO alarms provided:
45



CO safety conversations:
233



Repairs or replacements:
202

Why we're working together

When we're called to a gas emergency at a customer's home, our engineers will always make the situation safe. If the issue is with a faulty appliance or internal pipework, we must isolate the appliance or supply until it's repaired or replaced by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

Many vulnerable households are unable to meet this unexpected cost or find it challenging to arrange a repair, meaning they are forced to remain off supply longer than necessary.

Our engineers told us they were not comfortable walking away from a customer in these circumstances. They wanted a mechanism to be able to support vulnerable households left off supply.

Our Care and Repair scheme provides emergency funding to ensure vulnerable households are not left without gas indefinitely because they can't afford the unplanned repair or replacement. Working with a trusted Gas Safe registered company ensures our customers can be supported within the first 24 hours of their gas going off.

We've supported customers through this scheme since winter 2020, with our current delivery partner Universal Gas Solutions providing this service for us since August 2022. Since 2021, we've invested £293,643 into the delivery of our Care and Repair scheme, supporting 316 customers between 2021 and 2023.

How we're working together

Gas Safe registered engineers from our delivery partner Universal Gas Solutions will repair or replace the faulty appliance or pipework, or service the appliance as required. They share our focus on placing customers and safety first, and throughout their engagement, they ensure there is an efficient, safe and positive outcome for our vulnerable customers. This might also include helping the customer to address barriers to making repairs, such as clearing spaces to enable the work to safely take place.

If we've needed to isolate the gas supply to a vulnerable household due to a suspected or confirmed carbon monoxide leak from an appliance, the Universal Gas Solutions engineers will also test for CO in line with CMDDA1 and the associated procedures. If these tests identify CO from a faulty appliance, the engineers can repair or replace it for the customer and reduce the amount of time the customer is without their gas supply.

The Universal Gas Solutions team can also provide customers with additional support services to stay safe and warm at home including installing new CO alarms, providing practical energy efficiency advice and, if needed, onward referrals to trusted organisations for income maximisation and debt support.



Would rate this service a 15/10 if I could.
Extremely thankful for all of the help - God bless.

Mr Mahmood
Care and Repair beneficiary



Partnership impact

When our engineers have identified vulnerable households who could potentially benefit from our Care and Repair scheme, the team has called 100% of customers within four hours of receiving our request. This quick response is fundamental to this service, as we recognise the need to reassure vulnerable customers about the help available to them and the steps we'll take to restore their supply as soon as possible.

Through this partnership, we take the worry and responsibility off the customer to find trusted and reliable tradespeople to get their gas supply restored.

Following the initial call, the Universal Gas Solutions engineers attended 85% of households within 24 hours and 100% within 48 hours, with the majority of customers' issues resolved at this first visit. For customers with more complex needs, the team aims to restore their gas supply within three days.

The Universal Gas Solutions team takes time to understand each customer's unique circumstances and build a trusted relationship that allows for effective onward referral to other organisations, such as Age Scotland, National Energy Action, Scope and The Wise Group. By spending that time with the customer, they're able to comprehensively identify other funding mechanisms and support services that could help the customer maintain a safe and warm home for the long term.



We're immensely proud to be working with SGN. The opportunities to make a real difference to individuals and families from vulnerable and fuel poor households have been the most fulfilling area of work we have participated in. We have benefitted from the learning from SGN and their partners and are looking forward to expanding our support further in preparation for winter 2023/24.

Chris Taylor, Operations Director
Universal Gas Solutions





Supporting priority vulnerability groups to access tailored support services

Some communities find it more challenging to access help without trusted support, and are more impacted by living in a cold and unsafe home.

We initially identified seven groups with priority needs who would benefit most from energy industry initiatives to stay safe and warm. However, through working with our strategic partners and our Vulnerability and CO Steering Group, we've identified families with young children as a further priority group this year.

Our eight priority vulnerability groups are:

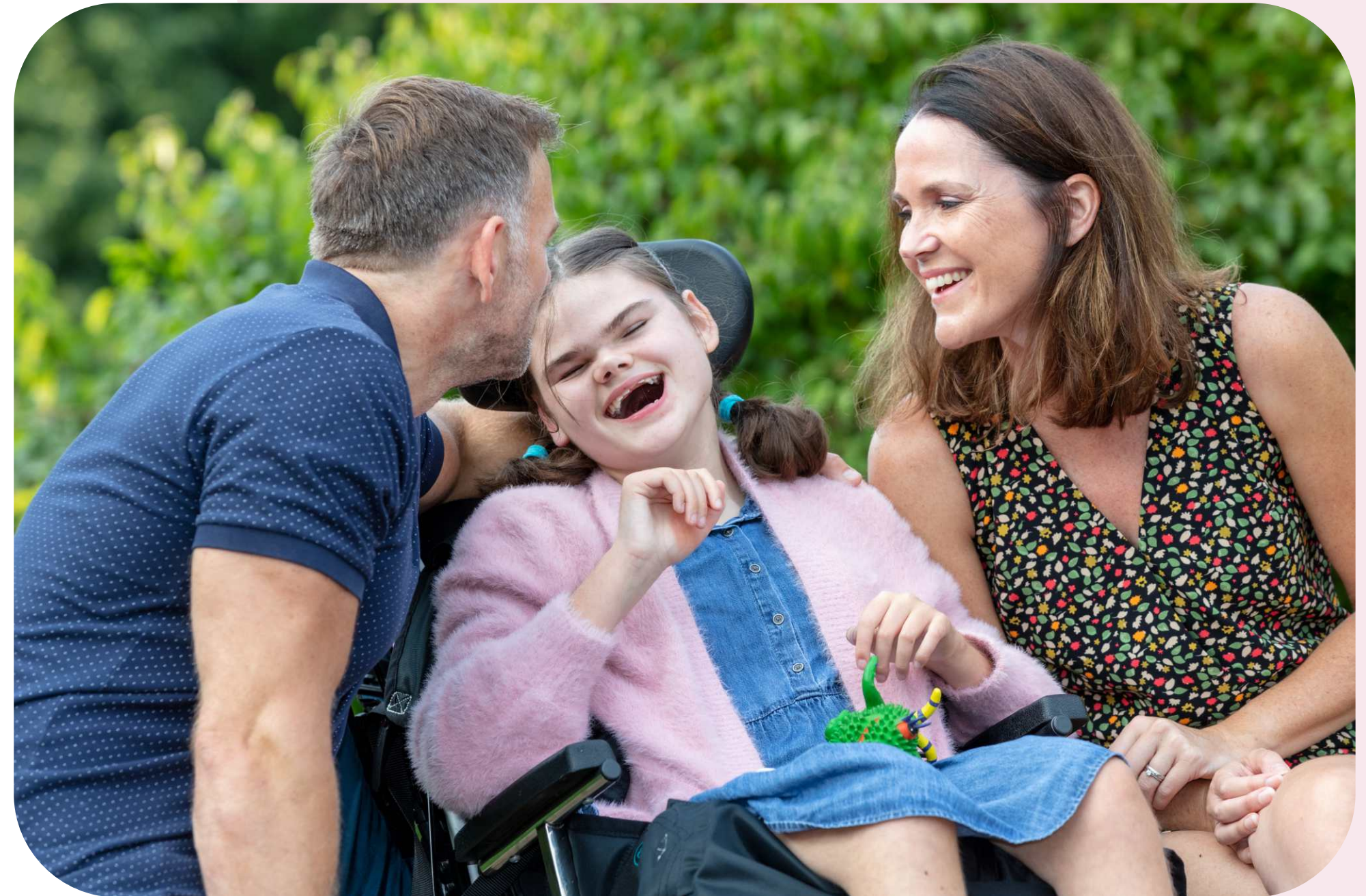
- Critically ill people
- Disabled people
- Families with young children
- Financially vulnerable people
- Digitally and culturally excluded groups
- People with mental health conditions
- Older people
- Young people

For us to have the greatest impact on these eight groups, we needed to develop programmes with strategic partners that have extensive first-hand expertise in supporting these specific communities. Typically, this means we've formed partnerships with charitable organisations that operate nationally, not just within our regions, such as Citizens Advice and Mental Health UK.

By working with strategic partners, we ensure our priority vulnerability groups can access support 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.

In establishing collaborative programmes with national third-sector organisations, our support can benefit customers beyond our geographical footprint. Because of this, we proactively invite other gas networks and regional utility companies to join these impactful partnerships to increase support for vulnerable customers.

As a result, a number of our notable partnerships with national charities that we established last year – such as our Disability Energy Support (DES) service with Scope and our safe and warm homes for older people project with Age Scotland – have been superseded by expanded pan-GDN programmes this year.





Health and Social Care Alliance ALLIANCE Scotland

Partnership at a glance

Strategy tier: 2
Duration: March 2022 to August 2023
Investment: £96,027

Forecast SROI: £5.80
SVB measurement: £1,829,990
Status: On track



Key 2022/23 achievements



Why we're working together

People living with long-term health conditions experience a range of challenges when it comes to maintaining a safe and warm home.

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland, also known as the ALLIANCE, identified that people living with long-term health conditions may not be aware of energy industry support services such as the Priority Services Register and may also find it challenging to access this information.

ALLIANCE's Community Links Worker Programme operates out of 65 GP practices in Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire that serve the most socioeconomically deprived communities in Scotland. **By being embedded in GP practices, the Community Links Practitioners tend to reach individuals with health issues that other services find hard to reach.**

By partnering with the ALLIANCE, we're able to remove some of the barriers to staying safe and warm at home that are faced by people from deprived communities living with long-term health conditions.

“ Together with SGN, we have a shared ambition to understand and address the social barriers people face in accessing safe, efficient and affordable energy. This partnership has given ALLIANCE Community Links Practitioners the opportunity to offer support to those in need. We look forward to our partnership growing and continuing to make a difference in the lives of citizens across Scotland.

Susan Young, Chief Officer - Operations ALLIANCE

How we're working together

Community Links Practitioners support people on a one-to-one basis to improve their health and wellbeing through better access to information, knowledge and resources.

Through our programme, we've enhanced the skills of 61 Community Links Practitioners by providing training and resources on how to support vulnerable households to maintain a safe and warm home.

When a Community Links Practitioner identifies a household in energy crisis, they're able to provide emergency fuel or food vouchers to help alleviate the immediate hardship the household is facing through the partnership funding.

As well as issuing crisis support and helping individuals to register for the PSR, Community Links Practitioners are also able to provide onward referrals and signposting to other organisations for support in areas such as income maximisation.

“ I can't thank you enough for calling, this chat is better than being given a million pounds. I was sitting crying before you called as I'm really frightened of what is ahead. I have great family support, but I try to put on a brave face for them. You have managed to make me smile.

Terminally ill patient

Partnership impact

By ensuring that training for Community Links Practitioners is a central element of our programme, we've given healthcare professionals the knowledge and skills to speak confidently to almost 9,500 vulnerable households about energy efficiency and energy safeguarding.

Equipped with this knowledge, Community Links Practitioners are best placed to determine which care setting is most appropriate to engage individuals in conversations about using energy safely, affordably and efficiently.

While emergency fuel and food vouchers are very much welcomed by households in a formal care setting, Community Links Practitioners found individuals better engage in conversations around the PSR and CO awareness at established groups that take place outside of care settings, such as walking groups or arts and crafts groups.





Mental Health and Money Advice Service Mental Health UK

Partnership at a glance

Strategy tier: 1
Duration: March 2022 to March 2023
Investment: £72,239

Forecast SROI: £3.20
SVB measurement: £25,714
Status: On track



Key 2022/23 achievements



Households supported:
106



CO safety conversations:
77



PSR registrations:
77



MHUK employees trained:
4



SGN employees trained:
50



Energy advice sessions:
85

Why we're working together

Before the pandemic, it was estimated that one in four people in the UK experienced a mental health condition every year. In Scotland, that figure was one in three.

Since the pandemic, and now with the cost-of-living crisis, this situation has only worsened.

Adults living in most deprived areas are twice as likely to struggle with their mental health as those in the least deprived, a causal link from experiencing stressful situations such as poor housing, unemployment, poverty and childhood adversity.

People with mental health issues also find it harder to stay safe and warm at home, with Money and Mental Health Institute research identifying energy bills as one of the most common payments people with mental health problems struggle to meet.

Mental Health UK shares our vision that no one experiencing money issues related to poor mental health or faces an increased risk of carbon monoxide poisoning because of mental health problems.

How we're working together

In March 2022, we began a six-month pilot to trial the effectiveness of a dedicated referral pathway for our engineers and partner organisations to refer vulnerable households in Scotland to the charity's Mental Health & Money Advice Service.

This service provides holistic energy safeguarding and financial advice to customers living with poor mental health. The charity has also supported us to upskill our Customer and Stakeholder teams, by developing and delivering bespoke training packages for teams who have direct engagement with customers.

In addition, The Mental Health UK team has also co-designed our bespoke vulnerable customer e-learning training package for our operational teams to guide our colleagues on ways in which to identify and support customers struggling with poor mental health as we go about our work.

Following the programme's success, we've extended the partnership in Scotland for a further nine months. We've also replicated the service in our Southern network area, at the request of our Southern operational teams, opening up access to the Mental Health & Money Advice Service for households with mental health conditions in the south of England for the first time.



Thank you I couldn't do any of this without your support. I've been so anxious about the rising costs of living. I can rest easier knowing I am getting the support I need.

Mental Health UK client



Partnership impact

We launched our pilot with Mental Health UK in March 2022, following feedback from our engineers who recognised the challenges customers with mental health faced during our work and the difficulties they experienced when accessing essential support services to stay safe and warm at home.

Our trial received positive feedback from both our colleagues and our customers who have benefited from the service. So much so that as well as expanding the service to our Southern network, we've also introduced Mental Health UK to our other VCMA programme partners in Scotland to explore how the charity could help meet gaps in mental health resource or expertise in other organisations.

We're already seeing the benefits of facilitating these connections between our partners. Age Scotland has established referral pathways into Mental Health UK's service for older people needing mental health support, while SP Energy Networks has invited Mental Health UK to join its new regional coalition of energy network operator partners that share skills and join forces to support vulnerable households in central Scotland.

Following the success of our trials in Scotland and southern England, we're also working with the other gas networks to assess how we expand the service to benefit customers across Wales and the rest of England too. From winter 2023 onwards, our regional programme will be replaced by a collaborative project co-led with Wales & West Utilities.



Working in partnership with SGN has been a real pleasure. The journey from project inception to delivery has been creative, well informed and extremely well-managed. Flexibility and innovation have been key to this smooth partnership and have been evident throughout.

*Rob Harding, Partnerships Manager
Mental Health UK*





Targeting geographic communities most at risk of fuel poverty

Households in fuel poverty are at increased risk of using unsafe appliances or fuels to heat their homes, as well as rationing their energy use which can lead to cold damp homes. These measures all negatively impact household health, safety and wellbeing.

We entered the second year of our VCMA delivery programme well aware of the increasing challenges that communities would face as we moved towards winter 2022/23. In October 2021, the average energy bill was £1,400 per year. It was forecast to reach as much as £4,266 by April 2023, which prompted the announcement of the Energy Price Guarantee in February 2022.

With this, the number of households in fuel poverty across Britain was expected to increase dramatically. It was forecast to rise from 13.4% of households to over 40% in England, and from 24% to over 35% in Scotland.

Insight and feedback from our strategic partners, such as Age Scotland, Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland revealed the same stark reality – more households than ever would be forced to make the inevitable decision between heating or eating as the cost of living became increasingly unaffordable throughout 2022.

We've developed our Vulnerability Index to identify regional communities in greatest need of support from their utility companies to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably. Created in partnership with Energy Savings Trust (EST), this data-driven approach combines our Vulnerability and CO Steering Group's experience with our vulnerability mapping tools.

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

With the cost-of-living crisis looming last summer, we identified that local authorities and community organisations were building new ways to support people unable to maintain a warm home. These new warm hubs became a key mechanism to reach regional communities at risk over winter. While the warm hubs helped address the immediate need, they often didn't have the information or resources to support people when they went back home.

We've been able to help by providing:

- customer information on the support available to stay safe and warm at home
- funds for resources to keep vulnerable people warm such as fuel vouchers, warm packs, heated blankets and slow cookers
- funding for trained energy advisers to attend warm hubs
- training for frontline organisations on energy safeguarding to help the wider community.

We've designed targeted support programmes for customers who are faced with difficult choices, often resulting in living in cold and unhealthy homes. This support ranges from crisis help to top up a meter in debt through to energy advice, benefits checks and help to manage household debt.

Our partnerships deliver essential support, not just for the immediate needs of our customers, but address the causes of fuel poverty to build long-term resilience.





Safe and Warm Community Scheme Centre for Sustainable Energy

Partnership at a glance

Strategy tier: 2
Duration: November 2022 to January 2024
Investment: £700,000

Forecast SROI: £0.41
SVB measurement: £133,731.89 (three months)
Status: On track



Key 2022/23 achievements



Households supported:
398



Energy advice sessions:
363



Emergency fuel and food vouchers:
315



CO safety conversations:
207



PSR registrations:
263



Benefit checks:
94

Why we're working together

Grassroots community organisations, such as addiction support groups, faith groups and play centres, are seeing record levels of demand from people struggling to make ends meet during the cost-of-living crisis. This is even more prevalent in areas of extreme poverty.

These small organisations are typically well-respected and trusted within their local area. By supporting grassroots organisations, we have a genuine opportunity to reach people in need within trusted community settings through trusted community leaders.

These households may not feel comfortable talking to a stranger about energy or money issues, so wouldn't access help from more mainstream sources of support such as government organisations. And those who had tried to approach trusted agencies for support were finding the organisations were overwhelmed with demand and wait times were too long for them to receive tangible help.

Yet often grassroots organisations don't have the capacity, skills or access to appropriate referral pathways and find it difficult to tap into potential funding streams such as the VCMA.

The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) is a national charity supporting local organisations across the UK to end the suffering caused by cold homes, so it's perfectly placed to connect us to groups who could benefit from our support.

How we're working together

By partnering with CSE, we've established a new network to reach grassroots organisations that support financially vulnerable communities.

Our Safe and Warm Community Scheme enables smaller organisations to access VCMA funding and skills that can help them lift hard-to-reach households out of fuel poverty and provide energy safeguarding support.

Through CSE, we're upskilling the grassroots organisations and broadening the support they're able to deliver within the community with 41 frontline workers trained so far. Following training from CSE and our CO training partner Think CO, grassroots organisations can register households for the PSR, deliver personalised energy advice, raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide, help with benefit checks and debt support, and provide emergency funding for households in energy crisis.

“
Most of our clients are on low incomes and feeling the cost-of-living rises very acutely. As well as experiencing energy and food poverty, digital poverty underpins their challenges in finding out accurate energy information and maximising their income to help offset the price rises. You are enabling us to reach people who often don't present at traditional support sites – such as foodbanks – because of the associated shame linked to poverty.

Liz Crew, Chief Operations Officer/Director TechResort



Partnership impact

Our scheme began in November 2022 and we've established partnerships with 17 grassroots organisations so far.

Increasing the capacity for grassroots organisations to support their communities within their existing facilities is also preventing other local services from being overwhelmed at a time when they're already stretched.

However, despite this initial success, it has been slower than we anticipated to mobilise the programme as smaller charities were so overwhelmed by the current crisis and needed more resourcing support to meet the funding criteria. In response, CSE adapted how it promoted the scheme and **put more resources into supporting potential partners with applications and training.**

We're keen to develop reciprocal relationships with the grassroots organisations we support. We're already benefiting from the invaluable first-hand insight into the challenges our communities are facing, which is helping us as we further shape our wider programme for the years to come.



Small, local organisations are often best placed to give help to people struggling to get by, but providing good advice about things like grants, benefits and changes in energy behaviour can be daunting. The support package from SGN means these organisations can access training and resources from CSE to give them the skills to provide exactly this sort of support, together with help from our team and SGN to access grants to cover their costs.

Janine Michael, Interim Deputy Chief Executive Centre for Sustainable Energy





Safe and Warm Scotland Citizens Advice Scotland

Partnership at a glance

Strategy tier: 2
Duration: March 2022 to March 2024
Investment: £1,082,554

Forecast SROI: £35.19
SVB measurement: £331,672
Status: On track



Key 2022/23 achievements



Households supported:
2,473



Emergency fuel and food vouchers:
1,072



CO safety conversations:
751



PSR registrations:
464



Benefit checks:
540



Frontline worker training:
296

Why we're working together

According to Energy Action Scotland, one in three Scottish households is now in fuel poverty. Even before the cost-of-living crisis, many families were finding their energy bills unaffordable.

Citizens Advice Scotland is the largest independent advice service in Scotland and the go-to agency for households in crisis. Working together, we're providing energy advisers in areas where there is no existing dedicated energy advice service. This enables us to help people in energy crisis and facing fuel poverty across Scotland to access the support they need to maintain a safe and warm home, particularly those in the most deprived parts of our network.

Over two years, we're aiming to support more than 6,400 customers in energy crisis, with a focus on marginalised groups, minority groups, asylum seekers, traveller and park home communities, and those who are digitally excluded.



SGN is clearly passionate about supporting those in need. Its commitment to supporting vulnerable customers has been invaluable, particularly at a time when we are experiencing a huge increase in the demand for energy advice. Energy advice is now our single biggest area of need and it's the first time since welfare reform in the 2010s that social security hasn't been the single biggest issue we are encountering.

Jonathan Watt, Director (Interim)
Citizens Advice Scotland



How we're working together

Building on the learning of our pilot project with Citizens Advice Scotland and regional electricity network SSEN, we developed a new programme to expand the Citizens Advice Scotland service into regional communities identified as being in greatest need through our Vulnerability Index.

We worked with Citizens Advice Scotland to assess which of the identified areas had the greatest gap in resources. We built a plan to reach the most vulnerable groups within these areas including marginalised groups, people with health conditions and those who are digitally excluded.

While our pilot programme saw us embed dedicated energy advisers in Citizens Advice bureaux, we're now taking Citizens Advice Scotland's support services directly into communities that need our help the most by placing advisers in existing community facilities, such as libraries, community hubs and health centres.

With our initial pilot with Citizens Advice in England and Wales highlighting that more than 50% of people in energy crisis didn't have the safeguard of a lifesaving CO alarm in place, we identified the need to raise awareness of CO safety among these communities. To address this, we engaged our training partner Gas Safe Charity to equip 138 Citizens Advice Scotland advisers with skills and knowledge to educate households and frontline workers on carbon monoxide safety.



[The energy adviser] helped us to apply for things we were entitled to - unbelievable. Getting new boiler and radiators, smoke alarms. Getting benefits we never knew about and debt written off. We can never thank her enough for her assistance.

Citizens Advice Scotland client



Partnership impact

Our Citizens Advice Scotland partnership has been extremely well received, with more than 2,400 households benefitting from advice on issues including energy, debt and housing. **In the first year, the community-based advisers have addressed more than 8,300 separate issues from vulnerable households through this service.**

Without this community-based service, households in some of the most vulnerable areas in Scotland would not have access to energy advice or support with housing, debt and other financial issues. Being based in the community and not just in bureaux, means Citizens Advice Scotland advisers have supported people who wouldn't normally approach them to access the service.

The team has held 86 community sessions, providing small groups with information on how to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably. Through this engagement, we've learned who is benefiting from our support:

- 65% of clients defined themselves as living with a health condition or disability that impacts their daily life
- 33% had caring responsibilities
- 20% identified as digitally excluded

Our advisers have delivered energy safeguarding training to 296 frontline workers from grassroots organisations operating in areas of greatest need. This training allows local agencies to identify and help people in energy crisis, referring customers back to Citizens Advice Scotland for additional support where required.



Additional winter funding

We were tracking the impact of the emerging cost-of-living crisis on vulnerable customers requiring the support of energy advisers and the emergence of warm hubs in Scotland. In response, we co-created a way to support these warm hubs with access to the skills required to provide impactful energy crisis support.

We provided £352,200 in winter funding to train over 300 frontline workers on energy safeguarding and build further capacity for trained Citizens Advice Scotland energy advisers to provide much-needed support for over 1,890 households in energy crisis.





Safe and Warm Fife Greener Kirkcaldy

Partnership at a glance

Strategy tier: 2
 Duration: May 2022 to March 2024
 Investment: £261,646

Forecast SROI: £10.04
 SVB measurement: £428,266
 Status: Exceeding target



Key 2022/23 achievements



Why we're working together

Fuel poverty is a real and persistent problem in Fife. There are 26 neighbourhoods in Fife with high levels of income deprivation that all fall within the 10% data zone in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, meaning they are some of the most deprived areas in the country.

Greener Kirkcaldy is a community-led charity working locally to bring people together, supporting residents through fuel poverty and food insecurity.

Together, we aimed to engage up to 20,000 Fife households over two years. Through community workshops, Greener Kirkcaldy's partner network and mailers we'll provide information designed to improve the wellbeing, safety and financial outcomes for fuel poor and vulnerable households. Stemming from this engagement, the team will go on to help at least 1,200 residents in energy crisis through personalised one-to-one support.

How we're working together

Our programme builds on the success of Greener Kirkcaldy's existing energy advice service, extending support to the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach households including older people, people on low incomes, and people with disabilities or long-term health issues.

Experienced energy advisers provide in-depth one-to-one advice on energy efficiency and energy budgeting, over the phone and in person. The advisers also raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide and how to reduce the risk of CO harm in the home.

Through the partnership, we're able to provide a pathway for Greener Kirkcaldy advisers to refer households to other sources of financial and wellbeing support including benefit checks and income maximation, PSR registration and befriending services.

In addition to one-to-one advice, the Greener Kirkcaldy team delivers energy efficiency and CO safety advice workshops for community groups across Fife, as well as holding drop-in energy advice clinics at community warm hubs.

Partnership impact

Our Greener Kirkcaldy programme has been extremely well received by the Fife community, with demand higher than expected in its first year. The programme exceeded the annual target as our marketing activity reached 44,942 households in Fife. More than 660 residents attended workshops and drop-in advice clinics to learn more about energy efficiency and CO safety.

The team has also provided in-depth one-to-one energy advice to a further 1,087 residents - a huge 191% increase on our year one target of supporting 600 households.

The project has successfully targeted support in the areas of Fife with the highest levels of fuel poverty, with 74% of households who received telephone and home energy advice in extreme fuel poverty.

Additional winter funding

Pre-empting the impact the emerging cost-of-living crisis would have on vulnerable households in Fife, we co-created an enhanced five-month winter programme with Greener Kirkcaldy - Energy Canny Communities - to provide personalised support to a minimum of 240 of the most vulnerable customers in Fife.

Through the programme, we're also delivering energy advice and CO awareness training for 30 frontline workers in grassroots organisations to enable them to identify and support households in energy crisis.



I'm phoning to make an appointment for an energy advice home visit for my parents, as I am so pleased with the service I received a few weeks ago. The energy advisor was so lovely and friendly and very knowledgeable about energy advice, and the home visit was very informative.

Greener Kirkcaldy client



People most in need are the hardest to reach, and the least able to protect their interests in the energy market. By the time people seek help they are often experiencing crisis energy issues. Our partnership has helped to deliver free and impartial energy advice to people in Fife who are most vulnerable to the impacts of fuel poverty. Together, we've achieved sustainable, measurable outcomes for Fife households, providing support where it's needed most.

*Kitty O'Connor, Energy Advice Team Leader
Greener Kirkcaldy*





Warm Hubs Surrey Surrey County Council

Partnership at a glance

Strategy tier: 2
Duration: November 2022 to March 2023
Investment: £70,000

Forecast SROI: £5.81
SVB measurement: £861,066
Status: Exceeded target



Key 2022/23 achievements



Why we're working together

Tens of thousands of Surrey residents face fuel poverty. Broader affluence masks areas of extreme deprivation with 20 areas of high need identified across the county in the English deprivation indices 2019.

Many Surrey residents facing fuel poverty will already be vulnerable households, who are at risk of exacerbated ill health from being unable to properly heat their homes because of rising energy costs.

We co-founded the Warm Hubs Surrey partnership with Surrey County Council to reach hyper-local communities within the county in need of support. We invited local electricity networks Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks and UK Power Networks to join our partnership to increase the outcomes for residents.



The partnership, particularly with SGN, was critical to scoping the details of how the scheme should operate. Their experience of working with community schemes and customers in fuel poverty was invaluable in helping define the outcomes we wanted to deliver.

*Natalie Fiskin, Chief of Staff
Surrey County Council*



How we're working together

The network of over 100 warm hubs was set up across the county to provide a welcoming location for vulnerable residents to keep warm, while accessing much-needed energy advice and financial support.

We carefully co-designed the programme to ensure all warm hubs were activity-based, with free hot food and drink as part of the offering. It was extremely important to all partners that we created a positive experience for those using the service, a place to connect with the local community and encourage residents to support each other.

The majority of hubs were led by communities and volunteers, embedded in libraries, community centres and faith centres. The partnership supported existing centres by providing marketing, funding to supply free hot drinks and meals, energy advice training for volunteers, fuel vouchers and winter essential items including thermal socks, gloves, flasks, wheat bags and heated electric blankets to distribute to households in need.



We have found that there are a variety of people who use the warm hub. There are lots of lonely, isolated people who live alone and love coming to access good free food and have a friendly conversation with someone in a relaxed warm space. There are people with housing problems, and others with mental health illnesses.

Talking Tree hub, Staines-Upon-Thames



Partnership impact

At the start of the partnership, we expected to set up around 80 new hubs and aimed to support a minimum of 4,000 visitors over the winter. Collectively, Surrey Warm Hubs were located in more than 100 community locations, providing safe and warm spaces that were used by 21,921 vulnerable residents over winter.

The sheer volume of new hubs established and residents using this service was well beyond what we, as a partnership, anticipated and demonstrates the hubs were valued and utilised.

Through the warm hubs, we provided 4,748 free hot meals, 4,033 winter essentials packs, 259 electric blankets and referred 1,569 vulnerable residents who were concerned about home safety for fire and rescue service safe and well visits.

Working with the local authority lets us connect to social enterprises within the community that we would have been unable to access at the same scale and pace otherwise. Because of Surrey County Council's network, we were able to mobilise our partnership so quickly and ensure our support reached frontline services ready for winter. This approach of building the capacity of local authority services is a model we're looking to replicate in other regions.

The hubs became far more than a place to stay warm and many continue to operate beyond the winter. Feedback from residents tells us that the hubs are an embedded and welcome community service, a place people want to visit, not just somewhere they have to go out of necessity. The warm hubs offer more than warmth alone, they offer a sense of connection and community in a post-Covid world.

Our partnership stretched beyond supporting the vulnerable households that visited the warm hubs in person, we also provided winter resilience, PSR, CO safety and energy advice to 482,000 Surrey residents through a direct mailer.



The family after-school club has been a particularly successful part of Warm Wednesdays. A regular core of families attends and appreciate the warmth, the activities for children (using different children's entertainers each week) and the hot meal.

Epsom Methodist Church





Reducing carbon monoxide harm

Through our organisational carbon monoxide strategy for RIIO-GD2, we aim to reduce CO harm in our communities

We do this 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 believe that it's through collaboration across industry that we'll have the greatest impact on reducing CO harm within our communities. As chair of the GDN Carbon Monoxide Working Group, we bring together key stakeholders to support the development of impactful, creative and collaborative initiatives to raise awareness of the dangers of CO.

We're also proudly leading a number of collaborative VMCA programmes, co-designed with key community partners who are equipping vulnerable groups with skills for life. By educating primary school children through the Bonanza Creative programme, young people through the Scouts programme and jointly leading the Game Over programme which innovatively engages teens and university students in keeping themselves safe from the Silent Killer, we're providing critical and relevant safety information at the right point in the individual's life.

These programmes also give young people the skills and the voice to share lifesaving safety messages at home and in their communities.



CO training for frontline partners

With the cost-of-living crisis seeing more people turn to potentially dangerous heating and cooking practices, we recognised the need to build capacity within our partner organisations to protect vulnerable households from CO harm.

We held a series of free CO training workshops for our VCMA programme partners, aimed at frontline staff and volunteers who provide support to vulnerable customers. Our own frontline engineers joined our Safety and Vulnerability teams to upskill our partners so they can make their clients more CO aware.

Almost 200 people attended our sessions. While increasing CO awareness was a key outcome, the sessions were a unique opportunity for frontline workers from a range of organisations to come together and openly share insights into how customers can be vulnerable in their homes, how we can identify their needs and how we mitigate vulnerability through appropriate safeguards.

Embedded CO education and training

Although we have established programmes focused specifically on reducing carbon monoxide harm among at-risk groups, raising awareness of the dangers of CO is fundamental and integral to all our community partnerships. We have embedded CO education and training within relevant regionally delivered programmes.

It's thanks to our partnership with Gas Safe Charity that we've been able to so successfully embed carbon monoxide awareness training within our community partnerships. The charity works closely with us to support the training of frontline workers so that all our partners have the information they need to identify and safeguard vulnerable households from CO harm.





Accessible and inclusive CO resources

With our CO strategy aiming to deliver tailored education and engagement programmes to increase CO awareness, accessibility and inclusivity is fundamental.

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 have a range of CO resources available in multiple languages and formats, including British Sign Language (BSL).

We've expanded our CO resources available for partners this year to include safety information leaflets available in multiple languages.

The print and digital leaflets are available in English, Urdu, Ukrainian, Polish, Chinese and Arabic.

We're also working with Gas Safe Charity and Action Deafness to develop four new CO safety information videos to use within our programmes with BSL translation and captions for people who are deaf or have hearing loss.

Measuring our CO activity

Through our own efforts, combined with our partner and collaborative GDN projects, we estimate that we've reached 43,852,680 customers in our network area with our CO awareness-raising activities this year which is a 327% increase from last year.

To measure effective engagement, we've assumed a common retention rate of 3% which is applied by all gas networks to any reach through marketing campaigns, based on marketing expert guidance. **Applying this approach, we're proud to report we've effectively engaged at least 1,453,752 customers within our network area with our CO awareness-raising activity this year contributing to a total of 2,297,833 customers over RIIO-GD2.**

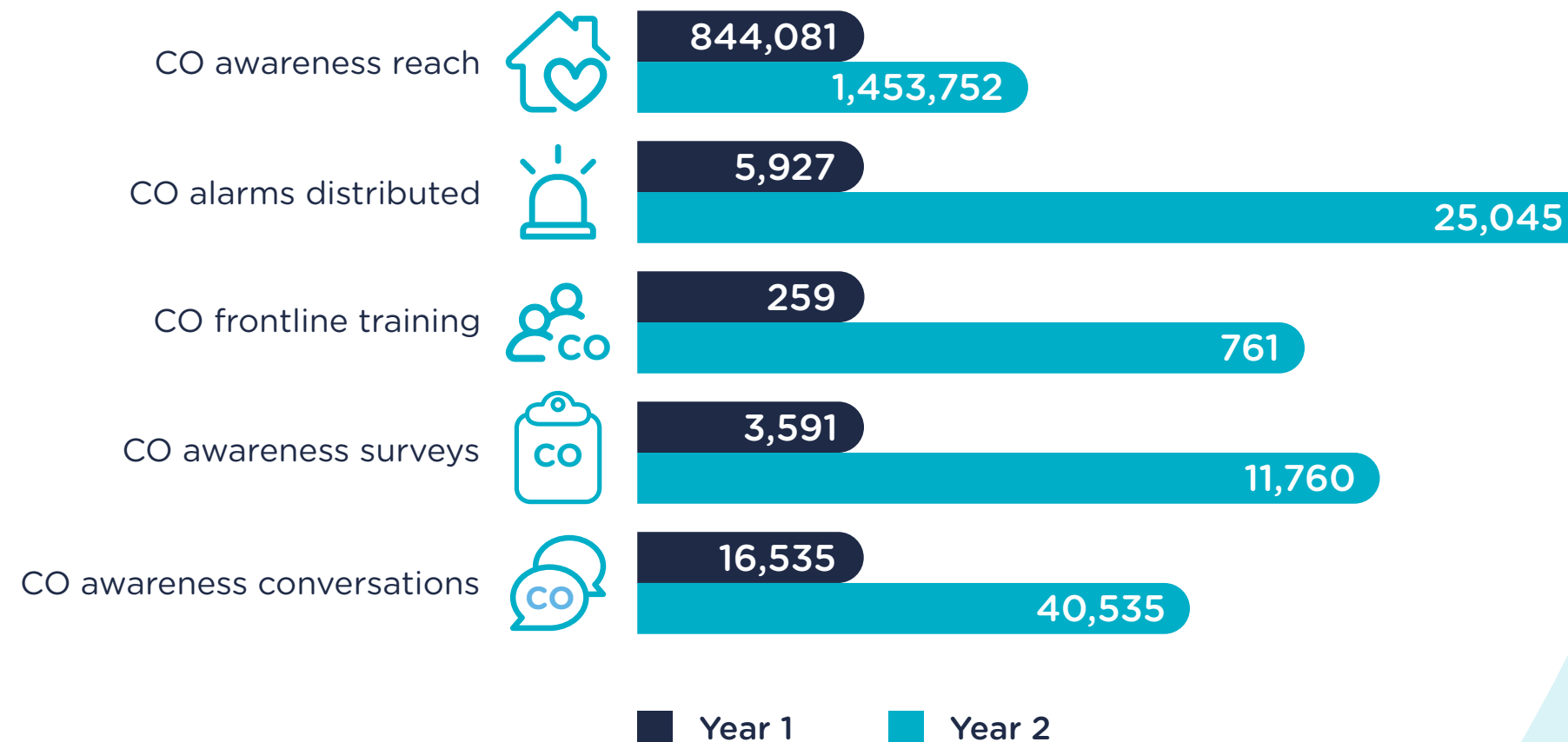
With more of our partners now trained on keeping vulnerable customers safe from the dangers of CO, we've been able to reach more households most at-risk of CO harm. This year between our own teams and our community partners, we've facilitated 40,355 CO awareness sessions to educate households on how to keep safe from CO.

The overall impact of our sessions is significant as we've seen the self-assessment scores move from 5.67 to 8.64, well above the industry mean. The impact of these partner and direct conversations is an increase in CO awareness by 52%.

It's 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.



Reducing carbon monoxide harm





Helping to make our CO ambitions a reality Gas Safe Charity




Frontline workers
trained on CO:
761

Why we're working together

We seek to raise awareness of carbon monoxide across our portfolio of VMCA programmes and educating frontline workers at our partner organisations is key to us being able to reduce CO harm in our communities.

We have a shared ambition with the Gas Safe Charity to help people be gas safe by informing, educating and supporting those who need it most. We both understand that by increasing awareness of carbon monoxide, we can reduce harm.

How we're working together

The Think CO programme is designed to help frontline staff who work in the homes of vulnerable people become more aware of the risks of CO poisoning. The in-person workshops and the interactive e-learning training courses equip people with a basic understanding of CO, knowledge of the signs and symptoms of CO poisoning and how to help prevent CO poisoning.

By coming together with Gas Safe Charity, we're able to ensure frontline teams working with vulnerable customers to deliver our VMCA programmes have the knowledge and skills to protect at-risk groups from the silent killer.



All of our energy advisers delivering work under the VMCA partnership have completed Think CO training. It has been an invaluable resource for engaging and training advisers in this advice area. Advisers have welcomed the support it gives them at a time when the cost-of-living crisis is driving client behaviours that are unknowingly putting them at risk in an effort to save money.

The training has directly resulted in our clients reporting increased knowledge and confidence in CO awareness after their appointments. Which is why we have now embedded CO awareness content into our training platform to make it available organisation-wide.

*Laura Williams, Service Delivery Manager
Energy Projects, Citizens Advice England and Wales*



As well as keeping people safe, another of our company values is to share our knowledge and expertise to help others. The work we're doing with Gas Safe Charity absolutely epitomises this. We're part of a community of frontline workers looking after vulnerable households up and down the country and by bringing these organisations together, we're able to strengthen networks between frontline workers and share experiences. Most importantly, we're equipping people with CO awareness that could potentially save a life.

*Grant Taylor, Area Health and Safety Manager
SGN*



Partnership impact

During RIIO-GD2 so far, the Gas Safe Charity has delivered its Think CO training to 1,020 frontline workers across 18 of our VMCA programme partners. This year alone, we've trained 761 frontline workers.

Beyond our programme requirements, we're facilitating connections between the Gas Safe Charity and our partners to help expand the reach of the Think CO training programme. For example, we've linked our collaborative project partner The Scouts with the Gas Safe Charity to develop bespoke e-learning for Scout leaders and adult volunteers.

Through engagement with the frontline organisations and the Gas Safe Charity, we're delighted to be leading a VMCA collaborative project on behalf of the GDNs which looks to further support frontline workers from third-sector organisations, fire and rescue teams and healthcare professionals to identify potential CO risks and provide CO safety information to the vulnerable households they assist.



Working closely with SGN, the Gas Safe Charity's Think CO Programme has extended the reach of its free carbon monoxide awareness training to organisations that provide support to vulnerable people. Our partnership with SGN has proved invaluable, particularly by engaging energy advice staff and volunteers from Citizens Advice in our online workshops and e-learning and by enabling us to make new connections with The Scouts.

*Hilary Bath, Programme Director
Gas Safe Charity*





CO community safety projects

Regional fire and rescue services

Partnership at a glance

Strategy tier: 3	Forecast SROI: £7.64
Duration: September 2021 to March 2026	SVB measurement: £402,020
Investment: £991,110	Status: On track

Key 2022/23 achievements

			
Households supported: 8,430	Frontline workers trained: 18	CO alarms provided: 19,525	CO safety conversations: 8,421

Why we're working together

Fire and rescue services have long been embedded in the communities they serve. While different services operate in different regions across the UK, they all have established home safety programmes that see them visit some of the most vulnerable households in our communities.

The home safety programmes, sometimes known as Safe and Well visits, are extremely effective at engaging hard-to-reach and high-risk households, such as older people, people with disabilities and people with chronic health conditions.

We know these groups are at greater risk of harm from carbon monoxide and while the home safety programmes do typically include some gas safety and CO advice, the guidance differs between regions as does the funding for CO alarms.



Working in partnership with SGN has allowed the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in Perth, Kinross, Angus and Dundee to increase awareness of CO poisoning and support vulnerable individuals we otherwise would not have been able to. We have been provided with CO detectors, translated resources and are now able to promote services which keep vulnerable people in the community safe and warm. SGN has been a pleasure to work with.

*Asha Lal, Community Safety Advocate
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service*



How we're working together

We've established two-way partnerships with all 11 fire and rescue services that operate in our network areas, working closely to ensure that vulnerable customers have appropriate safeguards in place. In addition, we now have eight unique partnerships funding CO safety initiatives that provide access to CO alarms and resources to be installed by trusted home safety prevention teams.

With each regional service operating slightly differently, we're using the learnings from each partnership we co-develop to guide future programmes. Every partnership is uniquely co-designed with the individual fire and rescue service, so our support perfectly complements the existing community programme while ensuring we're able to deliver consistent CO and gas safety services. For example, some services require our help with training for colleagues but have sufficient funding to provide CO alarms themselves, while other partnerships see us provide training, customer literature and accessible CO alarms for the fire and rescue service to install.

Recognising the potential to involve other community-based organisations in our efforts to raise awareness of carbon monoxide, **we've expanded this programme to regional community partners who support vulnerable or hard-to-reach communities.** This includes organisations such as food banks, handy van services and the Blue Lamp Trust.

These regional community-based organisations often work in a similar way to fire and rescue services as they are trusted in the community and directly support vulnerable households in person, so it was a natural expansion to include them in the scope of this project, and it allows us to reach more of the most in need households across our networks.

Partnership impact

Following on from our extensive efforts to mobilise new partnerships across our vast network areas last year, our programmes are now being delivered by eight fire and rescue services in our geographic areas and four community organisations.

One of the ways in which our programme is having the greatest impact on vulnerable customers is through the installation of CO alarms, in particular, accessible CO alarms. With fire and rescue services and community organisations having little to no provision for accessible alarms, our funding ensures that people with hearing or sight impairments are protected from carbon monoxide in their homes with alarms suited to their needs. To date, we've provided **1,365 hearing-impaired alarms and 525 verbal alarms** to be installed via these partner organisations.

With our safety messaging embedded in so many fire and rescue service and community programmes, we've significantly increased the number of CO safety conversations we've held this year. We've seen a **huge 842% rise in CO conversations compared to last year**, reflecting a considerable increase in the impact of this programme.



Our partnership with SGN goes beyond the provision of CO alarms and CO awareness discussions for the clients we support through our Home Safety Visits. Working closely together has enabled us to provide vital and potentially lifesaving support to some of the most vulnerable households in our community, addressing health and wellbeing issues as well as reducing the risk of fire in the home.

*Lisa Priestman, Prevention Manager
East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service*





Our projects

In the second year of RIIO-GD2, we're extremely proud to have an established portfolio of 27 regional VCMA programmes in addition to 24 collaborative projects with other gas networks.

You'll find our projects listed on the next page with key programme details, followed by a list of the collaborative projects.

There's a link from each project through to the Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA) on our website, where you can read more about the scope and ambition of the partnership.

We've also included a link to a new partnership page for you to keep up-to-date with programme progress over the months and years to come.

We've included full details of all our year two 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 2022/23 values.

Project list SGN-specific

Partner organisation	Project	Strategic theme	Region	Duration	Forecast SROI*	Total committed cost	Status
Age Scotland	Safe and Warm Homes	Supporting priority customer groups	Scotland	2021-23	£5.39	£166,439	Completed
Age Scotland	Cost of Living - Fuel Poverty advisers Additional winter support (repurposed funds)	Supporting priority customer groups	Scotland	2023-24	£10.79	£46,627	Delivering
AgilityEco	Care and Repair scheme	Services beyond the meter	Scotland and Southern	2021	N/A	£50,000	Completed
ALLIANCE Scotland	The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland	Supporting priority customer groups	Scotland	2022-23	£5.80	£96,027	Delivering
Centre for Sustainable Energy	Safe and Warm Community scheme	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Scotland and Southern	2022-24	£0.38	£700,000	Delivering
Changeworks	Affordable Warmth Advocacy South-East	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Scotland	2022-24	£1.37	£126,806	Delivering
Changeworks	Highlands Affordable Warmth	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Scotland	2022-24	£1.88	£294,008	Delivering
Citizens Advice - Hampshire	Home and Well	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Southern	2021-23	£22.15	£114,500	Completed
Citizens Advice - Sussex	Tackling Fuel Poverty Together	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Southern	2021-23	£1.81	£75,000	Completed
Citizens Advice - Sussex	Welcoming Warm Spaces Sussex	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Southern	2023	£5.25	£83,000	Delivering
Citizens Advice - North Oxon and South Northants	Energy Matters - Keeping communities safe and warm in North Oxfordshire and West Northamptonshire	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Southern	2023-25	£6.82	£202,800	Delivering
Citizens Advice Scotland	Energy Advisory Services North of Scotland	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Scotland	2021-22	£3.57	£89,886	Completed
Citizens Advice Scotland	Safe and Warm Scotland	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Scotland	2022-24	£35.19	£1,082,554	Delivering
Citizens Advice Scotland	Safe and Warm Spaces Additional winter support (repurposed funds)	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Scotland	2023	£9.19	£352,200	Delivering
Draw Events	Alzheimer's Dementia and Care Show 2023	Supporting priority customer groups	Scotland and Southern	2023	£7.56	£2,025	Completed
Extra Care Support Services	Extra Care Support Services (including Care and Repair)	Services beyond the meter	Scotland and Southern	2021-26	£4.58	£2,570,359	Delivering
Fuel Bank Foundation	Winter crisis fund Additional winter support (repurposed funds)	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Scotland and Southern	2023	£4.52	£100,000	Delivering
Greener Kirkcaldy	Safe and Warm - Fife	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Scotland	2022-24	£10.04	£261,646	Delivering
Greener Kirkcaldy	Energy Canny Communities Additional winter support (repurposed funds)	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Scotland	2023	£9.02	£25,557	Delivering
Groundwork London and Groundwork South of England	Groundwork Green Doctors - Kent	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Southern	2021-23	£1.90	£62,975	Completed
Mental Health UK	Mental Health UK Advisers Service	Supporting priority customer groups	Scotland	2022-23	£3.20	£72,239	Delivering
MyBnk	"Young People's Financial Education Programme The Money House and MoneyCast"	Supporting priority customer groups	Scotland and Southern	2021-24	£16.45	£210,000	Delivering
NEA	Empowered by Energy	Supporting priority customer groups	Scotland and Southern	2021-23	£5.50	£19,198	Completed
NEA and The Wise Group	Warm and Safe Homes Advice Service	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Scotland and Southern	2021-22	£4.64	£92,741	Completed
Regional fire and rescue service and community partnerships	Carbon monoxide community safety projects	Carbon monoxide awareness	Scotland and Southern	2021-26	£7.64	£991,110	Delivering
Scope	Disability Energy Helpdesk	Supporting priority customer groups	Scotland and Southern	2021-22	£13.21	£25,000	Completed
Scope	Help for disabled people in energy crisis Additional winter support (repurposed funds)	Supporting priority customer groups	Scotland and Southern	2023-24	£7.07	£169,000	Delivering
Surrey County Council	Warm Hubs Surrey	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Southern	2022-23	£5.81	£70,000	Completed
Thinking Works and SELCE	South London Together - Providing accessible help to keep communities safe and warm	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Southern	2023-25	£3.10	£369,921	Delivering
VCMA Administration	VCMA Administration	VCMA administration	Scotland and Southern	2021-26	N/A	£1,527,442	Delivering
Warmworks	Warmworks Aftercare Service	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Scotland	2022-23	£5.53	£40,625	Delivering
YES Energy Solutions	Holistic energy advisers service	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	Scotland and Southern	2023-24	£3.60	£151,647	Delivering

Project list collaborative

These are programmes we deliver in collaboration with one or more of the other gas distribution networks.

Partner organisation	Lead GDN	Participating GDNs	Project	Strategic theme	Duration	Forecast SROI*	Total committed cost	Status
Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age UK	SGN and WWU	Cadent and NGN	Helping older people live in safe and warm homes	Supporting priority customer groups	2023-25	£8.38	£360,747	Delivering
APPCOG and Policy Connect	WWU	Cadent, NGN and SGN	CO Awareness Week 2022	Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness	2022	£24.86	£5,414	Completed
Bonanza Creative	SGN	NGN and WWU	CO awareness in schools (Year 1)	Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness	2022	£1.56	£21,260	Completed
Bonanza Creative	SGN	NGN and WWU	CO awareness in schools (Year 2)	Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness	2022-23	£2.51	£72,069	Delivering
Citizens Advice England and Wales	SGN	Cadent, NGN and WWU	Energy safeguarding and CO safety partnership	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	2022-23	£5.76	£534,481	Completed
Citizens Advice England and Wales	SGN	NGN and WWU	Energy safeguarding and CO safety partnership	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	2023-26	£5.54	£1,121,386	Delivering
Fuel Bank Foundation	SGN	Cadent, NGN and WWU	Fuel crisis support	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	2022-24	£5.95	£135,355	Delivering
Gas Safe Charity	SGN	Cadent, NGN and WWU	Think CO app development	Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness	2023-26	£0.51	£11,593	Mobilising
Heavenly and Campus Group	SGN and WWU	Cadent and NGN	Game Over	Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness	2022-23	£8.45	£81,448	Delivering
IPIP	Cadent	NGN, SGN and WWU	CO in pregnancy research study	Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness	2021-23	£0.02	£67,670	Delivering
Jseven Media	Cadent	NGN, SGN and WWU	CO winter awareness campaign 2021-22	Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness	2021-22	£39.30	£104,186	Completed
Maggie's	Cadent	NGN and SGN	Maggie's centres - Safe and warm	Supporting priority customer groups	2022-24	£3.70	£95,418	Delivering
Marie Curie	SGN	Cadent, NGN and WWU	Energy safeguarding for terminally ill people	Supporting priority customer groups	2022-25	£12.16	£482,087	Delivering
MyBnk	SGN	Cadent, NGN and WWU	Schools - Financial inclusion and energy saving	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	2022-25	£15.53	£102,058	Delivering
NEA and Wise Group	Cadent and SGN		Warm and Safe Homes	Fuel poverty and energy affordability	2022-23	£9.05	£127,741	Completed
NSPCC	Cadent	NGN, SGN and WWU	NSPCC Collaborative GDN Project	Services beyond the meter	2023-25	£5.01	£151,502	Mobilising
Policy Connect	Cadent	NGN, SGN and WWU	CO Safe 4 Summer campaign	Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness	2022	£34.51	£13,536	Completed
Scope	SGN	Cadent, NGN and WWU	Disability Energy Support (DES) with water advice	Supporting priority customer groups	2022-24	£12.48	£64,970	Delivering
Scope	SGN	Cadent, NGN and WWU	Disabled community CO research	Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness	2022	£1.82	£8,284	Completed
SP Energy Networks	SGN	Cadent and WWU	Priority Services Register - CO pilot	Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness	2022-23	£13.18	£895	Delivering
The Scout Association	SGN	Cadent, NGN and WWU	Carbon monoxide awareness programme	Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness	2021-24	£1.81	£81,213	Delivering



Our future plans

Looking ahead

This year has been a year like no other for many of our customers, with so many households left struggling to stay safe and warm at home. Our partners have continued to provide invaluable insight into the increasing hardship faced by our communities and we're proud of the speed at which we've been able to target our support to people who need it most.

We set out to support 50,000 vulnerable customers this year, but by responding quickly and efficiently to the unprecedented customer need, we have well exceeded that target.

So much so, we supported 118,731 vulnerable households to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably this year, bringing us to a total of 170,870 vulnerable customers supported since the start of RIIO-GD2.

Responding to new impacts of the cost-of-living crisis

While we've seen a reduction in energy costs in 2023, energy bills are by no means back to pre-crisis levels. In May 2023, NEA reported that energy bills are still approximately almost double the level of October 2021. Just 21 months ago, the typical household paid £1,271 a year, and even with the new price, 2 million extra UK households are in fuel poverty, up from 4.5 million. It is a 65% increase in a typical bill since October 2021 and an 80% increase since April 2021.

And although winter may be behind us, we're now seeing the impact of last winter's high energy bills on household debt. Our partner Citizens Advice is witnessing escalating numbers of people now struggling to manage their household budget as a result of the energy debt forced upon them as they heated their homes over winter.

In a bid to help tackle household debt, we're seeing record numbers of people cancel their digital service subscriptions, such as mobile phones and home internet, creating new barriers to accessing information and services based not just on skill, but affordability too.

We will maintain this agile and responsive approach to shaping our programmes in 2023 to ensure we're responding appropriately to changing customer need, with debt and digital inclusion being key areas of focus for us in year three.

Increasing support for critically ill people

Next year, we'll continue to grow partnerships that support people in poor health. We're proudly piloting a project in Scotland with Kidney Care UK, given our understanding of the increased energy needs and health implications of not being able to afford energy for people with kidney disease.

We're also extending the support we provide to families living with life-limiting illnesses through a new partnership with Together for Short Lives, tailored to families caring for children with a terminal diagnosis.

Collaboration at the heart

As well as our regional programmes, we're excited about the new collaborative project in partnership with the NSPCC, which will see us invest time and resources into building skills within our business around child safeguarding.

This year has cemented to us that it's only through genuine collaboration and partnership that we can deliver impactful and sustainable support for vulnerable customers.

We're delighted to be the catalyst in bringing together large and small organisations, local authorities and other utilities to share resources, learn and develop our services together. Our safe and warm network of community partnerships is enabling us to collectively offer holistic support to the vulnerable communities we serve and enrich our respective organisations.



Expanding our programme scope

Following extensive engagement with Ofgem and our stakeholders, including the other gas networks and consumer advocate bodies such as Citizens Advice, Citizens Advice Scotland, NEA and Energy Action Scotland, there has been a decision to repurpose unused funds from the Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES).

The scheme is designed to connect customers in fuel poverty to the gas network for affordable heat. Although the FPNES is still an effective way to support households in fuel poverty, the demand for the service in the past two years is less than the allocated allowances.

To ensure that this funding can be used to support vulnerable customers in fuel poverty, it's been agreed that unspent allowances can be moved into the VCMA as VCMA2. Aligned with our core purpose of keeping our customers safe and warm, we're now preparing to utilise this additional funding to reach the most vulnerable members of our community.

We will use the additional VCMA funding responsibly, transparently and in a way that delivers true value for customers by creating sustainable partnerships that have meaningful outcomes for vulnerable households.

With the increased funding, we will double our vulnerable customer ambition for RIIO-GD2 - we will now support more than 500,000 vulnerable households to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably by 2026.

All of us at SGN are committed to making a true difference in the lives of our vulnerable customers. We're grateful for the continued support of our expert partners as we move into 2023 and we look forward to welcoming more partners onboard over the next 12 months and beyond. By working together, we're proudly supporting the most vulnerable households in our communities to stay safe and warm at home.



Full project data

For each of our projects, we've reported full details of our year two 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](#)

Over the coming year, we'll also be regularly updating our website with partnership progress. You can find the latest project data within individual programme pages in the [VCMA projects section of our website](#).

Appendix

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

Thank you to our community partners for your support in delivering the second year of our programme and helping collate this report.

