

Warmworks Aftercare Service

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance

1st October 2023

Updated Jan 2024

SGN



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1 Description

Funding GDN(s)	SGN
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	N/A
Date of PEA submission:	1 ST October 2023 Updated Jan 2024
Project contact name:	Linda Spence
Project contact number/email:	Linda.spence@sgn.co.uk
Total cost (£k)	£158,960
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£158,960

2 Problem statement

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

There are now 850,000 households estimated to be living in fuel poverty in Scotland.

<https://fuelpovertypanel.scot/key-facts/#Footnotes>. Through the delivery of the Warmer Homes Scotland Scheme (Scottish Government’s national fuel poverty scheme), Warmworks has supported more than 35,000 vulnerable households since 2015, who have struggled to heat their homes and pay their energy bills.

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

With the continuing impact of the cost of living crisis and the increase in demand from fuel poor households to have affordable heat, Warmworks identified a gap in the provision of a wraparound service for fuel poor households and assessed the need for a permanent Aftercare service. This service was piloted over a period of 19 months and focused on taking a proactive approach contacting those households identified as most at risk, providing energy safeguarding, CO awareness and access to other support services to help prevent future debt issues in the one of the top areas in SGN’s Vulnerability Index.

Through the Aftercare service it identified a high percentage of vulnerable households who are unaware/unsure of support services available through utility providers such as the Priority Services Register, free Gas Safety Checks and Warm Home Discount. For existing households on the gas network, there was a lack of awareness around gas appliance servicing and CO awareness due to the financial challenges they face or the way the household is living, particularly with hoarders and older people.

Part of the Aftercare team’s role is to support vulnerable customers with setting up tariffs when they’ve had a new gas connection installed, which can be an overwhelming process for a customer with additional needs. The Aftercare team have supported over 3000 customers through the Aftercare service, without this tailored approach fuel poor customers may have fallen out of the process.

Continuing our partnership with SGN, and with the new Warmer Homes Scotland scheme for fuel poor households in Scotland, we are working together to provide this much needed wraparound care and support service to those we identify as most vulnerable and at risk of self-disconnection, who find it difficult to navigate their heating systems and energy usage in their home. Whilst keeping them safe from the dangers of Carbon Monoxide, access to Priority Service Register and providing energy advice and onward support to help those struggling heat their homes for longer, keeping them well.

3 Scope and objectives

Warmworks aim to provide support to a minimum of 6,000 fuel poor households from October 2023 under Warmer Homes Scotland and in partnership with SGN until March 2026. We will support the dedicated areas for the Aftercare service, **Central Belt Area of Scotland (Greater Glasgow, Ayrshire, Falkirk, Edinburgh, Lothian, and Fife)** to support vulnerable households with post energy usage, safeguarding and CO awareness. This service will be mainly telephony based with referrals coming from Warmworks enquiry service and vulnerable households identified from home visits where they are struggling to afford to heat their homes.

The service will support vulnerable customers up to March 2026 predominately focusing on in-depth energy usage and advice combined with CO awareness as well as support to help them understand the following:

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

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

- referrals to emergency food bank/fuel bank
- referrals to Warm Home Discount scheme
- Social Service referrals to support with welfare
- Locking Cooker Valve referrals where required
- Access to energy redress hardship fund to support with energy debt
- Access to Warmworks emergency funding: support challenging financial requirement in the home
- HES referrals for other support services not covered in role: e.g., income maximisation, home visits, and access to local schemes
- Provide signposting for customers at risk of mental health through Mental Health & Money Advice & SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health)
- Isolation support offering referrals into Befriending Networks, Turn2u & Age UK

The Aftercare specialist will contact customers up to 8 weeks after they've had energy efficiency measures and heating under Warmer Homes Scotland. The customer will be asked a range of questions based around the changes to their home, CO awareness and their understanding of the improvements to their home and their

energy behaviour changes/challenges they have faced. Our team will also discuss the PSR for energy and water ensuring customers are registered if not we will ensure we capture information to allow us to register them.

4 Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

The project delivers against SGNs Vulnerability Strategy, by providing targeted support to households most at risk of living in fuel poverty based upon their personal circumstances and their geographical location.

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

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

This partnership service goes above and beyond our core responsibilities as a Gas Distribution Network and is eligible under the VCMA funding criteria as it will provide energy crisis support, access to energy efficiency and CO advice, empowering vulnerable households to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably.

This partnership aligns to the shared GDNs commitment to deliver support services customers aligned to our shared four strategic pillars:

1. Services Beyond the Meter
2. Supporting Priority Customer Groups
3. Fuel Poverty & Energy Affordability
4. Carbon Monoxide Awareness

This project aligns to strategic pillar 3 (outcomes also in 2 & 4).

5 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

Since June 2022 the Aftercare service has supported fuel poor customers across Scotland providing various routes of support. The table below provides an overview of the referrals and advice that's been provided. The main referrals are in the table below:

Referral or Advice	Total number of Households
CO awareness	688
Energy Efficiency Advice	587
Help to Heat	58
Priority Services Register	121
Utility Tarriff Service	111
Wellbeing & Mental Health support	595
Financial Support; Debt Advice & Funding	100
Home Visits	15

Mrs H
Aftercare Support

Mrs H qualified for Warm Homes Scotland as a pensioner with no working heating. Under the scheme she had a full gas system installed at her property.

During a call with our Aftercare team, it became apparent that she'd used electric as her main method of heating and cooking for decades and required more information on having gas in her property as it was making her anxious. She was given **in depth advice about gas safety and CO awareness** and sent in the post a **leaflet** to keep safe and reference later, alongside a CO alarm. The additional information helped her feel much more comfortable with the system.

During the call she asked for advice regarding how to use her energy more efficiently as she was worried about her energy costs which we provided. She also asked for help with her energy supplier as she had queries about a previous bill and a dispute regarding her meter. The team was able to set up a **triage call** with **Energy Advice Scotland** who were able to help with the matter and speak with **energy supplier** on her behalf.

Finally, we were able to sign Mrs H up to the **Priority Services Register** as she qualifies for the extra help and would require the support should there be any outages. She was left feeling much more confident with her system and with the understanding that extra help would be available should she need it.

Citizens Advice Extra Help Unit

The Aftercare team have working closely with the extra help unit to support customers who are having challenges accessing the correct meter support from their energy supplier.

This relationship has been critical to keeping customers on supply and moving them over to a more efficient and affordable system through Warmer Homes Scotland.

5.1 Customer Engagement Group 2021/22

Shaping our business plan to support customers in vulnerable circumstances we have committed to, over the 5-year price control, supporting over 500,000 vulnerable customers to use gas safely, affordably, and efficiently. We have a three-tiered approach and tier 1,2 and 3 priorities include providing independent support to help vulnerable customers with access to affordable energy.

5.2 Vulnerable Steering Group

During the shaping of the SGN business plan we committed to support at least 250,000 vulnerable households to use gas safely, affordably and efficiently over GD2. During 2023, following ongoing engagement with Ofgem, SGN's Customer and Stakeholder Engagement Group and Vulnerable Steering Group we increased this commitment to support 500,000 vulnerable households, those most at risk of living in a cold and unhealthy home. SGN have used data and insights to develop our programme, this has underpinned how this commitment to support those most in need from a strategic ambition into an extensive partnership-based delivery programme.

As we've progressed our portfolio of projects throughout GD2 our strategic Vulnerable Steering Group (VSG) has provided ongoing guidance to SGN, reiterating importance of impactful partnerships that co-ordinate activities with others to support those most in need.

6 Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria

6.1 Outcomes

A minimum of 6,000 vulnerable customers supported through the Aftercare service in partnership with Warmworks who will foster trust and accountability through robust, transparent reporting that outlines the successes against the expected outcomes.

Warmworks will commit to one case study every quarter highlighting the positive impact on the lives of customers who been supported in addition to detailed monthly reporting using SGN template and the new Warmworks Power BI report outlining the following:

Number of households receiving assistance 6,000 households with 4000 of those customers identified to have further support through the Aftercare Service for energy related support and safeguarding.

Support provided to households broken down into categories as per SGN reporting template monthly.

- 6000 installation of CO detectors in line with the Warmer Homes Scotland install
- 6000 CO awareness advice
- 4000 energy efficiency advice – behavioural
- 3000 best tariff advice for their heating installation
- 2000 Priority Services Register (energy and water)
- 350 Warm Home Discount
- 600 access to emergency food bank
- 600 access to fuel bank vouchers
- 600 access to hardship fund to support with energy debt
- 300 mental health and wellbeing referrals

Additional referrals customers will have access to

- Social Service referrals to support with welfare
- Locking Cooker Valve referrals where required
- HES referrals for other support services not covered in role

Other outcomes provided

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

6.2 Associated actions

Warmworks will continue this initiative as previously, however, will provide insight into energy behavioural patterns, demographic of customers being supported, and challenges/barriers faced around affordable heat.

6.3 Success Criteria

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

Key outcomes we expect to deliver through the project:

- >95% of customers reporting they are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the service provided by Aftercare and are more confident in managing their energy usage.
- 100% of customers increased understanding of gas safety awareness and the risks of carbon monoxide, with customer satisfaction scores above 9.0 aiming for 9.5 (all customers have CO alarms installed)
- 100% of qualifying customers aware of the PSR and how to manage in an energy emergency and increased registration helping improve PSR database developed through existing relationships with District Network Operators i.e., SPEN, SSEN and with Scottish Water (60% take up rate as advised via SGN)
- 5% of customers made aware of WHD, with all households eligible for this additional support on their fuel bills, we assume around 50% will be referred as most FP households will qualify
- Considerable carbon savings and energy bill reductions facilitated by energy saving improvements combined with post-installation energy advice and Aftercare support (where energy prices are increasing energy reduction may not be achievable for all customers)

- Fuel poor households have access to emergency food bank/fuel bank vouchers providing short term support from these essential services
- Helping dementia or autistic children stay safe in their homes for longer by referring customers for Locking Cooker Valve referrals where required
- Customers helped to clear their energy debts by accessing energy redress fund
- Referring customers for home visits and income maximisation through partnerships with HES
- Access to Social Service referrals to support with welfare
- Access to mental health & wellbeing services

7 Project partners and third parties involved

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

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

- Home Energy Scotland
- Language Line
- Care & Repair
- Life pod
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Scottish Water
- The Wise Group
- Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN)
- Trussell Trust, local food banks
- The Fuel bank Foundation
- Citizens advice – Extra Help Unit (Scotland)
- Age UK
- Cruise
- Turn2us
- Changeworks

8 Potential for new learning

Monitoring and evaluation

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

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

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

Learning

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

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

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

9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations

Social Value Measurement

Social Return on Investment calculations

Working with leading social impact research consultancy SIA partners, we have used their bespoke social value bank of financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to our services for vulnerable customers. The approach used to estimate social value is based on best practice endorsed by HM Treasury for the evaluation of social policy and utilises values from the Treasury's 'Green Book' where applicable.

Carrying out a high-level assessment using this methodology against a subset of the predicted outcomes and recognising that the project has outcomes we don't currently have social values mapped for, we still forecast a positive net SROI of £1.69

Calculation	Totals
Total Cost of Project	£152,582.16
Total gross present value	£410,379.16
Net present value	£257,797.00
SROI calculation	£1.69

10 VCMA Project start and end date

1 October 2023 to March 2026

11 Geographic area

Central belt area of Scotland, this will expand as Aftercare team grow across the project.

12 Internal Governance and project management evidence

SGN has worked alongside Warmworks to co-design this partnership and ensure that its ambition contributes to the delivery of our Vulnerability Strategy, the guidance from our Vulnerable Customer Steering Group and adheres to the updated VCMA governance criteria. The SROI has been externally assessed by SIA Partners using the DNO / GDN common rulebook.

To support the partnership to deliver the success criteria outcomes as detailed, the partners will review progress monthly and quarterly to learn, share best practices and address any delivery issues.

The PEA has been reviewed and approved by the business lead Linda Spence and the Director of Customer Services Maureen McIntosh.