

Safe & Warm Energy Efficiency Outreach in partnership with the Health and Social Care Alliance - Scotland

February 2024



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1 Description

Project Title:	Safe & Warm Energy Efficiency Outreach
Funding GDN(s):	SGN
New/Updated (indicate as appropriate):	New
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	N/A
Date of PEA submission:	Feb 24
Project contact name:	Linda Spence
Project contact number/email:	Linda.Spence@sgn.co.uk
Total cost (£k):	£474,017
Total VCMA funding required (£k):	£474,017

2 Problem Statement

Disabled people and people living with long term conditions experience a range of challenges when managing a safe and warm home and have been identified as at higher risk of fuel poverty because of factors which include household income as well as the required use of fuel and energy because of their health status, whether due to spending more time at home, having less physical tolerance for lower temperatures, the need to power and charge assistive technologies, or to keep medications at a safe temperature.

It has been identified through the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland's (the ALLIANCE) Link Worker Programme and membership that people who are living with long term conditions may not be aware of the support services in the utility sector that are designed for their needs such as the Priority Services Register, Warm Home Discount and support around Gas Safety (carbon monoxide risks). In addition, there can be challenges which people face in terms of the accessibility of information and communication about support services designed to help household energy efficiency and safeguarding.

The ALLIANCE's Links Worker Service operates out of 69 GP practices in Glasgow City and in West Dunbartonshire, many of which are described as operating in the Deep End¹ - serving the most deprived populations in Scotland. Money advice, energy and welfare services are currently overstretched across Glasgow City and West Dunbartonshire and there is currently higher demand than capacity to support every household and individual.

Within the Glasgow City ALLIANCE Links Worker Service, for the financial year 2022/23, 19% of the referrals were linked directly to poverty, and 11% for housing issues: this is approximately 4,300 people in this period. The service experienced an increase in referrals specifically in relation to fuel poverty and food insecurity, and with these referrals making up 4.4% of all referrals received. An additional 4.6% of referrals received (not counting any in which fuel poverty was listed) were for money issues. In total for Glasgow across the programme approximately 8,700 were referred to a Community Links Practitioner (CLP). Across West Dunbartonshire, for the financial year 2022/23, 21% of reasons for referrals were linked directly to poverty, and 17% for housing issues; this is approximately 740 people. In total for West Dunbartonshire 1,945 people were referred to a CLP.

Throughout the cost-of-living crisis, the ALLIANCE have been completing their own engagement which has provided further concerns around the choices people facing poverty and living with poor health are facing.

- ALLIANCE report '[Disabled people, unpaid carers and the cost of living crisis: Impacts, responses and long term solutions.](#)', has identified concerning situations people have been forced into, such as

¹ <https://www.gla.ac.uk/researchinstitutes/healthwellbeing/research/generalpractice/deepend/about/>

reducing food intake, limiting use of showers and wet rooms, unable to afford to heat their homes to a comfortable heat or charge powered wheelchairs to leave home

- The findings highlighted that the cost-of-living crisis has had a significant impact on the realisation of people's human rights, including the rights to food, health, independent living, and equal participation in society
- People living in private rented housing where landlords are often not keeping up with repairs, linking in with gas inspections or servicing/providing carbon monoxide alarms. Some of these householders are people whose first language is not English and who are not aware of their rights or how to action them
- The findings highlighted that the cost-of-living crisis has had a significant impact on the realisation of people's human rights, including the rights to food, health, independent living, and equal participation in society
- Direct feedback from the ALLIANCE's Community Link Practitioners (CLPs) has identified an increase in poverty related issues impacting on individuals and families overall wellbeing.
- Direct feedback from people accessing the support of CLPs demonstrates that the help received with getting crisis support, for example to energy crisis vouchers, provides such a relief to people who have to choose between food and fuel. And this leads to applying for warm home discount and meetings with welfare advisers to determine how to reduce costs etc

Responding to the impacts of the Covid pandemic and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis has worsened people's mental health – both for those with pre-existing mental health conditions and those whose mental health has deteriorated as a direct consequence. [There is evidence of this for young people and for disabled people including people with learning disabilities and autism](#). This is having an impact on people's resilience and sense of self-efficacy.

Since partnering with SGN, CLPs are having direct conversations with individuals about energy safeguarding and immediate energy related needs as well as carbon monoxide awareness, this is in addition to their immediate health and wellbeing needs such as trauma/relationships/long term conditions etc.

Nevertheless, the average open caseload of a CLP at any one time ranges from 35 to 60 open cases and the increasing complexity of the issues which people are presenting with often means that a CLP is not able to offer the detailed advice and support around complex matters such as energy efficiency and energy safeguarding which could increase an individual's or a household's resilience and safety in the longer term.

3 Scope and objectives

In partnership with SGN, The Health and Social Care Alliance, will continue their offering of energy safeguarding and emergency fuel and food crisis funding support across the Deep End GP practices from the Community Links Practitioners (CLP's). This initiative will also provide in-depth energy support to those who are struggling to maintain a safe and warm home by introducing two new positions - Energy Efficiency Outreach workers. These Outreach workers will provide much needed support to the CLP's and in addition, expand the support to equivalent CLP services in other parts of Scotland as well as ALLIANCE member organisations working with disabled people, people with long term conditions and unpaid carers who would be in a position to adapt the partnership model between the ALLIANCE and SGN to other areas of Scotland.

Our initiative is a continuation of our previous 18-month programme and will continue from Sept 23 to March 2026.

The scope of this project aims to support around 25,000 people across Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire during the project period, with 3,690 of those identified referred to the Energy Efficiency Outreach workers, from the CLP's. Together they will provide a holistic wraparound support service which will include

- Access to the Priority Services Register for those who are eligible and information around energy safeguarding should their energy or water supplies be interrupted
- Awareness of carbon monoxide (CO) and the risks associated with unsafe gas appliances, annual servicing and importance of a CO alarm for the home and gifting a free CO alarm for those at risk
- Tailored energy advice, heating and tariff information, and support to engage with their energy suppliers to enable them to use energy in the home, preventing self-disconnection or rationing of energy usage.
- Income maximisation and debt support to help people cope with the challenges faced around cost-of-living crisis, affordable living and access to grants and govt schemes in Scotland to improve their living conditions.
- Mental health and wellbeing sessions in their local GP practice with peer-to-peer support from the CLP's
- Emergency crisis funding to support fuel poor and vulnerable households who are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis and unable to heat their homes to stay warm and well

The Energy Efficiency Outreach workers within communities will also

- Support established local groups as well as the development of new groups to have a focus on energy safeguarding and efficiency through the relationships of the CLPs
- Offer tailored group-based information and advice sessions on energy safeguarding and efficiency, utilising the relationships CLPs have with GP practices to promote these sessions

The objectives of this initiative are to:

1. Ensure there is the enhanced support available to people with long term conditions, disabled people, and unpaid carers around maintaining safe, affordable, and efficient homes through the ALLIANCE CLP service, based on learning that it is not always possible or appropriate for CLPs to have more in-depth conversations with people about their energy situation
2. Build capacity amongst households and groups to understand the support available around energy efficiency and safeguarding
3. Widen the scope of this model of support through strengthening connections with third sector partners, SGN and other related utility infrastructure companies in Scotland
4. Ensure CLP's coming into contact with eligible customers are trained and informed about related services, and able to equip people with the right information and resources relevant to their area of expertise
5. Help to tackle stigma around vulnerability and poverty, and gather evidence and insights which can be shared with relevant stakeholders
6. Gather feedback from these sessions to disseminate to SGN and the Health and Social Care Partnerships to inform their public information campaigns, as well as issues facing households.

As the largest third sector intermediary for health and social care in Scotland, the ALLIANCE and SGN have a shared ambition to understand the barriers that people with long term conditions, disabled people and unpaid carers face in being able to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably, and for this information to be available to shape future strategy and schemes to help people realise their rights to housing and health.

4 Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

The project delivers against SGN's 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.

The partnership service aligns to our strategic ambition to support customers in energy crisis, helping those in fuel poverty to access financial crisis support, and other services including the Priority Services Register, awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide and energy efficiency advice, empowering vulnerable households to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably.

This partnership aligns to the SGN commitment to deliver support services for customers aligned to our 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 pillars 2 (outcomes in pillars 3 and 4).

5 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

5.1 SGN and ALLIANCE CLP feedback and workshop with member organisations 2021

The ALLIANCE in partnership with SGN has worked to deliver additional support through the ALLIANCE Community Link Worker Service (CLP's) in Glasgow City and West Dunbartonshire since August 2022. Through this, we have been able to train up all CLPs on energy safeguarding which includes Priority Service Register and carbon monoxide awareness, and are actively making referrals and capturing if individuals are already registered within PSR and ensure contact details are up to date.

All CLPs have been trained to recognise those struggling and in fuel poverty, and data is being gathered which captures the needs of people in food and fuel poverty. Learning to date has demonstrated the considerable reach of the CLPs and their ability to signpost to services and respond to immediate needs. This is demonstrated in the evidence captured around mental health and wellbeing conversations being held with individuals and the array of services and community support which the CLPs are knowledgeable about. In addition, we are also gathering learning through this partnership about the priority services which are available to people to support them heat their homes safely and efficiently which we are in a position to share through our networks.

Nevertheless, learning to date has demonstrated CLP capacity is limited to offer more tailored and targeted support and information on energy efficiency and safeguarding due to average open caseloads and the number of routine enquiries CLPs undertake. In addition, CLPs are not always able to have in-depth conversations about longer term energy efficiency or safeguarding requirements because of the immediate need's individuals are presenting with. This led to the identification of the Energy Efficiency Outreach Worker role.

Prior to this, a workshop with a selection of ALLIANCE member organisations was held to discuss the intersection between living with long term conditions with fuel poverty, and what is needed in terms of support and services.

This discussion with ALLIANCE members revealed a number of key themes including a strong indication that poverty and financial insecurity are deeply held concerns amongst disabled people and people living with long term conditions. Comments included people highlighting that they were making difficult choices between heating their home or using the internet, the importance of people with sensory loss being able to have accessible alarm systems, and the impact of the pandemic on people's mental health a recurring issue. It was also identified that there was limited knowledge of key support services like the Priority Services Register by the support organisations and client community.

Themes also included assisting eligible individuals to mitigate fuel poverty and avoiding the use of the term vulnerable which can be seen as stigmatising. It was also stressed that there is the need for more awareness raising of services available, support to navigate the complex systems, support for organisations when working with individuals, and accessible communication of services.

Recent work into the cost-of-living crisis has highlighted the deepening inequality and poverty being experienced by disabled people, people with long term conditions and unpaid carers, including being unable to charge powered wheelchairs and thus being stuck at home, finding the costs of showering and bathing unaffordable, not having enough to eat, and poor mental health. It also demonstrated the need to address the root causes of this crisis and prevent it from recurring through targeted support and advice around energy efficiency and safeguarding.

5.2 The Health and Social Care Alliance feedback – case studies

Engagement carried out to inform the ALLIANCE's work around the cost of living has indicated some of the personal impacts the cost-of-living crisis is having on disabled people, people with long term conditions and unpaid carers. For example, reliance on powered mobility equipment such as wheelchairs was repeatedly mentioned in our engagement, with one participant stating that they were scared to charge theirs due to the spiralling costs, impacting on their independence. Two individuals who had wet rooms at home had found related costs had increased substantially, to the extent that one person had stopped using it and was instead washing themselves with wet wipes to save money.

A number of contributors also highlighted the impact of cold temperatures on their conditions – for example due to having difficulty regulating their body temperature, or by worsening chronic pain. Some had already begun to go without heating and were reporting that they were cold and shivering as a result. For one individual energy costs were so unaffordable that they had even begun cutting back on lighting. One participant, reflecting on the range of additional energy costs, felt they did not have an option to use less energy for these things, and that cutting back was impacting their human rights. Another was already in energy debt and was worried about having their supply terminated entirely.

Cutting down on food was another common experience. Some attendees were prioritising other people over themselves, for example their children or a person they cared for. Two separate attendees said that all they had had to eat that day was a biscuit with a cup of tea – one of them added they generally only had one meal a day.

5.3 SGN's Vulnerable Customer 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 have progressed our portfolio of projects throughout GD2, our strategic steering group reiterated the vital impact we could have by co-ordinating our activities with others to support those most in need, those most impacted by the cost-of-living and energy cost crisis. The VSG have recommended that we look at ways in which we can build stronger links with other organisations including collaborating with other utilities, health services and charities to deliver support services that tackle the fuel poverty gap and the underlying causes of fuel poverty.

6 Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

6.1 Outcomes

The planned and measurable outcomes for the partnership are;

- ALLIANCE CLPs, and through them people with long term conditions, disabled people and unpaid carers, have increased access to energy efficiency advice and safeguarding support including emergency crisis funding
- People with long term conditions disabled people and unpaid carers have greater access to energy efficiency workshops and information reaching a wider audience of people who are often marginalised and overlooked
- People living with long term conditions, disabled people and unpaid carers have reduced stress, improved health and wellbeing, and increased knowledge and understanding of the support available for their energy efficiency and safeguarding matters

6.2 Associated actions

This project will directly engage with the ALLIANCE CLP service and similar services, and directly with individuals through the group work activities and through wider ALLIANCE member organisations. As this is a development to the existing partnership, we're looking to explore the; reach of this work, the right format for group work activities to expand the energy efficiency advice available to people, especially those who are in fuel poverty, and the best approach to onboard other organisations. As such, the numbers of people reached are estimates.

6.3 Success Criteria

This project will reach around 25,000 people who will access the services of the CLPs in the Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire Area. 3,690 people will have further support around energy safeguarding and energy advice on a one-on-one basis, or group setting from the Energy Efficiency Outreach workers.

The measurement is based on what we know currently however will be reviewed on an annual basis as these are two new posts being trialled within ALLIANCE based on the need of the clients they support.

- Energy efficiency advice and energy related services
- Tailored energy safeguarding training and advice to organisations/services to provide support to their target audience
- Priority Service Register registration
- CO Safety conversation and access to a working CO alarm where required
- Emergency crisis support for those struggling to heat their home which impacts on their health
- Income Maximisation and benefit checks to help increase income
- Access to services locally/nationally to improve health and wellbeing of the client through ALLIANCE established services
- Access to partnership network from SGN and SPEN

Outcome of the partnership

- 25,000 people access to energy safeguarding information through Primary Care Links workers –
 - PSR awareness and CO awareness all provided with information about energy safeguarding
- 25,000 people accessing mental health and wellbeing support
- 10,000 people access to income maximisation and benefits
- 5,000 people supported to join PSR
- 3,690 people access to emergency crisis funding: fuel and food Fuel Vouchers
- 3,690 in depth CO awareness conversations one to one basis
- 3,690 people supported in-depth with energy advisory services - advisory service: energy usage, billing and tariffs, and energy debt
- 500 people referred for further support for hardship funding
- 500 people referred to Home Energy Scotland for Energy Efficiency funded support schemes to improve their homes' heat
- 500 people referred to other organisations specific to need

- 300 CO alarms issued

7 Project partners and third parties involved

The Health and Social Care ALLIANCE will lead the delivery of this project. They are the national third sector intermediary for a range of health and social care organisations with a growing membership of over 3,300 national and local third sector organisations, associates in the statutory and private sectors, disabled people, people living with long term conditions and unpaid carers.

Some of the linked third parties involved include:

- Many NHS Boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships
- Medical Practices
- Third Sector Interfaces
- Home Energy Scotland
- Change Mental Health
- Age Scotland
- Scottish Power Energy Network

SGN – lead gas network providing funding and support to the delivery team, including training on energy safeguarding relevant support services, access to broader referral partners, and direct services for customers including but not limited to; emergency fuel vouchers, Locking Cooker Valves, CO alarms and access to the Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme.

8 Potential for new learning

Monitoring and evaluation

Through ongoing monitoring of the impact of this project the ALLIANCE will produce insights and an annual evaluation report that will provide insights into; barriers faced, effective engagement by the Energy Efficiency Outreach worker, inclusive and accessible communication and information of the PSR and related support, and the impact of accessing support to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably.

As a partnership we will work closely to ensure that we all understand the issues faced by participants reached and adapt the support provided to address barriers to a safe and warm home.

To monitor our impact in line with the above, we will:

- Monitor outcomes against our ambition to support vulnerable households as above
- Monitor outcomes in group sessions by the energy efficiency outreach workers
- Monitor the individuals which CLPS and the trained-up organisations/services thereafter support to access the Priority Services Register and CO awareness survey
- Generate learning reports from insights generated from the engagement with ALLIANCE CLPs and member organisations
- Work closely with partners to ensure that we all understand the issues faced to continue to develop our services by need
- Measure impact of the energy efficiency outreach workers and impact in local communities as they work alongside the CLP's.

Learning

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.

The ALLIANCE team will gather learning and feedback from individuals and member organisations to monitor the impact of the support provided, to identify gaps and work to define and develop solutions which would address these gaps.

9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations including NPV Social Value Measurement

We worked with leading social impact research consultancy SIA Partners to carry out an assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to our services for vulnerable customers incorporated in this partnership using the DNO methodology/rulebook with additional proxies developed for GDN activity. Carrying out an in-depth assessment of the predicted outcomes we forecast a positive net social return in investment (SROI) of £2.60.

Total cost	£458,168.13
Total gross present value	£1,650,245.72
NPV	£1,192,077.59
SROI	£2.60

10 VCMA Project start and end date

The project will continue from existing project which was to end August 2023 and run to 31 March 2026

3 to 6 months' set up phase for recruitment and induction of the Energy Efficiency Outreach worker during Qrt4 2024.

11 Geographic area

Scotland with increased focus on Deep End areas in Scotland which experience high levels of deprivation and therefore food and fuel poverty. Priority areas are Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire.

12 Internal Governance and project management evidence

SGN has worked alongside The ALLIANCE 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 at £2.60.

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.