

Dundee Heat in partnership with Scarf and Dundee City Council

Safe and Warm - Home Energy Advisers
Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance

January 2024
SGN



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Contents

1 Description.....	3
2 Problem statement	3
3 Scope and objectives	4
4 Why the project is being funded through the VCMA.....	5
5 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support.....	5
5.1 John Alexander Head of Dundee city council	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.2 Craig Mason Council Advice Services	5
5.3 Examples of support provided on previous Dundee projects	6
5.4 SGN Stakeholder Information.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
6 Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria	6
6.1 Outcomes	6
6.2 Associated Actions.....	7
6.3 Success Criteria.....	8
7 Project partners and third parties involved	8
8 Potential for new learning	9
9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations	10
10 VCMA Project start and end date	10
11 Geographic area	10
12 Approval	10

1 Description

Funding GDN(s)	SGN
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	
Date of PEA submission:	January 2024
Project contact name:	Linda Spence
Project contact number/email:	Linda.spence@sgn.co.uk
Total cost (£k)	£274,600
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£264,600

2 Problem statement

Before the covid-19 pandemic Dundee had one of the highest levels of fuel poverty in mainland Scotland at 29% and over 15% of households in extreme fuel poverty.

Since the pandemic Dundee has lost several large employers in Debenhams and the Mitchelin factory as well as many retailers. This along with losing large employers Dundee residents on average have gross median annual earnings of £26,285. This is nearly £3,000 less than the Scotland average (£29,248) ([PowerPoint Presentation \(dundeecity.gov.uk\)](#)). With the national average income being considerably lower and the cost-of-living crisis it is likely that more than 40% of its residents are now in fuel poverty.

Scarf has worked in partnership with Dundee city council previously and has a customer database of over 4,000 unique households who have applied for financial assistance from Dundee city council declaring low income, benefits, disability, children, digitally excluded and people who are critically ill and require heating to stay warm. These residents require support now more than ever due to the cost-of-living crisis and the increase in energy prices, currently there is no resource to support with the demand in services from vulnerable and fuel poor households.

The scale of deprivation is demonstrated below in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation figures which is before the cost-of-living crisis. Within the 20% of deprivation table 1 according to Dundee City Council there are over 10,500 children in poverty. When you review table 2 which is the most deprived 5% you can see Dundee has a higher percentage average than across mainland Scotland.

Fuel poverty can have several adverse effects on low-income households:

- Long term exposure to the cold and damp can affect the development of young children and create long term health problems.
- Continued exposure can lead adults to long term respiratory illness and reduce life expectancy.
- Poor living conditions and financial pressures can lead to mental health issues and suicide. Dundee currently has the highest suicide rate in Scotland.

Poor living conditions can lead to drug use. Dundee had the largest increase in its drug misuse death rate from 5.9 per 100,000 in 2004 to 45.2 per 100,000 in 2021.

Supporting low-income and vulnerable households with carbon monoxide prevention

There is a link between fuel poverty and carbon monoxide poisoning. Low-income householders are susceptible to having older boilers, heaters or cookers to heat their homes and may not have the disposable income for an annual boiler service. People living in areas of deprivation are also less likely to have a CO alarm which increases the chance of a leak being fatal. In partnership with SGN Scarf will provide carbon monoxide alarms and provide carbon monoxide awareness and education as part of our partnership.

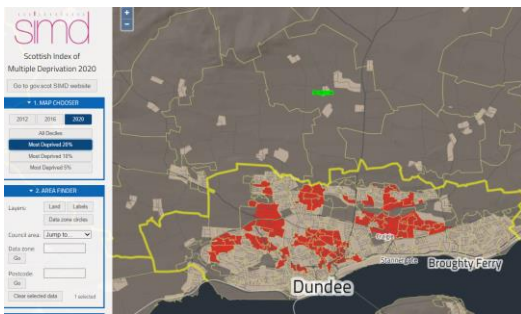


Table 1- 20% Most deprived

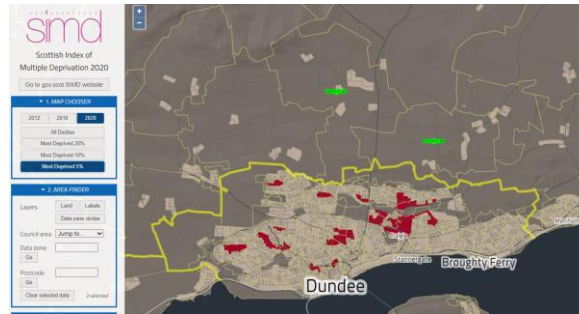


Table 2- 5% Most deprived

Working in partnership with SGN we aim to provide a holistic support advocacy service that gives fuel poor households in Dundee access to energy experts to reduce the impact of the financial pressures, create warm living conditions, more money in fuel poor clients pocket and a better understanding how to manage energy use, to stay safe and warm in their homes. We also aim to build a network of partners to provide multiple levels of support specific to the needs of fuel poor households and their families, in particular those with young children.

3 Scope and objectives

Scarf in partnership with SGN will deliver a 2-year programme funding Safe and Warm Home Energy Advisors supporting households in all tenure's living in fuel poverty in Dundee. Although the initiative will be aimed at all tenure's proactive marketing will be aimed as a priority to the most in need targeting the 20% most deprived areas with a particular focus on supporting families with children. The programme will proactively use an active database of Dundee residents, marketing and referrals from partners including but not limited to Dundee foodbanks, Home Energy Scotland and Dundee Citizens Advice Bureaus. The partnership will focus on improving the levels of fuel poverty, increased registration of the priority service register and the education on the use of carbon monoxide alarms. Once this activity is carried out Scarf will look to monitor the financial gap required to remove homes permanently from fuel poverty.

- Provide energy advice to households on a local level and via in-depth home visits / telephone support/email. This advice will be provided to educate the household on how to effectively heat their homes.
- Through the education piece this will allow the household to be able to heat the home more efficiently and therefore reduce consumption in the home to maximise income and reduce levels of fuel poverty in Dundee
- Ensure customers are on the right tariff and are receiving the UK, Scottish Government, Local Authority and access to any local charity financial assistance available.

- Ensure that households are aware of any home improvement grants schemes available to them to make their home more energy efficient and warmer.
- Provide an advocacy service to write off energy debt, apply for hardship funds and benefit checks.
- Provide regular, local information sessions/advice hubs for the public. This is to engage people who do not proactively ask for help. We find this is the best way to approach the most vulnerable.
- Make referrals to other local and national partners that specialize in mental health support, food provision or additional advice matters to offer a holistic approach to improving the persons situation.
- Build our current partner list to ensure lasting partnerships with new and existing organisations across Dundee City.
- Educate on carbon monoxide (CO) symptoms and provide awareness of dangers associated with CO
- Identify households who could benefit from the Priority Service Register and help them register.
- 100% of home visits carried out with an electric vehicle to reduce carbon footprint.

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.

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 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 pillar 3 (outcomes in 2 and 4).

5 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

5.1 SGN's Vulnerable Customer Steering Group

Our VSG has helped shape our vulnerability strategy and priorities for GD2 and how best to utilise the VCMA to help those most at risk of living in a cold and unhealthy home. It is with guidance and support from our dedicated VSG that SGN use data to prioritise and target communities living with a health condition made worse by living in a cold and damp home. This partnership is built on data and covers both geographic areas where there is compelling data that identifies vulnerable customer needs, both due to fuel poverty and health indicators.

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.

5.2 John Alexander Head of Dundee city council

As the Leader of the City of Dundee, I've had the opportunity to see the impact of the work of SCARF in Dundee first hand.

For context, our city has wrestled with significant levels of poverty and deprivation for many years as a legacy of post-industrial decline. 38% of our data zones, for the purposes of SMID (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation), are listed as having the highest levels of deprivation.

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and now, a cost-of-living crisis eating deeply into household budgets, is wearing heavily on the city. It is compounding the already challenging economic realities faced by too many in Dundee.

Over the last 18 months, Dundee City Council has worked comprehensively and collaboratively with many organisations, including Scarf. Their efforts, support and constructive feedback have helped improve the City's wider response, in addition to providing direct support to residents.

As a city, we are intent on rallying around those most in need, but we can only do so through partnership. Scarf is a vital partner in the fight against poverty and alleviating the effects on households across Dundee.

By partnering with Scarf and SGN, we would undoubtedly be making a disproportionately positive impact within our communities, alleviating poverty and alongside other initiatives, saving lives. I am, it's fair to say, desperately keen to see Scarf efforts continue and with SGN's partnership, they can.

5.3 Craig Mason Council Advice Services

Scarf have supported over £2 million of Dundee Council funds being provided to thousands of homes in Dundee through the fuel well programme. Scarf worked as a partner in this programme offering energy efficiency advice to over 800 households.

5.4 Examples of support provided on previous Dundee projects

Scarf provided Energy Savings Trust approved energy efficiency advice which has led to over £300,000 worth of estimated annual energy bill savings from advice and wrote off over £65,000 of fuel debt from energy suppliers.

6 Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

6.1 Outcomes

Through this partnership Scarf aims to alleviate the financial burdens faced by households living in fuel poverty. We will target support to those families most at risk of living in a cold and unhealthy home by providing a range of support services that address the underlying causes of fuel poverty.

Our main outcome is to ensure people in Dundee can feel safe and warm in their homes. The project will educate households to use energy more efficiently, support to maximise their household income and provide access to grants and schemes to make the homes more efficient. The collective outcomes should ensure a reduction in fuel poverty and a clearer understanding of carbon monoxide.

The in home and remote support advocacy will provide in-depth fuel poverty support to up to 2000 vulnerable consumers in crisis (e.g. with fuel billing issues, fuel debt, pre-payment meter self-disconnections) and raise awareness of fuel poverty, energy advice top tips, benefits of joining Priority Service Register and the dangers of CO to at least 2000 people across Dundee. The support will educate and support households to effectively heat their homes in an affordable safe manner.

The Safe and Warm Energy advisors will deliver high quality in-depth bespoke advice to the customer to up to 2000 people living in fuel poverty, providing advice on the following:

- energy efficient behaviour advice, including heating system advice.
- energy efficient measures and how to access these e.g. Home Energy Scotland (HES) referral to access Warmer Homes Scotland and SGN Help to Heat support.
- how to manage your energy consumption: understanding energy bills and meters, accessing discounts (e.g. WHD), accessing energy vouchers, tariff/supplier switching, and water efficiency.
- educate how to work with suppliers on fuel billing issues.
- fuel debt advocacy and signposting/referrals for wider debt advice through Dundee CAB
- access to hardship funds (Via Home Heating Support Fund/Dundee City Council and organisations such as the Fuel Bank)
- access to Scarf funding of £10,000 to support with fuel poverty
- PSR sign-ups
- the dangers of CO and how to be safe
- signposting/referrals to wider support e.g. income maximisation advice, mental health support (e.g. Citizens Advice, Scottish Association for Mental Health, Dundee City Council and Foodbanks)

Scarf will work closely with Home Energy Scotland (HES) and their partners to ensure clients receive a wraparound service. Energy support through a cross-referral relationship – in-depth billing and debt support (Scarf) and access to grants/schemes for energy saving measures (e.g. through Warmer Homes Scotland) and wider advice on, water saving and other HES programmes.

The project will also target and make fuel poverty, energy saving advice and dangers of CO information accessible to at least 2000 people via various activities e.g. delivering briefings to front-line staff, attending relevant forums/events, local long established partners such as the Local Authority, CAB, NHS Tayside and the vast amount of food banks around the city

- This initiative will secure employment to support the Dundee communities from Scarf.

6.2 Associated actions

Scarf will work with SGN to deliver training to the front-line advisors in Dundee and across Scarf support teams to be able to provide advice and support with the installing of CO alarms and provide CO awareness advice and materials to FP households.

Scarf will also deliver training around Priority Service Register to front line advisors to deliver energy safeguarding advice.

The Scarf marketing team will promote the CO awareness and the PSR across Dundee.

6.3 Success Criteria

Scarf over 2 years would aim to reach around 4000 households across Dundee and surrounding areas through various marketing initiatives, partner referrals and engagement events to identify 2000 households requiring further support through this initiative.

Support from our dedicated Safe and Warm Home Energy advisors would deliver for fuel poor households in Dundee

- 2000 customers have access to energy advice, PSR and CO awareness
- 1000 customers will receive in home energy visits
- 12000 unique pieces of energy efficiency advice provided
- 400 referrals to partner organisations for further debt advice and/or income maximisation.
- 400 carbon monoxide monitors provided along with CO awareness
- 400 sign up to Priority Service Register
- 200 referrals to the Scottish Government Home Energy Scotland programme
- 24 Local engagement events attended
- £25,000 – worth of energy debt written off, financial assistance obtained on behalf of the customer and extra income via benefit check
- 22 front line advisors in Scarf trained on CO awareness and Priority Service Register
- 3 trained energy advisors through the City and Guilds Training package
- referrals for mental health and wellbeing support
- referrals for food provision
- access to Scarf funding of £10,000 to support with fuel poverty

This initiative will also provide a large data sample of the tenure, income, house type which provides data on the financial gap required to remove people from fuel poverty at various levels of energy costs.

7 Project partners and third parties involved

Scarf has been delivering the in home and remote advice programmes in the Northeast for over 20 years for Angus, Perth & Kinross, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen city. Scarf would like to bring the same offering to the low-income and fuel poor households across Dundee.

Scarf's Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) are specialists in providing support to low income and vulnerable households by providing a full one stop shop support on energy advice and advocacy to support people out of fuel poverty. The team's approach is to educate the household to gain the knowledge to be able to tackle issues themselves. The team are city and guild qualified and deliver outcomes using Energy Savings Trust Advice.

Scarf has a long-standing relationship with partner organisations in Dundee. Scarf have listed organisation that it currently works with that will promote and refer into the programme.

Home Energy Scotland

HES is funded by the Scottish Government and in the Northeast delivered by Scarf. Home Energy Scotland has a 2-way referral programme with Scarf where households are past from HES to the HEAT team and practical support is carried out with the household such as in home reviews and support with billing. The HEAT team also refer into HES to ensure that where households qualify fabric improvements can be made. This provides the advice and fabric holistic approach to maximise the household's income and reduce fuel poverty.

Dundee Citizens Advice

Scarf has a good relationship with the Dundee Citizens Advice Bureau and Scarf CEO is a board member for Dundee CAB. Scarf will work with the Bureau as a 2-way referral. Scarf will provide specialised scheme advice around Dundee ECO4 scheme ran by Scarf in Dundee and the Warmer Homes Scotland Scheme to their customers as unique advice to ensure non duplication of advice. In turn Scarf will refer households to CAB to ensure financial assistance is provided where required.

Dundee City Council Money advice team

Scarf has a good working relationship with Dundee Council Money Advice team and will take referrals for energy advice provision but will also work with Dundee council to maximise household income through local financial scheme's being provided by the LA such as Fuelwell.

Churches, community centres and Food banks across Dundee.

Scarf has a large portfolio of partnerships across Dundee. Scarf will attend events and take referrals from households that reach out to one of our referral partners. We find that we have a good network of the organisations that see vulnerable households that would not normally pick up the phone for assistance.

Gas Safe Charity - support from the charity to provide CO awareness and training for frontline teams

SGN – support from SGN to provide CO alarms for fuel poor households

SSEN – PSR awareness and resilience support for Scarf

8 Potential for new learning

Monitoring and evaluation

The programme will produce monthly reporting on HL outcomes, a quarterly and annual report. These reports will look to provide an overview of the activity performed by the Safe and Warm team. The information captured in the home will be measured over 2 years against the current average energy prices to determine the gap required to remove households in Dundee from fuel poverty longer term.

Learning

Although a Housing Conditions Survey has been created for the first time since covid it lacks detail across Scotland with only a couple of thousands of participants giving no understanding of the current fuel poverty gap which has been made worse due to the cost-of-living crisis. Through looking at household incomes/tenure/property type captured on the initiatives from the home visits we will provide a report which will look at the Scottish Government definition of fuel poverty and look to understand the gap now required to remove households in a city from fuel poverty and extreme fuel poverty. This information will be used to engage with Scottish government and local authorities to support future energy support packages.

Dundee city council has in the last 2 years provided over £1 million of financial assistance to over 10,000 homes [Fuel Well 3 reopens for new applications | Dundee City Council](#). This project although beneficial provided a thin level of support over many people. Our partnership with SGN will provide the information required to support future initiatives in Dundee which will help make informed decisions required to target those fuel poor households most in need.

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 £1.19.

Total cost	£260,126.09
Total gross present value	£568,823.74
NPV	£308,697.65
SROI	£1.19

10 VCMA Project start and end date

The project will run from January 2024 until January 2026. We anticipate a lead time to get our team trained and in place to begin supporting vulnerable households.

The costs are to deliver a programme for 2 years however we would like to build on the learning and success that will be seen on the programme to make it a longer-term funded programme.

11 Geographic area

Dundee

12 Internal Governance and project management evidence

SGN has worked alongside Scarf 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.