

# Fuelling Futures Home-Start

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance

March 2024

SGN



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## 1 Description

Project title	Fuelling Futures – Home-Start
Funding GDN(s)	SGN
New/Updated (indicate as appropriate)	New
Date of PEA submission:	March 2024
Project contact name:	Janet Duggan
Project contact email:	Janet.duggan@sgn.co.uk
Total cost (£k)	£1,451,297.50
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£1,451,297.50

## 2 Problem statement

In 2022, there were an estimated 3.26 million households living in fuel poverty in England, based on the LILEE metric (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2023). This is an increase from 3.1 million in 2021 and doesn't take into consideration the cost-of-living crisis that has hit households throughout the winter of 2022-23 and beyond. National Energy Action state the figure as 6.7 million UK household since October 2022, using the 10% of income measure. It is recognised that nearly half of low-income households are still living in hard to heat homes, and the rate of improvements was well below what is needed to lift people out of fuel poverty by a target date of 2030.

For young families the rate of fuel poverty is above the national average with single parent households at 26% and the lower rate of 17% for couples with children. (Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, Fuel Poverty Report (2022)). Fuel poverty impacts children in 'distinct ways'. As part of their review of the evidence, the academics point to a study by the [National Centre for Social Research \(NatCen\)](#) that showed that respiratory problems are twice as prevalent in children who live in a cold home, 15% versus 7%.

Added to this, it has been found that fuel poverty increases the likelihood of depression in parents which can have significant knock-on effects for their children's welfare. Evidence from the [Children's Society](#) reveals that families who struggle to meet their energy bills will reduce their energy use and cut back on other areas of expenditure, such as food, leisure and clothing – all of which affect children's welfare.

300,000 more children were plunged into absolute poverty in a single year at the height of the cost of living crisis, official figures show, as cited in The Guardian (21<sup>st</sup> March 2024). Overall, during the year 12 million people were in absolute poverty, equivalent to 18% of the population, including 3.6 million children. Alison Garnham, the chief executive of the Child Poverty Action Group said in the article 'Child poverty has reached a record high, with 4.3 million kids now facing cold homes and empty tummies'.

Home-Start stands as a beacon of hope for families with young children, offering support in the face of life's many challenges. Their work begins at home, with an approach as unique as the families they serve. Home-Start UK stands by families grappling with issues that hinder their ability to provide a nurturing childhood for their children, be it poverty, isolation, mental health struggles, disability, or illness. With a network of local Home-Starts spread across the UK, they do more than just help parents cope, they empower them to thrive, fostering an environment that ensures the best possible start for their children.

Over the past year, Home-Start have seen a 15.7% increase in the number of families supported by Home-Start with increased financial vulnerability driving this need, as a result they are currently able to assist 3 in 4 families seeking support from the service.

In 2023, SGN piloted a partnership with Home-Start in Arun, Worthing & Adur as part of our Safe and Warm communities' programme. The project provides support and advice to families to alleviate fuel poverty, enabling parents to provide a safe and warm home. Through this partnership it became clear that many young families who are struggling are not aware of the support available to help through their utility companies including in particular the Priority Services Register, where all families with children under 5 are eligible.

### 3 Scope and objectives

By working in partnership with Home-Start, we aim to tackle fuel poverty in young families by providing access to utility support services they are eligible for. Together we can ensure that inclusion become an integral part of this mission with local Home-Starts providing translation services were necessary. We aim to create a supportive environment where every individual feels valued and accepted. Through collaborative efforts, we can break down barriers and foster a sense of belonging for families and young children. This partnership will allow us to tap into SGN's expertise and resources, enabling us to provide even more comprehensive support to those who need it most regardless of background or circumstances. This partnership will enable us to provide support services across all 37 Home-Start centres located within the SGN southern based network.

Through the partnership all 37 local Home-Starts will help families to stay safe and warm via community-based events, safety support and upskilling workshops.

The initiative looks to support young families by;

- Providing training to Home-Start teams and volunteers on energy safeguarding services including how to identify fuel poverty, carbon monoxide harm and how to describe the benefits of registering to the Priority Services Register
- Providing a safe and warm space to run workshops in Home-Start centres that provides energy safeguarding services whilst providing families with an inviting space to connect with others, combat loneliness and isolation whilst strengthening community bonds
- Providing information on carbon monoxide safety so that families have the information and support to access information on carbon monoxide and where required provide free carbon monoxide alarms
- Providing information on the Priority Services Register and support where required to help families sign up for support
- Provision of crisis support including utility triage, and the allocation of energy vouchers for customers via Prepayment meter vouchers, or direct to energy accounts for direct debit customers
- Providing workshops for families that helps to build confidence in managing energy costs and safe ways to become energy efficient. These sessions will include practical ways for families to prepare low-cost nutritious meals and how to manage energy debt.

The partnership will provide warm, safe, and welcoming spaces for young families, keeping them connected to their local community and addressing their immediate needs. Through collaboration the partnership will directly alleviate the financial stress caused by rising fuel bills for families with young children at a time of need, addressing the immediate issues faced at a critical time of need and will leave a lasting legacy within communities.

### 4 Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

This project is proposed for funding through the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) which aims to work with households with young families in fuel poverty. This project does this by providing direct support to young families who are struggling to maintain a safe and warm home.

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

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 efficiency advice and carbon monoxide awareness, 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 pillars 2 (with outcomes delivered in 3 & 4).

## 5 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

### 5.1 Home-Start

Home-Start centres across the country aim to create nurturing and supportive environments for young families. They understand the challenges faced by these families, particularly in their early years. By fostering resilient family dynamics, Home-Start endeavours to break the cycle of poverty and achieve positive long-term outcomes for young families. Young families will leave the programme with a safer, warmer home environment. They will also be offered the security of identifying risks within their home by trained volunteers who will work with them to upskill and identify their needs, to keep their families safe and warm.

At present Home-Start centres are responding to this crisis by adapting their model to meet the escalating needs of these families. Home-Start centres are providing a range of services each unique to meet the demands of their communities, creating safe and stable homes, offering practical resources such as affordable housing options and money management. Moreover, they offer emotional support through counselling services that address mental health concerns commonly experienced by parents. They also provide educational programs for both parents and children, empowering them to acquire essential skills for lifelong success.

*"Looking at our existing case load none of them are straightforward. They all have significant complexities, all made so much harder because of deprivation and the impact that has on mental and physical health and wellbeing. We are dealing with the aftermath of years of austerity, cuts to children's services, the pandemic, and now the cost-of-living crisis."* Home-Start Erewash

### 5.2 Case Studies

#### Case Study 1 – Home-Start Arun, Worthing and Adur

SGN has previously provided support to Home-Start Arun, Worthing & Adur, this programme has been piloted within the local community to young families who have benefitted from creating a safe and warm environment. Following on from the learning of this pilot, the programme will scale up to a wider reach of Home-Starts across SGN's southern region to support the work and enable more Home-Starts to help families tackling fuel poverty.

Home-Start Arun, Worthing & Adur actively participated in the Centre for Sustainable Energy Safe and Warm Project, supported by SGN. During the project's duration, a dedicated team of ten staff members worked on its implementation, with two staff members assigned to oversee its progress.

As part of their commitment to safety, the ten staff members underwent comprehensive online carbon monoxide (CO) training, which was also supplemented by in-person sessions conducted in-house. The primary objective of this training was to heighten staff awareness regarding the critical importance of CO alarms. Participants learned to recognise the signs and symptoms of CO poisoning and were equipped with an emergency contact number to report any suspected CO leaks promptly.

Empowered by this training, staff members were able to offer precise and succinct guidance to both families and volunteers. Additionally, the same training was extended to 36 volunteers, although their primary role was to inform families that a staff member would be in touch to provide necessary support. This approach ensured consistency and accuracy in communication.

Furthermore, the project revealed an essential gap: many families were unaware of their eligibility to sign up for the Priority Services Register. Consequently, Home-Start proactively shared this information with families, grandparents, and friends, promoting greater access to vital services.

The Safe and Warm Project has yielded positive outcomes for families, with staff and volunteers embracing the comprehensive training. Conversations around energy-efficient practices have resonated well, empowering families to make informed decisions and save on energy costs.

The Safe and Warm Project has made a significant impact, benefiting numerous households. The project has seen the following positive outcomes: 202 households received essential assistance, 170 families benefited from tailored guidance on energy efficiency, 93 households gained access to vital benefits through eligibility checks, 88 households received support for managing debt, 129 individuals were educated about the dangers of carbon monoxide, 79 families accessed energy-saving schemes (including the Warm Homes Discount), 104 households signed up for priority services, 76 families received support to enhance energy efficiency, and 79 households received crisis support in the form of fuel vouchers or emergency funding. Additionally, 72 households accessed other critical support such as food, clothing, and housing. This project fostered safer and more resilient communities.

## Case Study 2 – Cadent Gas

In April 2023 Home-Start launched a two-year Centres for Warmth project with Cadent, involving 27 local Home-Starts. During the first three quarters of the first year Home-Start have delivered 138% against the CO awareness and advice target, 186% against the energy efficiency & advice target and 220% against the Priority Service Register awareness target. Below are some examples of what local Home-Starts had to say about the partnership:

*‘One of our group families thought she smelt gas in her property and went into pure panic. She had picked up one of the Cadent leaflets from our group counter a few weeks before which she had hanging on her notice board and rang them straight away. She was amazed at how quick they came and checked her gas appliances reassuring her that there was nothing to worry about, but this led to her sharing her story with other parents, which led to a lengthy conversation on how important it is to keep the leaflet safe and at hand.*

*Each conversation we have had then leads to the importance of the CO alarms and how shocking that not only families, but staff and volunteers were also not aware of their importance. This funding and support has been a massive educational opportunity for all of us and can honestly say has become a weekly conversation within our groups.’*

### **Kaz, (Karen) Jones, Home-Start North East Worcestershire**

*‘Cadent funding was a real lifeline for our charity and the vulnerable families we support. We had lost funding to deliver a support group for new mums and their babies. The funds from Cadent saved the group and supported new parents further with giving advice and guidance on the priority service register energy savings*



*tips. The group has continued to grow so more vulnerable parents have received support and Cadent has helped so many. The information I read and encouragement to help vulnerable people actually helped me personally, I have a disabled son, his energy bill had got up to £2,500 when his boiler broke, and he used his electric heaters and emergent heater during covid, it was such a worry trying to pay this debt off. After reading the information on tips to reduce costs I registered my son on the Priority Service Register and one of the energy tips was looking for grants attached to the supplier. I applied and to my amazement was successful and the grant paid off his outstanding bill’.*

#### **Home-Start Colchester, Jaywick, and Clacton**

*‘Reminding families that they are a priority for fuel companies and giving out CO alarms has really raised awareness and improved safety for families. A number of families have never thought about CO dangers before or haven’t been able to afford the alarms.*

*Our groups continue to provide a safe, supportive and warm place for vulnerable and disadvantaged families to come together on a regular basis. For many it’s the only place they go to due to challenges of managing their children’s behaviour or because of their own anxiety challenges.’*

**Stella Renwick, Home-Start South Leicestershire**

### **5.3 SGNs Vulnerable Steering Group (VSG)**

Our VSG has helped us shape our vulnerability strategy and our 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 most likely to be living in a cold and unhealthy home, in particular those living with a health condition made worse by living in a cold and damp home. Young families were added as a Priority Vulnerable Group in 2022.

As we’ve 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 to build stronger links with organisations who already are trusted by the community we’re looking to support.

In 2023 our strategic steering group re-iterated the vital impact we could have by embedding support services in trusted organisations who can deliver impactful community engagement that addresses the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

## **6 Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria**

### **6.1 Outcomes**

Working together, SGN and Home-Start will be looking to support families with young children to stay safe and warm at home. Over the duration of the partnership, we are aiming to deliver the following customer outcomes, which has formed the basis of our social return on investment modelling.

Outcomes for beneficiaries will be;

- Increased awareness on the impact of a cold home on young children
- Through training increase the knowledge of Home-Start volunteers around energy safeguarding and increased energy efficiency
- Deliver workshops using safe & warm hubs on energy safety and efficiency
- Provide greater customer resilience by supporting families to sign up to the PSR
- Be more aware of the risks of carbon monoxide and how to mitigate these
- Confidence in managing household costs and preparing low-cost nutritious meals

## 6.2 Success Criteria

Through our partnership, we will aim to support 22,000 young families within SGN’s southern network to be safe and warm at home. We will be able to deliver the following outcomes:

- 250 Home-Start employees and volunteers trained on energy safeguarding, triage and onward referral for extra support with a mix of, information packs, face-to-face and on-line sessions
- 4,000 young families supported with personalised energy advice provided by the Home-Start employees and volunteers (energy advice, PSR and CO awareness – onward referral where required). Expectation 10.6% of these will be supported with energy debt issues
- 1,000 safe and warm energy advice workshops delivered through warm spaces held in Home Start venues – covering energy efficiency, energy debt, the Priority Services Register and carbon monoxide safety reaching 18,000 young families. Expectation 10.6% of these will be supported with energy debt issues
- 3,500 carbon monoxide alarms distributed (carbon monoxide survey dependant)
- 10,000, customers provided with information for eligibility to the Priority Services Register and supported to register where required
- 10,000 households referred on to SGN’s funded specialist energy advice teams for assessment for energy efficiency measures and support on energy matters including energy efficiency advice

## 7 Project partners and third parties involved

This is where we detail who is involved in the partnership and their role

- SGN - provide funding and ongoing support to deliver successful outcomes for the programme including funding for training and carbon monoxide alarms
- Home-Start UK – coordination of the programme, supporting local Home-Starts in delivery
- Local Home-Starts - identify vulnerable families in need of support; train front-line workers in energy safeguarding and efficiency; host workshops; support eligible customers to sign up to the PSR; raise awareness around Carbon Monoxide alarms, safety and installation; deliver managing household costs awareness
- Gas Safe Charity – providing Think CO training workshops and e-learning specifically for CO awareness
- National Energy Foundation (NEF) – providing energy advice including a whole home-based approach to energy efficiency scheme assessment and tailored energy advice and income maximisation services including a home visit service where required (funded VCMA partnership)
- YES Energy Solutions – providing energy advice including a whole home-based approach to energy efficiency scheme assessment and tailored energy advice and income maximisation services (funded VCMA partnership)
- The partner will continue to closely with a network of local partners such as Borough Councils, food banks and Citizens Advice to identify eligible families across the SGN Southern based network; local Home-Starts work closely with local partners currently to ensure families get the best support possible. Home-Start UK, will manage local Home-Starts to keep a track of families who have been referred to services as a direct result of our partnership.

## 8 Potential for new learning

### Monitoring and evaluation

This partnership has been co-designed by Home-Start UK and SGN, with recent learnings from the pilot partnership with Home-Start Arun, Worthing & Adur as part of our Safe and Warm communities programme; supporting people in energy crisis or living in fuel poverty. The partnership builds capacity by providing access



to key services including the PSR, interventions that address fuel poverty and broader safeguarding and wellbeing services to those in need.

As we continue to evolve the partnership and progress with the delivery, the following activities will be in place to monitor and evaluate project progress and impacts:

- Quantitative and qualitative customer outcomes
- Feedback questionnaires to ensure that the services are valued by those who use it
- The questionnaires have additional space for attendees to write more in-depth personalised reviews and this qualitative data is invaluable to us in helping assess and shape our services
- Ongoing referrals from/to partners to ensure that we’re delivering outcomes that address both crisis and long-term fuel poverty / health outcomes
- Each month we will review the progress of the support service to share ideas and challenges through individual and organisational partnership case studies.

### Learning

We are keen to learn from this project and for successes to be incorporated into ongoing projects that engage young families. The Home-Start account manager will be in regular contact with all participating Home-Starts and will collate a quarterly report that will be shared with SGN and all Home-Starts involved. This partnership and the Home Start UK partnership with Cadent will share learning to ensure that benefits and learning is shared across both partnerships to improve the services provided to young families struggling to maintain a safe and warm home.

The monitoring of performance reporting will contain SROI data in line with the measures in this document, and as agreed with SGN, as well as qualitative information about challenges, successes and learnings.

In addition to this, the account manager will also host a ‘learn and share’ workshop for all participating Home-Starts during Q3 of year one and again during Q3 of year two. The learnings from these workshops will be shared in the Q4 written reports.

Through the partnership we will be looking to assess the needs of young families who are using the service and assessing what additional resources are required as a result. We will be assessing the demographics of need and the circumstances and reviewing resources eg. Alternative language resources and fuel vouchers etc.

SGN will share the outcomes via stakeholder mechanisms including the SGN Safe and Warm partnership network the GDN Vulnerability Working Group as well as via the VCMA Annual Showcase and VCMA Annual Report.

This project has the potential to be upscaled as a model, working with other GDN’s, enabling more families with young children to be supported.

## 9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations, including NPV

We worked with leading social impact consultancy SIRIO Strategies using the new industry standard social value framework and supporting GDN Rulebook to forecast the social value and SROI for this project. SIRIO strategies have carried out an in-depth assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to our services for vulnerable customers incorporated in this partnership over two year and forecast a positive net Social Return on Investment of £1.64.

### Social Value Measurement

<b>Total cost*</b>	£1,418,365.30
<b>Total gross present value</b>	£3,743,947.49
<b>Net Present Value (NPV)</b>	£2,325,582.19
<b>SROI</b>	£1.64

*\*Accounting for inflationary factors over the term of the project.*

## 10 VCMA Project start and end date

The project will run from April 2024 to March 2026 (2 years)

## 11 Geographic area

The project will take place within the SGN Southern Network - the following Local Home-Starts operate within the counties listed below:

1. Kent
2. Oxfordshire
3. Dorset
4. Hampshire and IOW
5. Sussex
6. Surrey
7. Berkshire

## 12 Internal governance and project management evidence

SGN has worked alongside Home-Start 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 SIRIO Strategies using the DNO / GDN common rulebook, the current partnership scope which has been forecast at adding an additional £1.64 for each £1 invested, this will be monitored closely to ensure we adhere to the VCMA governance criteria.

SGN and Home-Start will meet monthly and quarterly to review outcomes, learn, share best practices, and address any delivery issues.

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