

Tenant Energy Support across Scotland in partnership with Changeworks

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance

July 2024

SGN



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1 Description

Funding GDN(s)	SGN
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	N/A
New/Updated	New
Date of PEA submission:	31/07/24
Project contact name:	Margaret Hamilton
Project contact number/email:	Margaret.hamilton@sgn.co.uk
Total cost (£k)	£242,464
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£242,464

2 Problem statement

Tenants of housing associations (12% of all homes in Scotland), are the tenure with the highest proportion of people living in relative poverty in Scotland, at around 40%¹. Social tenants are more likely to receive income through the social security system and some of the most vulnerable people live in social housing. 30% of social homes are older households, 25% have children, 46% are in the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland (SIMD) and house people who were previously homeless and refugees. Many of these tenants will be eligible for PSR but will have limited awareness of free PSR services.

The cost of living crisis has cut right across social tenants' lives – *“deeply affecting their financial security, their physical and mental health, and levels of social isolation – and has had a disproportionate impact compared to people living in other tenure types”* (Scottish Federation of Housing Association (SFHA), November 2023²).

Changeworks know from partnerships with SFHA that tenants are struggling with energy costs – 57% are in fuel poverty (with members reporting higher instances³) – with many households never having struggled with energy costs before. Only 8% tenants feel as though the cost-of-living crisis is easing as we head into another winter. The Scottish Housing Regulator's (SHR) National Panel of Tenants 2022/23 report⁴ found 71% having difficulty heating their homes and four in five tenants (82%) had limited how often they used heating or lighting at home. As prices have risen tenants have found it increasingly difficult to cover their essential costs with a growing number being pushed into riskier financial behaviours. Consistently through 2023 more than half of social tenants have borrowed money to cover regular household expenditure, and 73% of SFHA's members reported an increase in the levels of fuel debt.

“For the past three months I’ve not had my heater on in this house. I didn’t put it on, I just said this (to her children), put on your jumper...I’m really really worried about the winter, I don’t know how I’m going to cope. Because when the winter comes, you can’t say you won’t put on the heater. I have children.”

“When the weans are at school I would have a coffee in the morning and wouldn’t eat until they came home because I’m saving on the gas and electricity by not cooking anything.”

Insufficient heating can increase the risk of health issues or make existing conditions worse. Half of social tenant's consistently say it negatively affected their health in 2023. This is more than any other tenure. 45%

¹ [Scottish Government \(2022\) Cost of Living Bill – Key Statistics](#)

² [SFHA report \(2023\) The impact of the cost-of-living crisis on social tenants in Scotland](#)

³ E.g. 70% of Argyll and Bute-based housing association, 60% of Glasgow and West of Scotland based housing association, tenants spend more than 10% of their income on energy.

⁴ [Scottish Housing Regulator \(2023\) National Panel of Tenants and Service Users 2022-2023](#)

stated they had a disability (21% private tenants)⁵, and importantly some tenants have specialist medical equipment which can be expensive to run, meaning they are not using it as much as they would have before.

“It’s affecting my health as I am struggling to pay to put my nebuliser on as much as I have to.”

“House is freezing. I have emphysema and can’t use my heating because I can’t afford it.”

A survey of 700 tenants found 98% were struggling with their energy costs, 79% with socialising.⁶ One of the more unseen effects of high energy costs and cost of living crisis is on levels of social interaction and relationships. Over half of social tenants (57%) reported a negative impact on them spending time or connecting with others. Given that around half of social tenants live by themselves, reducing contact with people means there is a significantly increased risk of social isolation, loneliness and related mental health impacts.

“There is more tension in the house because the price of gas and electricity is now just astronomical.”

“I have had to alter my general lifestyle which makes me feel depressed and at times frustrated. I have to stay more at home, plus my house is very cold meaning my home makes my health issues worse.”

Tenants require energy advice and advocacy to support them to tackle high energy costs, however only one third of housing associations provide energy advice support.

3 Scope and objectives

In partnership, SGN and Changeworks are setting up a new initiative, *Tenant Energy Support* (TES) and will target vulnerable groups most at risk of living in cold damp homes to provide a one-stop comprehensive energy advice service to tenants of housing associations. The service will deliver tailored, efficient, and effective support where it is needed most and as a national service will provide sustainable, long-term support across Scotland. Our ambition is to provide a cost effective, resilient solution for SFHA housing association members and to support their tenants to create lasting change in how they manage and pay for energy in the home.

Tenant Energy Support initiative has been tailored to suit tenant sector specifically and, with endorsement from Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), will offer a tenant advice service to their Registered Social Landlord members across Scotland (130).

The Tenant Energy Support initiative is a novel service in Scotland that has been co-created with input from housing associations to ensure its relevance and affordability as a long-term, sustainable solution to tenant energy advice provision. The partnership will build on the success of an existing pilot service delivered with five housing association partners in 2023/24 through funding secured via the Scottish Government’s Social Housing Fuel Support Fund and administered by Scottish Federation of Housing Associations. The service has been welcomed by the five housing association partners involved in the pilot and has demonstrated the demand for a bespoke advisory service for tenants which targets and offers support to those fuel poor households to help them live in a safe and warm home.

With the pilot project at a close, this new partnership will expand and deliver this flagship service over a further 20-month period.

The project will offer the service to existing and new housing partners, with a target reach of **448** social housing tenants in year one (August 2024-March 2025) and **1092** tenants in year two (April 2025-March 2026)

⁵ [Scottish Government \(2019\) Social tenants in Scotland 2017](#)

⁶ [SFHA report \(2023\) The impact of the cost-of-living crisis on social tenants in Scotland](#)

and aspires to support these tenants across approximately **8 housing associations** in order to enhance the reach of the project and establish new partnerships for the future. The service will also include an emergency fund to provide essential financial interventions to tenants.

Tenant Energy Support will provide **housing association tenants** with three levels of energy advice support depending on their need (information, advice, and advocacy).

The service will tackle the **four drivers of fuel poverty** (poor energy efficiency of the home; high energy costs; low household income; how energy is used in the home), supporting tenants to:

- **Improve energy efficiency** behaviours in the home, including getting the most from their heating system, understanding carbon monoxide safety and how to prevent condensation and mould.
- **Tackle high fuel costs** by better understanding energy bills and meters, gaining confidence communicating with their energy supplier, accessing discounts and energy vouchers where available, switching tariffs, and making their home more energy efficient.
- **Make their homes warmer** by accessing energy efficiency measures and equipment available through complementary initiatives.
- **Increase incomes** by helping to resolve fuel billing and fuel debt issues and by referring to welfare rights and income maximisation support.

The project will provide support to all tenants of housing associations who have signed up to receive the service. To generate awareness and availability of the support we will provide resources and support to housing association staff to build knowledge and understanding of the support available and to ensure that all tenants who would benefit from the service can be reached. This will sit alongside tenant engagement including in-person events and home visits. This approach will enhance the local delivery aspect of Tenant Energy Support and will provide greater opportunity for housing association staff to refer tenants to the service if there is shown to be a need.

Tenant Energy Support will be delivered across three complimentary tiers, all tenants signed up to the service will have access to all levels of support.

1) Information – c20,000 tenants will receive a wide range of energy advice information online and in print, promoted monthly through communication channels targeted at tenants e.g. via social media, housing association newsletters and websites, frontline staff signposting.

2) Advice and 3) Advocacy– 1,540 tenants will receive 1:1 tailored support, either as Advice provided by phone or at targeted outreach events (e.g. site visits and energy surgeries), or as Advocacy in-depth support and casework when required.

The service will operate as a membership model and will be open to housing associations with properties in Scotland. As an annual membership, initially as a commitment for 24/25 with the option to extend use of the service for 25/26, housing associations will sign up to the service which in turn will be accessible to their tenants. New membership opportunities will be available each quarter to enable Changeworks to streamline the service and manage demand. We will determine new membership on the basis of available capacity, and this may change each quarter.

Housing association members will be provided with the following:

- Monthly energy advice information – to share with all tenants through their communication channels. Information shared will ensure as many people can benefit from energy advice and raise awareness of the service for those needing 1:1 tailored support.

- Two-way staff briefings to raise awareness of support and for Changeworks staff to understand from each member their tenants, properties, and in-house support to join-up / link with to enable holistic outcomes.
- Training sessions to raise frontline staff awareness of fuel poverty issues, Priority Service Register, carbon monoxide safety and how the service can help them and their tenants.
- Referral routes for tenants to access the level of Tenant Energy Support they need.
- All three advice routes will support energy advice and usage, awareness of and registration to the **Priority Service Register** and **carbon monoxide safety information** and will cross-refer service-users to ensure holistic support is provided.

Energy Confident New Tenants (ECNT), for 150+ tenants

Through Tenant Energy Support, Changeworks will provide access to a new flagship early intervention support service aimed at new tenants to avoid fuel debt and confidently manage their energy. Tenants moving into a new home will receive targeted support within the first eight weeks of their tenancy, enabling the best possible start, and will help identify those tenants where more in-depth energy advice from TES may be required. This will be an optional service for association members, but we will actively encourage participation and seek to administer the service through tenant auto-enrolment.

£5000 Emergency Support Fund, for 90-95 tenants

Clients of this project will also have access to emergency funding via fuel voucher support that will help them stay warm at home. This financial assistance is deemed essential with recent cuts to Fuel Bank funding and an end to the Home Heating Support Fund. We suggest that these vouchers be provided to 5-7% of tenants supported (c90-95 tenants).

4 Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

The service will provide support to consumers in *vulnerable situations* to tackle fuel poverty issues and to address CO safety issues resulting in positive Social Return on Investment. The project will provide holistic energy efficiency advice, awareness of the dangers of CO tailored to the needs of each householder to support energy safeguarding and reduce the risk of harm caused by CO and identify clients who should register for the Priority Service Register. The project will work collaboratively with expert agencies to maximise positive impacts and deliver defined outcomes for individuals.

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 pillars 3, 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 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 Housing Association Energy Support Service with SFHA

Tenant Energy Support builds on Changeworks 35 year's expertise of delivering energy information, advice and advocacy, and close working with housing associations across Scotland⁷ and through a strategic partnership with SFHA.

The pilot service⁸ (September 2023 – June 2024) was co-designed with housing associations following a roundtable meeting with over 25 SFHA members in January 2023 and subsequent development sessions.⁹ The pilot launched with 5 housing association partners, all made possible through funding awarded through the Scottish Government's *Social Housing Fuel Support Fund* managed and administered by SFHA.

The service has been available to tenants since September 2023 and, delivered holistically across three tiers of support (Energy Saving Information, Energy Advice and Energy Advocacy), has shown success in preventing and alleviating the effects of fuel poverty and in empowering tenants to gain the knowledge and skills to best manage their energy.

During the 10-month pilot the service delivered energy advice, information, and advocacy support to over 775 tenants since September 2023.

Of the total number of tenants supported:

- Before advice, only 7% of our clients felt warm in their home, after Changeworks support, 71% were warm in their home
- Before our support only 20% felt confident and 55% were not confident, after our support 78% felt confident and only 8% were not confident
- 98% of our clients found the service approachable and friendly.
- 97% of clients said the support was delivered in an appropriate timescale.
- 100% of clients said the advisor was knowledgeable about how best to help them.
- 100% of clients said the advisor explained the information in a way that was clear and easy to understand.

⁷ Currently Changeworks is working with 15 housing associations

⁸ Funded via the Social Housing Fuel Support Fund

⁹ Funded via the Social Housing Fuel Support Fund

- 98% of our clients said they were happy or very happy with the support they received from the advisor.

"I learned how and when to use the dials on my storage heaters having had no confidence over the past 2 years. I now feel confident and hope to save in the future."

"I learned more about how much I should be paying and more about reading the meter and checking the tariffs"

"The stress that I had when dealing with [the supplier] was unbelievable and when [the advisor] dealt with them my stress level decreased"

Tenant Energy Support has been developed from the success and positive reception of the pilot and will re-launch with the expectation of opening up support to more member associations from August 2024. Changeworks has recently begun outreach activities to promote the service to potential members.

6 Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria

6.1 Outcomes

Tenant Energy Support is a new national energy advice service in Scotland targeting the most vulnerable in our society to access the support they need to tackle fuel poverty and be warm and safe in their homes. As a result of this support, tenants of housing associations will have improved energy efficiency, achieved financial savings, managed energy debt, reduced carbon, be safer at home and have better health and well-being.

Tenant Energy Support will be the only national energy advice service targeting housing association tenants across Scotland and will directly impact customers on the participating GDN and DNO network(s).

The project will support **1,540** tenants, however via this service c20,000 tenants will have increased awareness of and access to energy advice information from tailored member communications.

6.2 Associated actions

- 75% of service users will report increased knowledge of how to deal with their energy issues (of those responding to service-user surveys)
- £201,740 financial savings in total for those supported
- 511,280kg total carbon savings (332kg per tenant supported on average)

In addition:

- 30 housing association frontline staff upskilled on fuel poverty, CO and PSR awareness
- 10 volunteers trained and supported to assist with project delivery and community outreach

6.3 Success Criteria

Between September 2024 and March 2026, housing association tenants will be supported, of which:

- **20,000** tenants will receive a wide range of **energy advice, PSR and CO** information online and in print
- **1,540** tenants will receive 1:1 tailored support, either as Advice provided by phone or at targeted outreach events (e.g. site visits and energy surgeries), or as Advocacy in-depth support and casework when required

of which:

- **1,540** tenants will have energy efficiency, energy usage and heating systems advice
- **1,540** tenants will have PSR conversation
- **1,540** tenants will have carbon monoxide safety awareness conversation
- **660** tenants signposted to additional relevant support including:
 - Warm Homes Discount,

- national debt advice,
 - mental health support
- **475** tenants will register for Priority Service Register
- **475** tenants will receive carbon monoxide safety advice
- **250** tenants referred to additional relevant support including:
 - welfare rights and income maximisation advice (e.g. housing association in-house service or local Citizens Advice Bureaux)
 - tenancy sustainment support
 - food banks
 - emergency energy top-ups
- **150** new tenants supported through Energy Confident New Tenants service
- **95** tenants will benefit from £50 fuel vouchers from a total pot of £5000

Please note, tenants may receive support across a number of services.

7 Project partners and third parties involved

Changeworks is a Scottish charity leading the way in solutions for low-carbon living, based on 35- year expertise delivering impact and making a difference in people's lives. Changeworks believe action must be dramatically scaled up to tackle the climate emergency and make Scotland's homes low carbon, affordably warmer and easier to heat. Their commitment is to support a just transition towards a positive low-carbon reality for everyone, including tackling fuel poverty. Changeworks has delivered energy advice services to tackle fuel poverty in Midlothian for over a decade, working with the council, health professionals, housing associations and third sector support agencies to identify those in need and to deliver support across the region.

Changeworks' Affordable Warmth Service is a specialist service supporting vulnerable people by providing holistic, bespoke, and in-depth energy advice to tackle fuel poverty. The team's approach is focused on empowering people to gain sustainable life skills to tackle issues themselves. Staff have the skills and experience to deliver robust outcomes:

- Scottish National Standards accredited to deliver Type 1 Utility Debts advice
- City & Guilds Energy Awareness and Renewable Energy certified (Level 3) and receive comprehensive in-house training
- Disclosure Scotland checked and had training in: Child Protection, Protection of Vulnerable Adults, Lone Worker Safety, and Equalities

Scottish Federation of housing Associations, SFHA

SFHA is the national voice of Scotland's housing associations and co-operatives and exists to represent, support, and connect its members of over 130 housing associations across Scotland. Its ambition is that everyone has a good home in a successful community, with high quality, affordable, safe, and accessible homes. As the membership body for housing associations, the SFHA plays a key role in representing and supporting members and shares a joint interest with Changeworks in providing shared services, tackling fuel poverty, and moving towards Net Zero.

Since 2021, SFHA managed and administered the Scottish Government's *Social Housing Fuel Support Fund*, a £2 million fuel poverty fund to help social landlords support their tenants struggling with fuel costs and energy management in the home. The aim of the fund was to provide practical support to social housing tenants and addressed the need to provide immediate support against the direct effects of fuel poverty. Now closed, the funding demonstrated the high demand and need for support of this kind and as a result SFHA have endorsed Tenant Energy Support and will sign post their members to the service and promote its availability through direct communications channels.

SFHA and Changeworks Strategic Partnership

Since 2021, Changeworks, Warmworks and SFHA have worked through a strategic partnership to support housing associations to decarbonise their housing stock and to support tenants to be affordably warm.

Now in its fourth year, collaboratively the partnership provides:

- Best practice, case studies, insight and expertise on decarbonisation and fuel poverty shared through a quarterly Energy and Net Zero Forum, joint delivery of conferences and events.
- Support to achieving Net Zero targets through provision of tailored solutions for energy efficiency.
- Support to tackle fuel poverty through energy advice and advocacy for tenants.

Collectively, these organisations listen to the needs of the sector to develop solutions that are impactful and cost-effective. This is achieved through trusted delivery services with the tenant at the heart of the approach.

8 Potential for new learning

Monitoring and evaluation

The following activities will be in place to monitor and evaluate project progress and impacts:

- Quantitative and qualitative service user outcomes and demographics/ vulnerabilities recorded/monitored
- Service user before-and-after-support surveys and follow-up calls
- Referrals recorded/monitored
- Feedback, indicators, outputs, and outcomes reported on quarterly
- Project progress monitored: e.g. monthly Advisor 1-to-1s, quarterly partner meetings.

Learning

We are keen to learn from activity and for successes to be incorporated into future delivery and promoted to others. We will learn about:

- Partnership working and new joined up working practices
- Impact/benefits of local engagement in communities and how key messages are cascaded, helping to understand more around type of engagement preferred, especially in the harder to reach communities
- New challenges fuel poor householders are facing with changes in the Cost-of-Living crisis

9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations

Social Value Measurement

We worked with leading social impact research consultancy Sirio Strategies to carry out an assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to our services for vulnerable customers incorporated in this partnership using the Industry Standard Social Value Framework and supporting GDN rulebook. Carrying out an in-depth assessment of the predicted outcomes we forecast a positive net social return in investment of £1.12.

Total cost	£236,961.14
Total gross present value	£501,278.02
Net present value	£264,316.89
SROI	£1.12

10 VCMA Project start and end date

The project will run from August 2024-March 2026 (20 months)

11 Geographic area

Nationwide, Scotland, targeting key areas where there is high deprivation and fuel poverty.

12 Approval

SGN has worked alongside Changeworks 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 Industry Standard Social Value Framework and supporting GDN 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.