

Moving The Dial



Introduction

The evaluation explored the impact of a cross-section of SGN's VCMA-funded projects, examining key service outcomes related to fuel poverty risk and energy vulnerability. The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach which included an online survey of **206** clients and **8** in-depth client interviews.

"I think it's really amazing and just so important to be helping people who are struggling at this time and I am very grateful for all the help you gave me."

Who the service is reaching:

The vast majority of clients surveyed had a very low household income (72% <£16,010 per annum) and 99% had a household income below the national median.



- Clients predominantly identified as having a white British ethnic background (78.9%) while 8.5% identified as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British.
- Clients reflected groups known to be more at risk of fuel poverty or vulnerable to the effects of cold homes: 1 in 4 were from households with children under or older households with at least 1 person aged 75 or over.



"It was helpful and I felt like someone understood and I was worthy of needing help and this was appreciated." (Survey respondent)

Empowering clients

The VCMA-funded projects provided a variety of energy-related support that provide immediate relief (such as confidence around energy billing and reducing the incidence of debt) and longer-term impacts that clients will continue to benefit from (e.g. greater knowledge of energy-related support, energy management and carbon monoxide safety).

60% agreed that it is both easier for them to use and control their heating system

- 53.1% of respondents said that the support had improved their confidence in reducing energy/fuel debt
- 60.5% said that they know more about saving energy at home whilst also keeping warm.
- 56.1% said that they felt more able to understand and use their smart meter and in-home display
- 50% feel more confident about checking if they are the best energy deal
- 46% were more confident when dealing with their energy supplier

"People at [the service] are amazing from the phone to your door. I would fight tooth and nail myself to keep this organisation going." (Survey respondent)

Enhancing knowledge and awareness

Many respondents had increased knowledge of support schemes, e.g. the Warm Home Discount and Priority Services Register - and had investigated these schemes and/or applied because of the support they had received.



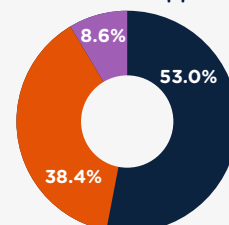
68.3% agreed that they had investigated or joined the PSR - potentially linked to the targeting of people in vulnerable situations by VCMA funded services

- 61.3% agreed that they had investigated or applied for the Warm Home Discount
- 48.9% said they have investigated or applied for grants/support for home energy efficiency or heating upgrades
- 62.4% said they know more about grants/support for home energy efficiency or heating upgrades
- 68.2% said they have more knowledge about where to go for energy-related support and advice
- 72.9% said that they were likely to share what they'd learned with family, friends or neighbours.

"I could not heat my home before. We would sit under blankets so cold. Having the new boiler and radiator and the insulation done has changed so much" (Client case study)

Can you heat your home comfortably during the winter months?

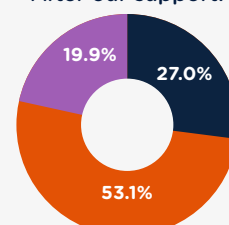
Before our support:



Key

- Yes, easily
- Yes, but it was/is hard for me
- No, I could not/not/cannot

After our support:



Keeping clients safe and warm at home

The VCMA-funded projects provided a variety of energy-related support that provide immediate relief (such as confidence around energy billing and reducing the incidence of debt) and longer-term impacts that clients will continue to benefit from (e.g. greater knowledge of energy-related support, energy management and carbon monoxide safety).



“The help I received has greatly improved my ability to better manage my warmth and comfort while battling with the huge increase in fuel costs. Without [the service’s] assistance I would have had a much worse experience in the past years.”
(Client case study)

67.5% know more about CO risks in the home after receiving support

- 64.6% know more about the actions they can take to reduce carbon monoxide (CO) risks at home
- Clients who were unable to keep their whole house warm when it was cold, or only with difficulty was reduced by 14.9%, while those who could not achieve this at all was reduced by almost half (52.2% to 26.8%).
- Cutting back on use of home heating was reduced from 53% to 46%.
- More clients reported using low-cost or simple methods to help them keep warm: 64% said they used ‘blankets, coats, hot water bottles or other items to keep warm instead of turning the heating on’, up from 46.6%. This may be related to advice services offering ‘warmth packs’ including such products, potentially increasing their use.
- Getting behind on paying energy bills was reduced from 41.3% to 30.4% doing this after receiving support (41.3% doing so previously). A third still falling behind on paying their energy bills reflects the ongoing rising cost of energy.
- Not being able to top up a PPM reduced to 31.7% from 45.1%.



Financial capability

Support delivered under the VCMA-funded projects has had a positive impact on financial capability, most notably:

53.1% had improved confidence in reducing energy debt

- 41% worried less over energy bills
- 36.7% had been able to reduce pay off energy debt
- 32.3% said their household budget felt more manageable
- 24.2% said their financial situation was improved.



“[Support service] helped me at a very low point in my life and their support and advice really got me a much needed breathing space from worrying constantly about money and making ends meet. I can’t thank them enough for what they did for me”
(Client case study)

Supporting health and wellbeing

A large proportion of clients reported enhanced overall health and wellbeing, including improvements in average scores across 3 out of 4 domains measuring sense of wellbeing:

- Life satisfaction
- A feeling that things done are worthwhile
- Happiness

Tangible impacts upon physical and mental health were also reported, including symptom relief and reduced stress and anxiety.

- Reporting general health as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’ reduced after receiving support from 64% to 42%.



“Just to say that two of my children are disabled, and just to say thank you, really. Schemes like this are life-changing for people like me, and I am really thankful.”
(Client case study)

